

The CNT in the Spanish Revolution, Volume 3

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Contents

Glossary of organisations	3
The history of Spanish anarchism in the English language	5
Beginnings: Millenarianism versus Rationalism	5
Places	7
Revolution	9
Exile and resistance	11
Themes	12
Anarchist lives	12
English bibliography	13
Chapter One: The Valencia Economic Forum	20
Chapter Two: The New Trade Union Platform	43
Chapter Three: From Victory at Teruel to Disaster in Aragón	68
Chapter Four: The Libertarian Movement's Crisis Within	93
Chapter Five: The August Crisis and the Battle of the Ebro	108
Chapter Six: Francoist Policy	120
Chapter Seven: State take-over of the War Industries	141
Chapter Eight: Libertarians and Communists in the War	164
Chapter Nine: The Terror on the Fronts	186
Chapter Ten: The Terror in the Rearguard	206
Chapter Eleven: From the October Plenum to the Loss of Catalonia	225
Chapter Twelve: The Last Bulwark	250
Chapter Thirteen: Woe to the Vanquished	269

Glossary of organisations

BOC Bloc Obrer i Camperol/Worker-Peasant Block; an anti-Stalinist communist party

CADCI Centre Autonomista de Dependents del Comerç i de la Indústria/ Autonomist Centre for Shop and White-Collar Workers; a Catalan white-collar and shop workers' union, the leading union in this sector

CEDA Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas/Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Rightists; the main rightist party in the 1930s, of quasi-fascist persuasion

CGT Confédération Générale du Travail/General Confederation of Labour; Europe's leading anarcho-syndicalist union before World War One, it later fell under socialist and communist influence

CGTU Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire/Unitary General Confederation of Labour; formed by communists and allied to the RILU

CNT Confederación Nacional del Trabajo/National Confederation of Labour

CRT Confederación Regional del Trabajo/Regional Confederation of Labour; the regional bodies that made up the CNT

ERC Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya/Republican Left of Catalonia; a middle class republican party

FAI Federación Anarquista Ibérica/Iberian Anarchist Federation; the pan-Iberian federation of anarchist affinity groups

FIJL Federación Ibérica de Juventudes Libertarias/Iberian Federation of Young Libertarians; the anarchist youth movement

FJS Federación de Juventudes Socialistas/Socialist Youth Federation; the youth movement of the PSOE

FNTT Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Tierra/National Federation of Land Labourers; the UGT agrarian workers' union

FOUS Federación Obrera de Unificación Sindical/Workers' Federation of Trade Union Unity; a dissident communist union federation close to the POUM

FSL Federación Sindicalista Libertaria/Libertarian Syndicalist Federation; a moderate anarcho-syndicalist answer to the FAI formed during the power struggles in the CNT prior to the civil war

ICE Izquierda Comunista de España/Communist Left of Spain; a small Trotskyist grouping which helped form the POUM in 1935

IWA International Workingmen's Association; the world organisation of anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist groups

JCI Juventud Comunista Ibérica/Iberian Communist Youth; the PCE youth movement

JJ.LL Juventudes Libertarias/Young Libertarians; the Catalan association of young anarchists

JSU Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas/Unified Socialist Youth; an amalgamation of the JSU and the JCI under Stalinist hegemony

PCC Partit Comunista Català/Catalan Communist Party; a dissident communist group which helped form the BOC in 1930

PCE Partido Comunista de España/Communist Party of Spain; the official pro-Moscow communist party

POUM Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista/Workers' Party of Marxist Unification; a dissident communist, anti-Stalinist party

PSOE Partido Socialista Obrero Español/Spanish Socialist Workers' Party; the Spanish social-democratic party

PSUC Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya/Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia; the Catalan Communist Party formed at the start of the civil war in order to rival the power of the revolutionary CNT-FAI and the POUM

RILU Red International of Labour Unions; Comintern union federation

SS.OO Sindicatos de la Oposición/Opposition Unions; made up of anti-FAI anarcho-syndicalists

UGT Unión General de Trabajadores/General Workers' Union; the PSOE-affiliated union movement

USC Unió Socialista de Catalunya/Socialist Union of Catalonia; a quasi-Fabian-socialist party which split from the PSOE due to the latter's centralist stance on the national question. Very close to the ERC before the civil war, it later joined the PSUC.

U. de R. Unió de Rabassaires/Union of Sharecroppers; a Catalan tenant farmers' union close to the ERC

The history of Spanish anarchism in the English language¹

The CNT in the Spanish Revolution, as we indicated in the introduction to Volume 1, and as hopefully by now those of you reading this introduction will concur, is a seminal work in the historiography of the Iberian anarchist movement. This essay seeks to locate Peirats's work more generally within the context of the English language literature on Spanish anarchism. For an overarching view of the Spanish workers' movement in all its guises and the position of the anarchists in relation to other factions, see Benjamin Martin (1990). Prior to plunging into the detail offered by Martin, it is well worth consulting the excellent interpretive essay by Paul Heywood (1989), which constitutes a wonderful starting point for any consideration of the appeal of anarchism. Heywood's contention that the success of anarchism cannot be entirely understood without appreciating the inherent weaknesses of the socialist movement is underscored in his penetrating study of the failure of Marxism to take root in Spain (1990).

Beginnings: Millenarianism versus Rationalism

During the long winter of Francoism, when the regime endeavoured to impose an intellectual *cordon sanitaire* around Spain, it fell to historians and writers working beyond the reach of the censor of the dictatorship, principally from the Anglo-Saxon world, to produce illuminating and independent studies that ensured that Spain did not become *terra incognita*. One such pioneering study of the 1930s political crisis in Spain was the beautifully written book by Bloomsbury Group historian Gerald Brenan (1943). Having moved to Andalusia in the 1920s, Brenan was very much concerned with the nature of agrarian anarchism and perhaps as a result overplays the rural dimensions of the movement. In essence, Brenan saw anarchism as a chiliastic, millenarian, movement that functioned as a substitute religion for the masses: in a corrupt and wretched society in which the organised Church had allied with the rich and the powerful, the appeal of anarchism was its prophecy of a totally new beginning for an oppressed humanity. Brenan's perspective was greatly influenced by Juan Díaz del Moral's 1928 *Historia de las agitaciones campesinas andaluzas*, a study written by a centre-left lawyer and mason from the south of Spain. Besides stressing what he saw as the moralistic nature of anarchist belief, Díaz del Moral also invoked the hoary myth of national idiosyncrasy to explain anarchism's popularity. For a more detailed discussion of Brenan, see Marie Louise Berneri (1961), and for a critique of the stress on national characteristics, see Chris Ealham (1994).

Eric Hobsbawm (1959), the celebrated British social historian, followed the approach of Brenan (and indeed that of Díaz del Moral), while taking their analysis in a more critical and anti-anarchist direction and defining the movement as a form of 'primitive rebellion', harnessing

¹ I am very grateful to Paul Preston for his comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

elemental agrarian social strata and capable of nothing more than periodic, dramatic but essentially doomed insurrections. Deploying a range of *a priori* assumptions and a teleology that one might expect of a scholar who was, at this time, close to the British communist party, Hobsbawm described the movement as a millenarian and irrational form of pre-industrial revolt that was destined to fail by virtue of its own internal contradictions whereupon it would be replaced by a more modern and coherent, urban-based Marxist-led social movement. While in the latter part of the nineteenth century sections of the southern branch of the anarchist movement were periodically enveloped in a cycle of insurrectionary violence, Hobsbawm's polemical certainties nevertheless ignore the regional variations of the movement and cannot account for the process whereby anarchism became the dominant creed among the working class in Barcelona, Spain's most important and advanced industrial city. Moreover, there is considerable evidence that many people came to anarchism after a lengthy period of reflection and experience, and that anarchist activists were anything but 'primitive', as has been demonstrated by Mercedes Vilanova (1992).

The millenarian perspective came under sustained attack from and was eventually laid to rest by a later generation of scholars, such as Clara Lida (1969) and Temma Kaplan (1977), who interpreted anarchism as a 'rational' response to the oppression and exclusion of certain social groups during a specific set of historical circumstances. In particular, Kaplan, who anchors her study in a socio-economic analysis of Cádiz province, the very area which the supporters of the millenarian thesis believed was most central to their argument, goes on to study the anarchist movement in its local context, demonstrating that anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist militants pursued a realistic and credible set of protest tactics that was firmly rooted in the everyday life of the social constituencies to which they appealed and whose interests they set about defending. Based on a much more exhaustive consideration of source materials than Hobsbawm and Brennan put together, Kaplan explodes the myths and mechanistic logic underpinning the millenarian thesis. For a detailed discussion of this debate, see Martha Grace Duncan (1988) and Chris Ealham (1996a).

The late Murray Bookchin's *The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years* (1977) appeared the same year as Kaplan's study. This highly readable introductory survey is essential for the early history of the movement, although it is not entirely without inaccuracy. Written with considerable brio and passion, and based on ten years' research, which included many interviews with exiled anarchist militants, Bookchin explores the formation and consolidation of the movement across the full range of its activities (agrarian, educational, trade union). One of the main merits of Bookchin's survey is that he locates the growth of anarchism within both the contours of international working class politics during the 1860s and 1870s and the repressive political, economic and cultural context in Spain, emphasising the effect of the weak bourgeois-liberal sphere. Bookchin's treatment of the issue of anarchist 'propaganda by the deed' in the 1890s is especially sensitive and represented a significant advance upon the traditional view discussed above. Of special importance is Bookchin's examination of the movement's internal culture and the everyday hopes and aspirations of its supporters; these themes are developed through a series of vivid and compelling biographical sketches of key figures in the history of Iberian libertarianism, ranging from founding fathers like Anselmo Lorenzo, Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia and Fermín Salvochea, to prominent activists from the inter-war years, such as Salvador Seguí and Buenaventura Durruti. While the scope of Bookchin's study is quite breathtaking, his attention is directed mainly at the pre-history of the CNT, which means that the dense and convoluted politics of the pre-revolutionary, pre-civil war republican years are treated very briefly indeed.

For an impressive scholarly treatment of the early years of the anarchist movement up until the birth of anarcho-syndicalism, see the work of George Esenwein (1989). This study is especially significant given the dearth of material in English on the ideological evolution of early anarchism. As far as the later development of anarcho-syndicalism is concerned, Antonio Bar (1981) covers very well the formative years of the CNT through to the massification of the unions during World War One, basing his analysis on a vast range of primary materials. Less impressive is the rather dated work by Gerald Meaker (1974). See also Chris Ealham (2001), for a study of the impact of the war on the CNT in its Barcelona stronghold. Meanwhile, for the period thereafter see the important study by Pere Gabriel (2002), one of the leading experts on the Spanish labour movement.

When it comes to the crisis years of the 1930s, John Brademas (1953) produced the first English language study of the CNT and the anarchist movement while studying at Oxford University in the early 1950s. A conventional political and institutional history of the CNT in the republican period and the revolution, its treatment of the history of the pre-war Republic is rather uneven but there is good information on the formation of the FAI and its relationship with the wider movement. In what is a wonderfully documented survey, the focus is firmly on the split within the CNT and the ‘revolutionary gymnastics’ of the early 1930s and the unprecedented wartime decision of anarchists to enter a bourgeois government.

Brademas’s study has recently been superseded by Julián Casanova (2004), whose excellent monograph offers an overarching analysis of the CNT over the entire republican era. Benefiting from a theoretical approach grounded in recent theoretical innovations in the study of social movements, Casanova’s study is vital to any understanding of the radicalisation of the anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist movements prior to the revolution and, indeed, to the relationship between the two. Casanova’s work also renders earlier works, such as the unreliable tome by Robert Kern (1979), not to mention the detailed but ultimately incoherent and error prone study by Robert Alexander (1999), redundant.

The exclusively anarchist FAI still awaits a thorough treatment. Beyond the somewhat unsatisfactory translation of Juan Gómez Casas’s largely uncritical study (1986), we have the more recent but all-too brief critical study by Stuart Christie (2000). Chris Ealham (2005) offers an appraisal of the radicalisation of the FAI and the split within the CNT in Barcelona and arrives at conclusions that are sharply at variance with Antonio Bar (1990), who seemingly ignores the membership haemorrhage and split in the CNT in the early thirties, and maintains that the unions were always strongest when the anarchist presence was greatest.

Places

The regional bastions of the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movements have received a somewhat uneven treatment. Of the ‘revolutionary triangle’ formed by Aragon, Catalonia and Andalusia, the last, despite being the classic centre of rural anarchism, and notwithstanding the aforementioned work of Lida and Kaplan, is undoubtedly in need of further research. Of note is the wonderful local ethnographic study by Jerome K. Mintz (1982) of Casas Viejas, a village that acquired national attention in 1933 following the repression of a short-lived anarchist insurrection. Divided into three parts — the genesis of the rising, the insurrection itself and its aftermath — this book is based largely on written and oral sources, including many interviews with villagers.

This is all synthesised into a compelling vision of the cultural universe of the landless *braceros* and the attempt by anarchists to create a revolutionary culture among one of the most desperate social classes in twentieth century Europe. A more recent ethnography by J. R. Corbin (1993) is a frustrating, sometimes inaccurate and methodologically confused study that is based on a highly restricted bibliography.

Anarchism in rural Aragon, a centre of the 1936 Revolution, has, understandably, received far greater coverage than other regions. An excellent starting point is the comprehensive survey by Graham Kelsey (1991) of the republican era and early part of the revolution. We have two important eyewitness accounts of the collectivisation process from Gaston Leval (1975) and Augustin Souchy (1982), as well as the critical survey by Julián Casanova (1987).

The final point of the 'revolutionary triangle' – Catalonia – has received most attention. Joan Connelly Ullman (1968) offers a wonderful vision of the Barcelona workers' movement and its anti-clerical, anti-militarist traditions in the period leading up to the creation of the CNT. Anyone wishing to explore the development of 'Red Barcelona' must consult the work of Nick Rider. Of special mention is his remarkable, and regrettably unpublished, doctoral dissertation (1987), which is an astounding and breathtaking survey of the myriad social, cultural, economic and political factors that gave rise to the interplay between anarchism, urbanisation and mass mobilisation in Barcelona over the period from the rise of anarchism in the nineteenth century through to the first year of the Second Republic. Two articles have been extracted from Rider's dissertation: the first (1989) is a case study of an anarchist-led rent strike that electrified the Barcelona region in 1931, the second (2002) is a penetrating survey of the growth of anarchism in the Catalan capital in the early 1930s. Chris Ealham (2005) follows in the footsteps of Rider by locating the revolutionary period in the 1930s in the context of Barcelona's earlier urban development, resulting in a far-reaching analysis of the struggle for the city, the conflictive relationship between the Barcelona anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movements and the state and, moreover, social and urban relations in the Catalan capital. Also valuable are the various studies by Angel Smith (1997 and 1999), for their analysis of the relationship between anarchism and nationalism, or for the role of anarcho-syndicalism within the local labour movement (1997a and 2002). Smith develops these themes at length in his study of the period 1898-1923 (2006). Worth avoiding (although it does contain some very eye-catching graphic material) is the fundamentally disappointing work by Temma Kaplan (1992). Doubtless such a suggestive title as *Red City/Blue Period* is highly attractive to a publisher yet in practice the 'red' and 'blue' sections of the book diverge rather than dovetail. Moreover, the chronological coverage is very patchy (far too little on the late 1920s and the crucial 1930s) and the empirical basis is pretty flimsy at times.

There are some important studies that shine light on the orientation of the CNT in areas where it was less hegemonic and/or where it was obliged to co-exist with the socialist movement. Adrian Shubert (1984) provides an impressive social history of the origins of the Asturian workers' movement in terms of the labour culture and camaraderie in the mines of the region. Another pioneering and innovative survey of the Asturian CNT in action is that of Pamela Radcliff (1997), a stimulating and suggestive social history of cultural and political polarisation in Gijón based around the thesis that between 1900 and 1937 Spain witnessed a latent cultural war between rival elite, republican and proletarian hegemonic projects. Rather than resorting to grand and unsustainable theories such as the 'millenarian' approach, Radcliff's appraisal of anarchist strength in Gijón relies on the primacy of local conditions and the configuration of the local labour movement. For the tensions generated within the city and the labour movement by the

emergence of an anarchist movement in the traditional socialist stronghold of Madrid, see Santos Juliá (1986), who explains how 1920s urban development in the Spanish capital generated a new, predominantly unskilled, working class that could not easily be accommodated within a socialist movement that was dominated by a rather stuffy, craft-centred ethos. For studies with a clearer geographical sensibility and which analyse the interaction between place and social movements and other spatial dimensions, see Myrna Margulies Breitbart (1979 and 1980), Pamela Radcliff (2005) and Chris Ealham (2001; 2005a and 2005b).

Revolution

Beyond doubt the most voluminous literature relates to issues arising from the revolution and the civil war, when the CNT came to the centre of national political life. There is a translation of Peirats's synthesis of his 3-volume *magnum opus* (1990), which, although based on the material that went into this study, reveals a sharper, more defined critique of the wartime 'democratic collaboration' of the CNT leadership. Yet the classic and most full-blooded critique of the CNT during the war is that of Vernon Richards (1972), who attributed the entrance into government of CNT-FAI leaders to the deficiencies of their ideological formation. The views of some other foreign anarchists on the 1930s crisis and the 'governmentalism' of the CNT-FAI leaders can be consulted in Emma Goldman (1983) and Rudolf Rocker (1937), while there is a collection of some of the best articles from the London-based journal *Spain and the World*, see Various authors (1990). For an academic discussion of the entrance of anarchists into government, see the short piece by Burnett Bolloten and George Esenwein (1990).

While the anarchist leadership managed, for the most part, to contain opposition to its 'line', it was inevitable that the rebellion of the grassroots should find expression. One famous example was the *Columna de hierro* (Iron Column), a legendary Valencia-based anarchist militia unit which was determined to pursue a revolutionary war against fascism. Abel Paz (2006) outlines the hostility of the Iron Column to all compromise over the revolution and its hostility to the entry of the CNT into government, in an engaging account that highlights the fight against militarisation during the civil war.

Yet it was the *Amigos de Durruti* (Friends of Durruti), a small but energetic group that provided most focus for the reaction of a section of the grassroots of the anarchist movement to the wartime Popular Frontism of the leadership. In his lucid and penetrating case study of the Friends of Durruti, Agustín Guillamón (1996) begins by outlining the reasons for anarchist collaboration with the republican state after the July revolution. In a clear rejoinder to Richards, Guillamón postulates that it was precisely because of anarchist principles — especially the rejection of a programme for the creation of an armed revolutionary power — that the CNT-FAI hierarchy proved unable to respond to the fundamental challenges posed by the revolutionary dynamics of the thirties. The true merit of Guillamón's study is that it locates the Friends of Durruti within the wider context of the crisis in the development of Spanish anarchism. According to the Friends of Durruti, the theoretical basis of Iberian anarchism was undernourished: 'The CNT was utterly devoid of revolutionary theory. We did not have a concrete programme. We had no idea where we were going.'² It is worth remembering, therefore, that for all its many supporters and activists, the Spanish movement failed to produce a major anarchist theoretician and

² *Los Amigos de Durruti, Hacia la nueva revolución*, Barcelona, n.p., 1937, p.15.

remained highly dependent on the oeuvre of foreign ideologues for its inspiration. Accordingly, while the years before 1936 might be considered 'heroic', to borrow Bookchin's adjective, in the sense that the anarchists fought a determined campaign to endure periods of clandestinity and semi-legality in order to preserve their space within society, this rearguard struggle for organisational survival conditioned the development of their movement, endowing it with an essentially defensive remit that paved the way for compromise and defeat after the 1936 Revolution. Indeed, by 1936 large sections of the CNT-FAI were dominated by a ghetto mentality that prioritised the primacy of action over theoretical reflection. In practical terms this dulled the conceptual and tactical acumen of the anarchist leadership, which had a poor grasp of the wider political context. It was these shortcomings — clearly in evidence from the 1920s onwards — which culminated in the political crisis of the movement during 1936-39.

Guillamón is mainly concerned with the Friends of Durruti's attempt to transcend the tactical and theoretical deficits of the CNT-FAI: the absence of a coherent revolutionary theory and practice. Therein the most significant element of the politics of the Friends of Durruti was their appreciation of the role of some form of revolutionary power; it was precisely this issue that was ignored by the official anarchist leadership and which led to the paradox of 'anarchist' ministers sitting in bourgeois governments in Barcelona and Madrid. Unlike many anarchists, the Friends of Durruti were ready to kill several sacred cows following the retreat from revolution after July 1936 and in this sense the group represented a watershed in the development of libertarian thought in Spain. Thus, they upheld a new revolutionary praxis, calling for an exclusive proletarian power (a workers', peasants' and soldiers' assembly) and a revolutionary junta that would physically contain its political and social enemies through sweeping repressive measures. As such, the Friends of Durruti Group manifesto (1978) is of immense interest for those concerned with the evolution of anarchism during the civil war.

Another classic intervention in the polemic surrounding the revolution and its treatment, or rather lack of coverage, in liberal histories of the civil war was made by Noam Chomsky (1969). The revolution and its eclipse is certainly the abiding concern of the polemical work of Burnett Bolloten (1961, 1979 and 1991). When working in Spain as a journalist covering the civil war for the North American press, Bolloten collected a wealth of newspapers and books which later formed the basis of his work on the social revolution and the internal politics of the republican zone. Bolloten's unwavering emphasis on the machinations of the communists has invited criticisms that he had a Cold War agenda. To be sure, while the communists increased their power massively within the republican state, particularly in the military and police apparatus, we should not also lose sight of the counter-revolutionary mobilisation of other groups within the republican zone. All the same, the final version of Bollotens' study (1991) is a monumental work that deserves a careful and critical reading.

A far more rounded and nuanced discussion of the issues surrounding war and revolution can be found in Ronald Fraser (1984). Indeed, Fraser's monumental oral history (1979) is one of the masterpieces of civil war history. Based on some 300 interviews with protagonists, including several CNT-FAI people and grassroots participants in the collectivisation process, this book is critical of and yet sympathetic to the anarchists. Of special interest is one of the appendices that analyses the orientation of the anarchist movement in the prelude to the civil war. When it comes to the final confrontation between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces during the so-called 'May Days' in Barcelona, see the conflicting yet equally essential accounts in Helen Graham (1999) and Augustin Souchy et. al. (1987).

As we have already seen, Spanish anarchism has attracted commentaries that have ranged from the apposite to the outright bizarre. Perhaps the most outlandish approach of all is the inchoate and confused article by Juan McIver (n.d.), in which the author asks: 'Was there a social revolution in Spain in 1936-39?' Well, clearly there was a revolution and a revolutionary process, albeit was cut short by a civil war that was quickly internationalised, after which the creation of universal felicity in Spain was always going to prove problematic. Guided by a Tolstoyan-pacifist perspective, all McIver can see is the nastiness that accompanied the civil war, including 'executions without the slightest semblance of a trial' (n.d.: 64). While one imagines McIver gazing at the violence with his hands partially covering his eyes, he is confident enough to tell us that republican terror equalled that of Franco. And within this 'terror', in McIver's view, we find the rough justice of the revolutionary groups that drowned their dreams of social change in blood.

Another curious study, although better documented than McIver, is that by Michael Seidman (1991), who, following extensive archival research, spent four hundred pages explaining that workers do not necessarily enjoy working, something many young people discover shortly after taking on their first paper round. Yet Seidman goes further than this: his study is interspersed with various critiques of labour history, the validity of class as a category and the 'productivist' utopia of the left. In sum, he concludes that many workers were hostile to 'the values of the Spanish Revolution, which glorified the development of modern productive forces and production itself...' (1991: 169)

Anyone seeking a more conventional discussion of the collectivisation during the 1930s should see Sam Dolgoff (1974) and Gaston Leval (1975). A marvellous and sensitive eye-witness account of the collectives and the revolution by an independent Marxist and sociologist was left by Franz Borkenau (1937). Later studies of revolutionary Barcelona include those by Antoni Castells Duran (2002) and Chris Ealham (2005a). Martha Ackelsberg (1993) offers a gendered perspective on the 1936 revolution. Ackelsberg has also produced a series of important studies of *Mujeres Libres*, the anarcho-feminist group that emerged during the civil war (1984; 1985; 1991; 2000) For surveys of the literature on the revolution, see Walther Bernecker (1980) and Chris Ealham (1996b).

Exile and resistance

For the CNT in exile, José Peirats (1993) is essential reading, while Sharif Gemie (2006) touches upon some areas of interest in a suggestive article. For a poignant autobiography of an exiled anarchist activist see Miguel García (1972). A veteran of the civil war anarchist militias, García was part of a resistance group that smuggled Allied airmen and Jews from France into Spain during World War Two. With the war's end, he maintained the resistance struggle against the regime until being captured in 1949 and sentenced to death, a punishment later commuted to 20 years imprisonment. For anarchist resistance during the Franco years, see also the life and writings of Antonio Téllez Solá, who emerged from the resistance struggle to become its historian. Among his works in English see his fascinating study of Francisco Ponzán Vidal (1997), a fearless anarchist guerrilla and lynchpin of the trans-Pyrenean group to which García belonged. Also available are his brief study of an audacious attempt to assassinate Franco from the air (2006), a study of Francesc Sabater, the most celebrated of all the anti-Francoist guerrillas (1985), and a more general survey of the resistance to Franco (2002).

After the collapse of Francoism, the CNT was never to regain its former strength, its decline conditioned by a complex array of factors, such as the changed industrial and social structures, the transition from subsistence to consumer capitalism, the spread of welfarism and educational provision, and so on. More work needs to be done in this area. Meanwhile, Lester Golden (1979) offers a valuable assessment of the CNT in the immediate aftermath of Franco's death, as do Andrew Giles-Peters (1978) and Albert Meltzer (1978). Meanwhile, Maggie Torres (1998) discusses the emergence of 'autonomous' groups that owed a significant debt to their anarchist predecessors.

Themes

There is a rich array of studies dealing with specific themes and aspects relating to the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movements. Recent analysis has moved towards a consideration of the internal dynamics of the CNT. The innovative work by Mercedes Vilanova has been little translated but there is an article (1992) that shows how anarchist activists had a higher level of general culture than the average worker. Chris Ealham (2001 and 2002) explores the distinct levels of militancy across activists and sympathisers within revolutionary unions. Several studies have dealt with the issue of violence, such as Julián Casanova (2005), Chris Ealham (1993 and 1995) and Walther Bernecker (1982). Carolyn Boyd (1976) has written on the educational mission of the anarchists that was so central to their practice. Richard Cleminson has dealt extensively with health issues (1994, 1995, 1995a) and offers a full commentary on anarchism and sexology (2000 and 2000a). Martha Ackselberg (1985 and 1993) and Shirley Fredricks (1981) have examined anarchist attitudes toward feminism. Fredericks focuses on Federica Montseny, who became Spain's first female Minister in 1936, and who warrants further research. Chris Ealham (2000a) analyses anarchist strategies relating to unemployment.

Anarchist lives

One of the most striking aspects of anarchist history in Spain is the incredible commitment and selflessness of activists and the remarkable lives they lived in their struggle against tyranny. Equally striking is the rich autobiographical current within the anarchist movement, with prominent figures such as Anselmo Lorenzo and Angel Pestaña through to Peirats, all favouring the genre and penning autobiographical works. Sadly, only one such autobiography has, to date, been translated into English, that of Baltasar Porcel (1999), which provides a wonderful vision of the rich cultural world of a grassroots activist that was preserved in the face of systematic harassment from the authorities, spells in jail, police beatings and brutalising work experiences.

An abridged and rather poorly translated version of Abel Paz's biography of Buenaventura Durruti (1976), arguably the most famous of all Spanish anarchists, has now been superseded by a new translation of the last and revised Spanish edition (2006). Durruti's life history is especially poignant, not least because he was expelled from UGT for practising direct action during a strike, an episode that underscores the entirely inappropriate nature of socialist tactics to Spanish labour disputes. For a critical survey of rank-and-file anarchist life histories, see Chris Ealham (2001). We can be certain that the titanic struggles of the Spanish anarchist movement will continue to inspire more such studies. The great pity is that the pen of José Peirats is now still.

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NOTES

Chapter One: The Valencia Economic Forum

By mid-1938 the economic activities of the CNT unions were exceptionally substantial. For one thing, a new Regional Peasant Congress was held in Catalonia. It sat down to business on 8 January. A report from the Regional Peasant Committee dealt with the following topics:

- (a) A Higher Agricultural Council
- (b) The decree on land redistribution
- (c) Collectives
- (d) Agricultural unions.

The chapter headings of the report covered virtually every item on the congress agenda.

The Higher Agricultural Council was the supervisory and arbitration agency in disputes arising out of the labyrinthine accumulated agrarian legislation. It comprised representatives from every trade union and political camp in Catalonia and thus had a political complexion at odds with its technical nature. As a result, the Council was criticised for being a hindrance rather than the solution to the problems in Catalan agriculture.

Congress agreed to amend the structure of the Council, namely, to exclude the representation awarded to non-peasant groups, an exception being made of the representative from the Generalitat's Agriculture department. The latter would chair the Council and have a casting vote in case of deadlock. Also, as many experts or assessors as might be deemed advisable could be seconded to the Council, without any rights to participate or cast any votes in its deliberations.

A decree had been promulgated, dealing, supposedly, with 'land redistribution'. In this 'redistribution' the decree awarded preferential status to individual cultivators who had occupied land. Given that in many villages lands had been snatched away from the collectives because their possession of them had been deemed at odds with the law, the congress resolved, by way of a pre-requisite for acceptance of the decree, that collectivists be acknowledged in their right to occupy lands in the possession of individual cultivators, and that the lands wrested from them be returned to their possession. This redistribution was to take place without paying the compensation that the decree recommended to the former owners.

As for the thorny question of the Agricultural Unions, the outlook was still that the make-up of their juntas was not proportionate with the relative numerical strength of the factions involved. The congress took the line that the holding of fresh general elections so that these juntas could be fairly composed was a matter of urgency. It also criticised the shortcomings and abuses of the Agricultural Unions' juntas, many of whose members were accused of having indulged in 'shameful speculation' and 'scandalous dealings' to the advantage of 'favoured friends' and to the detriment of the peasants and the consumer. The retort of many individualist peasants to this political favouritism was to refuse to hand over their surplus produce to the appropriate Agricultural Union and to enter, directly or indirectly into black market deals with the consumers.

The Agricultural Unions represented a sort of cooperative institution, traditional in Catalonia as well as in most other countries, for the procurement of fertilisers, insecticides and tools, and

for the better administration of the marketable portion of harvests. Unscrupulous dealings had turned them into instruments of the usual political parasites.

Since May 1936 and the CNT's last Extraordinary National Congress, there had been no comprehensive consultation with its unions. The wartime circumstances continued to prevent that. Half of Spain under enemy occupation was a serious drawback to any thought of a new, regular congress. Three important areas of CNT strength — Aragón, Andalusia and Galicia — were completely or partly under enemy occupation. In the North, the Asturian, Santander and Basque redoubts had been virtually cut off since the outbreak of hostilities. Upwards of one third of the Confederation's membership had been rendered hors de combat in July 1936. The outlook was rendered even more dismal by military setbacks suffered in Andalusia and the complete loss of the North.

Against this backdrop, the idea of an extended national economic plenum was mooted at the end of 1937. Scheduled for 1 January 1938, it was not able to proceed until 15 January.

What was proposed was the most comprehensive possible consultation regarding problems of an economic nature falling within the strict purview of the confederation. Some statements by the CNT's general secretary confirmed this intent.¹ The plenum would tackle certain fundamental issues; it aimed to demonstrate the maturity acquired by the CNT over 18 months of constructive experimentation in the various facets of the economy (production, technology and administration) and resolve these very problems 'in a detailed, clear and positive way'. Another aim was to show that the workers had it in them to find solutions to the problems created by the situation, facing up to the requisite sacrifices and surmounting what shortcomings there were: to grapple with the problems basically pertinent to it, in pursuit of the collective interest of the labouring people. This would be achieved by studying the economy in its entirety and devising the most appropriate and rational solution 'quite removed from the war and politicking'.

An editorial in *Solidaridad Obrera* a few days prior to the gathering declared:

'The plenum to be held on Saturday in Valencia specifically proposes to make this correction. What are the fundamental flaws in need of elimination? The corporative selfishness of certain undertakings and collectives, the absence of planned production, an unwarranted disparity in terms of wages, the existence of industries which can be regarded as redundant and the existence of other necessary ones whose survival is precarious, whilst there are tremendously prosperous undertakings, administrative dispersion, falling productivity levels, etc. All of these faults, largely attributable to the circumstances indicated above, are covered by the plenum's agenda and have been the subject of conscientious scrutiny by unions and Industrial Federations, and there are motions framed offering solutions to specific problems...'²

There is no comprehensive memorandum concerning the course of this important get together. What we know of the proceedings has come in the form of the all too fragmentary reports in the CNT press and a pamphlet issued by the National Committee, setting out the resolutions passed.³ Those resolutions were taken in the name of 1,700,000 members. *Solidaridad Obrera* of 18 January reports that more than 800 delegates took part in the debates. The plenum, held in Valencia's Serrano Theatre, was, in the organisational jargon, a National Plenum of Local and Area Federations. And it is understood that those Local Federations that were, for various reasons,

¹ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 9 January 1938

² *Solidaridad Obrera*, 13 January 1938

³ CNT, *Acuerdos del Peno Económico Nacional Ampliado*, Barcelona, n.d.

unable to attend, were represented by their respective Area Committees. Thus, the unions were not directly represented. As is *de rigueur* at events of this sort, the Regional Committees and the National Committee were in attendance. The Regional Committees of Catalonia, the Centre, Andalusia, Levante, Extremadura and Aragón were there, as were the National Federations of Industry.

According to the digest mentioned earlier, only three votes were held during the 21 sittings of the plenum. The first was on Item 4 ('Creation of Work Inspectors') when 516 votes were cast for the motion, 120 against and 82 abstained: the second concerned Item 6 ('Advisability of the Establishment of a Trade Union Bank') — 581 votes for, 60 against, with 74 abstentions; and the third vote was on Item 12, which dealt with a revamping of the Federations of Industry. On this item voting was on the proposition (from the National Committee) and on a separate motion. The outcome was as follows: votes in favour of the separate motion, 352; in favour of the proposition, 226. There were 115 abstentions. The remaining propositions were carried unanimously. The procedure adopted was so-called proportional voting. Due to rigid application of the majority principle (x many members = x many votes), village unions, having smaller membership numbers, were being swamped at congresses and in referenda by the bigger trade union battalions. The Extraordinary Congress held in 1931, out of consideration for the minorities, had introduced the so-called proportional method of voting (one vote for each specified number of members, on a sliding scale).

The extended plenum adopted this practice at the 1931 Conservatorio Congress, but stipulated that it would not obtain in subsequent plenums. This is how the arrangement worked out in practice:

Membership:

- 1–500 members 1 vote
- 1–1,500 members 2 votes
- 1–3,000 members 3 votes
- 1–6,000 members 4 votes
- 1–10,000 members 5 votes
- 1–15,000 members 6 votes
- 1–25,000 members 7 votes
- 25,000 + members 8 votes.

The extended plenum stretched out the graduation as follows:

Membership:

- Up to 35,000 8 votes
- Up to 45,000 9 votes
- Up to 55,000 10 votes
- Up to 65,000 11 votes
- Up to 75,000 12 votes
- Up to 85,000 13 votes
- Up to 95,000 14 votes
- Up to 105,000 15 votes
- Up to 115,000 16 votes
- Up to 130,000 17 votes
- Up to 160,000 18 votes
- Up to 200,000 19 votes

Up to 200,000 + 20 votes.

At this plenum, one of the anomalies evident was the National Committee's prior formulation of motions covering every item on the agenda. This was at odds with traditional practice. Although all of the motions ready-formulated by the National Committee were offered for discussion by the delegates attending the plenum, this procedure might, had the circumstances been different, have been denounced as irregular and contrived. Another irregular practice never before countenanced was the National Committee's participation in the deliberations on every debate, and most especially its advocacy of its motions.

Let us move on to the resolutions of the plenum.

Item 4 on the agenda — strictly speaking, the first item — encapsulated a preoccupation with discipline analogous with the military discipline on the battlefronts. 'We know', said the National Committee in its digest, 'that the vast majority of workers and militants have done their duty and have sought by every means to intensify output. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that there have been minorities which, utterly irresponsibly and not appreciating what they did, have not put into rearguard activities the effort which might have been expected.' The following motion was designed to lead to the establishment of Work Inspectors empowered to offer guidance and inflict sanctions on workers and firms under their jurisdiction.

'The working party appointed to frame a motion on Item 4 of the agenda, referring to the setting up of Work Inspectors, believes it encapsulates the aspirations ventilated at the plenum by the various delegates who have taken part in the debate, when it proposes:

1. At the instigation of the unions and through the Regional, Area and Local Federations, the National Federations of Industry shall appoint the requisite technical delegates to inspect and offer guidance to the economic units under their jurisdiction.

2. These delegates shall propose norms designed to offer effective guidance to the various industrial units with a view to bettering their economy and administration. They shall not be empowered to act on their own authority: they will have responsibility for implementing and seeing to the implementation of the dispositions of the councils, to which councils they will be answerable.

3. For the sake of greater efficiency and purpose and in those instances where this may be necessary, the councils which will have appointed them shall move the application of pertinent sanctions against agencies or individuals which may have earned them through dereliction of their duties.

4. The organisation shall delegate appropriate powers of correction to those agencies that must make use of those powers, these being prescribed under a set regulation.

These dispositions are designed to achieve just one thing and refer to those industries that are in the hands of the workers.

For the working party:

The National Peasant Federation; the Regional Committee of Aragón, Rioja and Navarre; the National Transport Federation; the Regional Committee of Catalonia; the National Federation of Chemical Industries; the Regional Committee of Levante; the Weaving, Textile and Ancillary Federation; the Regional Committee of the Centre; the National Health Federation.'

The reader conversant with the Confederation's organisational procedures will have problems understanding how representatives of Regional Committees could be signatories to the motions placed before a Plenum of Local and Area Federations.

Item 5 was designed to regulate, so far as this was feasible, the different modes and systems of payment, sometimes found within the same trade and locality. We have referred already to the ups and downs of the question of payment. In keeping with the egalitarian climate of the early months of the revolution, the notion of the family wage quickly made headway. However, there was still the thorny problem outstanding of the payment of technicians. According to the resumé in *Solidaridad Obrera*, Mariano R. Vázquez declared 'that the agronomist cannot be paid the same as the labourer, for it is not the wage of the latter that matters but what he produces...He maintained that the uniform family wage is anti-humanistic in that it damages the economy.'⁴

This matter was settled with the endorsement of the following proposition:

'The undersigned working party, having given consideration to the various opinions expressed at the plenum and having read with interest all of the written submissions presented, considers:

1. That to ensure greater efficacy in the procedure adopted, it is necessary that observance of this procedure should be forthcoming from the two trade union associations, the UGT and the CNT, and that our efforts should be so directed.

2. That having no desire to negate the basic precepts which have always informed our organisation, and agreeing that the family-type wage is most consonant with those precepts, we advocate adoption of that system of reward, in accordance with the percentages and formula set out in the analytical clause, with regard to those Industries, National Federations, etc. which may not be in a position to adopt a more comprehensive system of family payment.

3. That, acknowledging complementary needs among the various professional categories, we also advocate circumstantial recognition of same, albeit that our aim for the future is to do away with trade-based pay differentials where the workers are concerned.

Consequently, in keeping with those elementary findings, we propose to the plenum:

1. That a professional rate be adopted and, we suggest, adopted by the National Federations of Industry, albeit matched to their economic potentials in the following manner, taking X as the basic initial figure required to cover the producer's needs.

Basic grade. Unskilled labourer, X

First higher grade. Tradesman, X + 20%

Second higher grade. Specialist tradesman, X + 40%

Third higher grade. Assistant technician, X + 70%

Fourth higher grade. Supervisory technician, X + 100%.

These percentages are taken to be applicable, working from the basic grade figure upwards.

Firms are to supply technical personnel with whatever facilities they need for study and research, setting aside funding for this quite apart from the allotted pay rate.

We leave it to the Technical Councils of the National Federations of Industry, given the appreciable differences of the skills required by their work, to determine the percentages and grades of apprentices.

2. The family supplement is accepted, provided it be applied in the following manner:

- (a) Firms shall contribute a certain percentage of the total wages bill to the establishment of the Family Compensation Fund. These funds are to be based locally, all of the funds in one area being linked up one with another.

- (b) A National Plenum of Federations of Industry, following compilation of detailed statistics and technical-economic research, shall determine the percentage contribution towards the Fam-

⁴ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 18 January 1938

ily Compensation Fund and the rules governing the spending of these. The resolutions of this plenum shall be presented to the UGT Executive so that they may be jointly implemented by both trade union families.

(c) The family award allotted and determined by the appropriate National Federation is to be paid from the compensation fund, which is to be set up by the National Federation, with the endorsement of the National Economic Council.

(d) The Federations of Industry will have to set the maximum applicable figure for family income in each region eligible for supplementary payment.

(e) The CNT will champion this argument so as to ensure that the family supplement is established for all workers without exception.

Before any proposal can be put into effect, one needs to have access to the requisite organs that can make it fully effective.

It is the view of the working party that the only organs qualified to pronounce with finality upon the rate of recompense for work performed, as well as to prescribe the procedure and sums to be contributed towards the coffers of the family supplement fund, are the National Federations of Industry.

The National Federations of Industry are to hold regional congresses at which the special conditions that may characterise the economic circumstances of each of them may be examined, and they are to indicate the special features that may distinguish some areas established by the relevant National Federation of Industry in respect of the cost of living in some villages as against others; they shall prescribe the appropriate grading so as to lay down a scale of categories and pay corresponding to each one of these.

Acknowledging the importance of female labour in some regions, they are to make a prolonged study of this matter and work towards resolution of it by linking it in with the pay scale outlined in this motion.

Upon completion of this work, which can be broadened to cover whatever the Federations of Industry may deem suitable, with an eye to arriving at the figures required if the organisation is to be able to formulate a precise evaluation of the nation's economy as a whole, the National Committee is to summon a plenum of the National Federations of Industry, at which the sole and exclusive business shall be the possible implementation of the pay scale, together with the relevant family supplement by means of the organism established for that purpose, which organism will have to be run and monitored by the two trade union associations or by ourselves alone, should our sister association fail to embrace the solution we have provisionally formulated to the question of recompense for work done.

In keeping with the second of our considerations, be it clear that if the formula whereby workers are to be rewarded according to their national and professional needs is to be put into effect, it will be crucial that the National Federations interested in the adoption of just such a procedure commit themselves, in conjunction with the national economy, to the ground leading to the introduction of that arrangement.

The working party's understanding is that the organisation should not be daunted by the obstacles which may be placed in its path...obstacles which are in any case natural, if we consider the situation the country finds itself in, and the politico-social spectrum involved in the transformation of Spain, and that in the face of these and remembering that the resolutions adopted are designed to move gradually towards the goal of our objective aims, they should redouble their energy and the crucial enthusiasm which may lead to ultimate success. Valencia, 21 January 1938.

On behalf of Catalonia (the l'Hospitalet local federation), José Abella; on behalf of the Centre (the Regional Committee), C. Alonso; on behalf of Aragón (Regional Committee), Sigfrido Català; on behalf of Andalusia (the Regional Committee), Domingo Martínez.'

When attention turned to Item 6 of the agenda, controversy raged between the advocates and opponents of the establishment of a trade union-type banking institution. The chairman (David Antona) put the following formula to the vote: 'Is the creation of a Trade Union Bank deemed appropriate?' The local federations of Igualada, Badalona and Colmenar Viejo came out in favour: the local federations of Madrid, the Andalusian regional federation of the Banking and Exchange Union, and the Madrid Regional Federation of the Construction and Timber Industry came out against. Then up spoke the National Committee (through Cardona Rosell):

'He said that this item was included — besides the committee's view — due to requests and suggestions made by many of the entities and organisations of the Confederation. This Trade Union Bank would be in charge of orchestrating other banks. It would perform ordinary banking duties, but would have its own view concerning the manner in which credit commissions should be handled and how other kindred functions should be performed. In relation to the socialised and collectivised industries, we would offer a service that the bourgeois banks never could.'⁵

The National Committee's contribution over, there was further insistence on the matter's being put to a vote; the outcome of which we have noted above. This is the working party's proposition:

'The plenum, having acknowledged the desirability of establishing a Trade Union Bank and this working party having taken cognisance of the studies, treatises and suggestions submitted by the Confederation's National Committee and by various delegations, we propose to the plenum that it adopt the following accords:

1. The plenum is agreed upon the creation of a Trade Union Bank to be known as the Iberian Trade Union Bank, wherein equal shares in the trade union working capital of the bank shall be set aside for the two union associations, CNT and UGT, the prior consent of the other association not being indispensable before it may begin operations immediately, and this bank must be governed by such statutes and norms of internal regulation as shall be drawn up, within the space of 30 days following the conclusion of this plenum, by the Special Commission indicated in this accord, said commission being empowered to determine who is to endorse the bank's foundation charter, occupy the positions of president and vice-president of the national representative body of the bank, to appoint the comrade to take up the office of director general of the bank and to make those initial appointments which it may be deemed advisable not to delegate to the president, vice-president or director-general of the Banco Sindical Ibérico (Iberian Trade Union Bank). Such appointments are to be made known to the organisation so that whatever objections may be deemed pertinent may be made before the probationary period has elapsed.

2. Said commission is to set the amount of trade union share capital, as well as the manner of its contribution or formation, and fix the manner in which the workers or representatives of the trade union and economic bodies resident in the district of these boards are to participate in the governing bodies of the bank, whether on its national board, regional boards, area boards or branch boards, such decisions being subject to final endorsement by a National Plenum of Regional Committees.

3. The Special Commission referred to in the first accord is to be made up of the following representatives:

⁵ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 18 January 1938

- (a) The secretary of the Confederation's National Committee, who will chair the commission.
- (b) The secretary of the Economic Section of the National Committee.
- (c) The secretary of the Banking Subsection of the National Federation of Banking, Insurance and Allied Workers.

(d) The secretary of the Confederation's Economic Committee in Barcelona.

(e) One delegate from Catalonia, the Centre, Levante, Andalusia, Aragón and Extremadura.

4. The plenum declares that the local federations and the CNT Regional Committees, based in those localities where the Trade Union Bank may launch its first operations, are to contribute such portion of trade union share capital as may be indicated to them by the Special commission mentioned in the previous accord. This same Commission is empowered to set the scale of contributions required of any other areas that may apply to have one or several ranches of the aforementioned bank set up within their boundaries.

Valencia, 23 January 1938'

The motion passed on Item 7 was preceded by a lengthy preamble dealing with the casual treatment that the CNT had hitherto meted out to the matters relating to insurance. 'Repeatedly', that preamble stated, 'we have argued the line that in the society towards which we are headed and whose foundations are even now being laid, security would render insurance redundant, and that insurance is merely the improvement introduced into capitalist economics by the desire, somehow, to approximate the attainment of aims that are socially and humanly monumentally significant, albeit with the underlying blight that is a feature of every capitalist creature connected with the existence of the means of exchange and wage slavery.' It went on to point out that since 19 July the workers, upon coming into possession of the means of production, had been concerned to find a solution to the problem of providence 'only insofar as it relates to the risks which might apply to the workers of their respective industries or entities.' But mutual societies had confined their interests to illness, working accidents, retirement from work and maternity, not expanding into general insurance matters like fire insurance, vehicle insurance, plant insurance, life insurance, etc. Thus with the bourgeois institution of insurance lingering on '...not merely in essence, but also with justification, in that the proletariat's efforts in that direction had failed to match the progress achieved in other theatres of the economy.' The dual circumstance of the progressive spread of socialisation and the runaway, irreversible economic crisis of the bourgeois institution of insurance lent an especial complexity to the situation. 'Some socialised industries are already practising the various forms of insurance in a comprehensive fashion in keeping with the policy that some day, perhaps not long off, it may become general and properly perfected, once socialisation becomes widespread in the country.' These industries covered their risks 'by adding to their normal running costs a sum to cover expenditure on accident payments, pensions, etc.' and carried out a clean-up and inspection of their industry that cut the number of normal risks. 'Let us note the case', the preamble goes on to state, 'of one industry that invests upwards of half a million pesetas a year to cover pensions, retirement allowances, nursing care, sickness payments, help for accident victims, etc... However, as the state continues to retain in force in the insurance field the legislation antedating 19 July 1936, it demands and even goes so far as to make demands of the socialised industries which exercise such exemplary oversight of assistance and social providence matters, which the state, in an inferior way, undertakes to see to by levying the costs or premiums of the respective insurances.' This trajectory was the fruit of the disparity between revolutionary achievement and state legislation.

Here is the prescriptive part of the motion:

‘... (a) CNT representation shall be sought on each and every one of the official state bodies, autonomous regional governments, provincial and municipal councils of loyalist Spain which may have charge of overseeing, directing or advising in the management and execution of national, regional, provincial, local or area policy regarding insurance and social providence in any of their forms. Such representation may never be inferior to the representation already enjoyed by, or likely to be awarded to, the other trade union association.

(b) Amendment is to be sought to current legislation on insurance so that the proletariat may not be confronted with difficulties in providing the most comprehensive social protection for the worker, in the socialised or collectivised industries and entities, such entities needing to be assured (once they have complied with those requirements technically deemed indispensable to effective performance of the mission assumed) of exemption from the obligation to pay those dues or premiums which are most lawfully payable; but ensuring that this reform favours those workers’ collectives which can show annually that they have, as comprehensively as the official institutions, attended to the risks assumed and whose economic investment for the year may have exceeded the sum that might have been levied upon them as dues or premiums lawfully required of them in respect of payment of compulsory official insurance cover.

(c) There shall be negotiated an immediate suspension of all proceedings initiated against collectivised or socialised collectives, cooperatives, industries etc., for lack of cover owing to default upon dues or premiums payable for compulsory official insurance cover, regardless of the period of time to which the due date of said payments or premiums may refer.

(d) All proceedings and cases pending against the bodies covered by the provisions of the previous clause are to be reviewed in the light of the amendment made to governmental legislation as indicated in clause (b).

(e) The requisite steps shall be taken so that each and every one of the private agencies engaged in insurance in any way...unless said agencies are wholly comprised of, and run by workers affiliated to the CNT and UGT,...operate in accordance with the proportionality and targets which these two associations may mutually accept as nationally binding.

(f) Immediate payments shall be sought to current legislation on accidents at work, to the effect that payment of the obligatory minimum pensions due to accident victims may be assured by methods consistent with the circumstances prevailing in the country and with the ongoing progress of socialisation, without any need for capital sums to be set aside to earn interest with which to meet payment of such pensions.

(g) Efforts are to be made to ensure the lifting or reduction of contributions and charges levied upon mutual associations, cooperatives and entities comprised of freely associated workers, collectives and unions affiliated to either of the two existing union federations, so that they may operate in accordance with the social legislation in force at any given time: ensuring that our own trade union federation may at all times have a direct involvement in the framing of such social legislation.

(h) We must pursue the most comprehensive overhaul and transformation of so-called general insurance, adapting the calculation of their mathematical reserves or providence guarantees (or funds) payable to accident victims (by means of adjustment, modification or alteration or by making them conditional upon the nature of the valuables or assets involved), to the socio-economic panorama created by the revolution begun on 19 July 1936 and continued forward through the socialisation currently in progress. Consequently, we will arrive at a variation of the sorts of premium payable on various types of insurance, and the fullest freedom should be afforded in the

devising of new forms of policy for bodies already extant or which may be formed in the future, following their expert investigation, building up a minimum social fund capable of guaranteeing that they operate as normal.

Coordination, supervision and direction of CNT bodies involved in insurance and social providence, or which engage in such operations on their own behalf. The solutions we propose, for satisfactory compliance with the aims outlined, consist of the definition of three distinct spheres of activity, and the perfect matching of the first two of these with the third, thereby arriving, at some date in the future which cannot be predicted (whether in the short-term or in the long-term, though we can even now be specific about the circumstances which must attend it) at the establishment of a single, national agency to oversee the entire set-up and capable of handling every conceivable sort of insurance and social providence and appropriate to the proletariat and to the revolutionary economy, the existence of said powerful agency being adjusted to the contention implicit in this motion, as set out in the preamble and in the conclusions to the first chapter.

Let us now proceed to spell out the solution that we deem appropriate in each of these spheres of activity:

(a) CNT bodies or joint CNT-UGT bodies set up to cater for social providence or insurance activities or which, while not expressly formed for that purpose, do themselves perform said functions.

Those unions or federations which themselves (or through their collective enterprises, etc.) engage in any form of insurance, will have to furnish the agency cited in clause (c) above, with whatever statistics it may require of them, and will also be required to submit to whatever inspection said agency may see fit to mount of their health facilities, or statistical, administrative and technical services. Likewise they will have obligation to introduce whatever modifications the aforementioned agency may recommend as necessary, so that the insurance functions assumed by the relevant collective or industrial union, etc., can proceed with what is deemed the requisite guarantees for the insured workers and for the economic stability of the industry concerned. If, following inspection and a follow-up technical inquiry, and the determination of the necessary modifications, the industry concerned (be it collective, union or federation) should fail to introduce those modifications, it shall be barred from engaging in those forms of insurance cover. The agreement may be placed in cold storage until such time as a final decision has been made by the national leadership of the agency referred to in subsection (c) above, and, should that decision be felt unfair, the matter may be referred to the CNT Economic Council (8th Department of the CNT National Committee's Economic Section).

Those workers' mutual associations formed on the basis of CNT or UGT-CNT workers, or run by trade union representatives from those centrals, or in any way supervised by them, whatever types of social securities or providence functions they offer in return for payment of premiums or dues either by the beneficiaries directly or by the insured unions, or industries, etc., will likewise be required to furnish the said agency at intervals with whatever information it may seek and will submit to any inspection visits which that agency may deem necessary for their healthy or technical operations, etc.

They are similarly obliged to comply with the instructions of that agency in the following two areas:

(a) Modifications to be introduced by way of guarantee for services or for workers, insured persons or beneficiaries generally: adjustments to premiums or payments with a view to reducing or increasing...as the case may be...those in force at the time of inspection and which are shown

from the technical point of view to be greater than required for the normal, efficient operation of the mutual association or mutuality concerned: whatever overhauling of auxiliary or other services may be advisable on technical or practical grounds so as to make those services more economical and administration of them more elastic and straightforward.

(b) Amalgamation of mutual funds with others already in existence within the same municipal, regional or national borders, either straight away without intermediate stages, or through a planned series of progressive territorial expansions, so that the facilities on offer at the old level of operation can more readily be improved and not reduced, thereby achieving a streamlining or reduction in overall costs and a positive expansion in the mutual fund's services and facilities through amalgamation with a number of already existing funds.

The regulations set out above for mutual funds are, of necessity, applicable to CNT-run ones and also to joint funds in which both union federations are involved, if they wish to go on enjoying our official involvement.

Establishment of an Insurance Technical Advisory agency to link up with official, private, and CNT bodies involved in the insurance and social providence field, so that each and every one of the aims laid down for a Trade Union Insurance Administration Agency in the National Committee's proposition as attached to the suggestions of this working party, may be fulfilled.

The branches or offshoots of the Insurance Technical Consultancy are to be set out and governed according to rules that may be adopted by the agency indicated in subsection (c), and of which the Insurance Technical Consultancy will be merely a sub-branch or department.

The agency mentioned in subsection (c) below, has authority to extend or amend the functions or legal standing of the Insurance Technical Consultancy.

(c) With the powers and purpose indicated in the same subsection of the enclosed proposition submitted by the National Committee, a Mutual and Insurance Section is to be set up, as a subordinate part of the National Committee of the CNT's Economic Council: it is to be organised on a national scale and will be governed and orientated by the aforementioned Economic Council. In its operations, this section will strive, insofar as it may, to achieve initiatives of immediate import to workers, pending achievement of the ultimate objective prescribed in the final paragraph of the report submitted by the National Committee.

The appropriate draft is to be placed before the organisation by the latter when the time is right.

Valencia, 21 January 1938. On behalf of the National Federation of Bank, Savings, Insurance and Allied Workers, Mariano Cardona Rosell; on behalf of the Badalona Local Union Federation, Ramiro Colell; on behalf of the National Health Union, A. García Lorent; on behalf of the Barcelona Local Union Federation, Gonzalo Aubray; on behalf of the Valencia Local Union Federation, E. Navarro Beltrán; on behalf of the Madrid Local Union Federation, Jesús de Asusmendi.'

The resolution on Item 8 of the agenda, notes three reasons for reduction in the number of CNT publications. The first is the paper shortage, the lack of raw materials or the foreign currency for importing newsprint. Then again there was a pointless over abundance of publications in cutthroat competition with one another. The second reason was the tiny number of comrades of both proven ideological soundness and journalistic ability. Finally, there was the need to offer standard guidelines to their publications. As the motion declared, 'There must be an end of public

contradictions from within the movement.’⁶ In the light of which the following guidelines were laid down:

‘In Barcelona, Valencia and Madrid, two daily papers should appear; one in the mornings, the other in the evenings.

One morning paper may be published in each of the following localities: Catalonia — Girona, Lleida and Tarragona; Levante — Castelló, Albacete, Alicante, Murcia or Cartagena (one appears in each of the last two cities and one only should appear with provision made for ensuring that its appearance is simultaneous in both places); Andalusia — Almería, Ubeda, Jaén or Baza; Extremadura — Cabeza de Buey (Badajoz); Centre — Cuenca, Toledo, Ciudad Libre; Aragón — Alcañiz.

With daily papers appearing as set out, our movement’s propaganda in both respects is absolutely assured...we have large presses of enormously wide circulation and the smaller provincial ones, meeting the need for guidance attuned to the ethos and mores of the towns.

All dailies failing to comply with this arrangement will have to go, in that they are considered uneconomical and unnecessary.

On the decision of the national plenum, all newspapers are required to devote one page or one half-page daily to the peasants.

On no account is there to be non-compliance with this accord.

Bulletins. Each National Industrial Federation will, each month, publish a bulletin offering briefings on trade union and constructive developments in all of the industry’s operations. That bulletin is for the exclusive use of the unions and will not in any way deal with political or military developments, this being the exclusive prerogative of the daily press.

Reviews. One quarterly issued by each National Industrial Federation and recording progress achieved in the technical development of the industry, is sufficient. The National Peasants’ Federation will publish a monthly magazine instead of a quarterly. This magazine will have to confine its contents to analysis and technical advice, keeping absolutely clear of political or trade union guidance functions, since these are the sole preserves of the dailies and of the bulletins, respectively.’

With its resolution on Item 9, the plenum sought to restore confidence to the people by making provision for fair distribution of available foodstuffs and by curtailing the activities of speculators, businessmen and politicians.

The resolution stated:

‘The working party charged by the plenum to draft a resolution on Item 9 of the agenda, having come together and familiarised itself with suggestions advanced by a variety of delegations, and in view of the contents and implications of the motion submitted by the CNT National Committee, is unanimous that it is proper to suggest to the CNT’s economic plenum adoption of the following accords:

1. The unions’ distribution sections, in concert with the Local and Area Committees, are to proceed forthwith with setting up, in every township, large distribution warehouses and may assume whatever name and form circumstances may commend in each region.

⁶ There was talk in the CNT press on 20 February 1937 of a future national conference of all the CNT and anarchist press with the aim of introducing a ‘homogenous orientation’. The conference took place on Sunday 28 March in the Casa CNT-FAI in Barcelona. Despite the fierce opposition from *Acracia* of Lleida and *Nosotros* of Valencia and the other odd publication, the ‘orientation’ was approved by the higher committees. In the debates, Mariano R. Vázquez, Secretary of the CNT National Committee, played an active role.

2. In order to establish a network of connections among these distribution warehouses a statistical branch is to be set up, attached to every Local, Area, District or Regional Economic Council.

3. The powers of these Statistical Branches will be:

(a) To maintain up to date figures for stocks in the various warehouses with a view to their being shared out fairly between localities according to need.

(b) To take a hand in wholesale purchasing operations.

(c) To fix sale prices, taking due account of general expenditure, transport costs, etc., which will vary according to the provenance of articles and the characteristics of the locality where they are retailed.

4. The purchase of produce from abroad will be handled by the usual agency.

5. In the establishment of these distribution warehouses, it is to be borne in mind that their services will be for the people as a whole.

6. The operation of the Statistical Branches will be governed by the Economic Council in accordance with the points set out above.

On behalf of the Valencia Local Union Federation, Leoncio Sánchez; on behalf of the Madrid Local Union Federation, José Zaragoza; on behalf of the Barcelona Local Union Federation, Manuel Cirach; on behalf of the Levante Regional Peasant Federation, Salvador Galea; on behalf of the Sabadell Local Union Federation, Bruno Lladó. Valencia, 21 January, 1938.'

The motion on Item 10 of the agenda is one of the most ambitious of all. In sections (b) and (c), the CNT set about tackling the industrial planning that was widely advocated in Spain: winding up industries redundant in time of war, or converting them so as to improve and render their output more appropriate; boosting the output of those industries regarded as crucial, in accordance with a scrupulous plan and nationwide deployment of surplus labour. In the absence of a National Economic Council with trade union participation — as the CNT had been urging — the plenum broached and resolved the problem for itself insofar as the Confederation itself was involved:

'How effective industrial planning might be pursued, without the creation of the national economic council, an official agency with a mixed state-trade union basis, which would be called upon to meet this glaring economic need.

Motion placed before the CNT's plenum by the working party charged with reporting on sections (b), (c) and (d) of Item 10 on the agenda.

As section (b) of Item 10 of the agenda has raised the issue of how effective planning of industries might be achieved in the conditions described by that section, and as it has become apparent in the debating of the views on the aforementioned Item 10 that the plenum wholly agrees with the explanations offered by the CNT National Committee and several delegations, this working party reckons that its own report should be confined to noting the foregoing and to solemnly urging the plenum to be more specific in ratifying (and outlining the parameters within which it should take place) the planning mentioned in section (b), indicating the nature of the norms requested in section (c) and specifying the powers to be devolved to the Economic Council in the implementation of the dispositions of section (d) ...in consequence of all of which this working party is unanimous in proposing to the plenum that it adopt the following accords:

1. The plenum does not regard it as at all necessary to wait for the establishment of a formal National Economic Council founded upon a mixed state/trade union basis with an effective majority and equal representation for both trade union groupings, before tackling such overall industrial planning as may ensure a maximum possible increase in output, streamlining production, making

products more cheaply or effecting reductions in their cost prices, or simplifying/reducing the number of intermediaries between producer and consumer and, through appropriate exploitation of the country's natural resources, the provision of replacements or substitutes for those raw materials requiring importation and refinement or extension of the range of tools, machinery and equipment currently in use, with a view to achieving an effective economic overhaul of industry and of the national economy, at least as far as that segment of the national economy controlled, collectivised or essentially dependent on the economic agencies of our trade union federation may be concerned.

2. The Economic Council is hereby authorised to draw up and proceed with the implementation of a wide scheme or planning programme for the whole of the economy, subject to the following conditions:

(a) That, with the utmost haste, it embark upon the necessary research preparatory to drafting the overall plan for the economy: its inquiry into and adoption of a decision upon this should be completed within a period not exceeding four months from the date on which the Confederation makes its final pronouncement upon the draft agenda, to wit "Overhauling industrial operations".

(b) That the scheme which the Economic Council is to draft and, when the time comes, put into practice, has the special feature of containing the necessary elasticity to embrace the overall picture (the broadest possible picture) of the entire national economy, and thereby, engage in planning in everything relating to the economy, be it through partial implementation of overall targets of such general economic planning as the Economic Council may reckon necessary to the undertaking of national reconstruction and consolidation of the Spanish proletariat's revolutionary process, in which case the plenum thinks it should continue for the duration of the war against fascism, in view of the ineluctable need to go on building our economic potential, building up our reserves and laying the groundwork for a beneficial revamping of the economy in the event of victory.

3. At its plenary sessions, the Economic Council is empowered to determine which industries will, under the projected planning, be subject to conversion, relocation, suspension or abolition, its sole obligation being that its resolutions should offer these two guarantees:

(a) That the eventual decision regarding suspension or closure of some industries or establishments be prompted by the intention to arrive at a real economy or reduction in the cost price of the product or service rendered more expensively in a given factory, workshop, farm, etc.; the aim therefore being that the solution should be purely objective and economic, with loyalist Spain as a whole being considered as a single unit without regional or other differences.

(b) That no factory, workshop, farm, mine, etc. be suspended or shut down unless prior arrangements have been made for redeploying the producers who might be left jobless if this condition were not to be fulfilled. Consequently, unemployment could not come about at any time as a consequence of the implementation of planning in the economy.

Until such time as the projected overall planning can be implemented, all Industrial Unions, and Regional and National Industrial Federations and the Regional Committees themselves are empowered, acting alone or in concert with regional, area or local agencies for the management and direction of the economy in their respective regions, to pursue, insofar as may be feasible, the objective underpinning the plenum's intention of introducing planning into industries. This assumes, of course, that whatever the decisions adopted by said agencies and the nature of the improvements introduced, or whatever the changes effected, etc., these are overruled by the planning guidelines agreed by the Economic Council, just as soon as the latter are published or

otherwise communicated to the respective pertinent National Federations and Regional Committees.

Valencia, 24 January 1938. On behalf of the CNT National Committee, Mariano Cardona Rosell; on behalf of the Barcelona Local Union Federation, Fernando Alemany; on behalf of the Area Federation of Cardoner and Alt Llobregat, F. Daniel Cuevas; on behalf of the Madrid Local Union Federation, Julián Fernández; on behalf of the Mataró Local Industrial Union Federation, Miguel Suñé Atanasi; on behalf of the Valencia Local Industrial Union Federation, R. Cebrián.'

Item 10 had been shorn of its section (a), regarding which the National Committee had framed a motion stating: 'The necessity of arriving at administrative centralisation of the economy.' What the plenum adopted was a scheme that confronted the many workers and collectivists who believed that 19 July 1936 had changed only the mode of ownership, and was designed to eliminate the economic differences which existed between the collectivists and the non-collectivists, determined by whether they were advantageously or disadvantageously placed in their industries and places of production.

The motion passed was as follows:

'Unanimously and before entering into debate upon this item on the agenda, the plenum declares:

"Industrial undertakings and peasant collectives under CNT control are to be governed by the National Economic Council."

Months have elapsed since the glorious 19 July 1936 and the creative potential of the proletariat has absorbed all of the attentions of militants, for it has left us hardly any time for anything other than fleshing out revolutionary aspirations and doing everything possible and, sometimes, it seems, the impossible, in order to see them fleshed out in hard and fast creations, while large numbers of militants have shouldered the hard, sublime task of sustaining the armed struggle against fascism, mainly in order to consolidate the gains of the revolution and speed the complete attainment of the goals it set itself.

So it is scarcely surprising that after almost a year and a half since that memorable date, it has not been possible to achieve the necessary co-ordination essential at national level if all the spheres of the economy under the control or at the disposal of Spain's working class are to interlock and fuse together as required if we are effectively to reap the benefits of a socialisation which, if it is to be wholly deserving of the name, has to overcome certain stages, the chief one being no doubt, the stage involving the matching of efforts and resources, leading on to economic fellowship in the broadest possible sense of those terms.

The phase to which we refer could not possibly be completed, unless we resolve to lay down the rules and create the mechanism which may allow administration of the economy to be concentrated in workers' hands. As far as our own trade union central is concerned, we alone can decide and we will do precisely that in the text of this item on the agenda, the economy. Meaning not merely that economy which is wholly ours, but embracing also our involvement in economic units, every last one of them, marshalled together as is vital if we are to oversee (these being statistical data of the first importance) the monies represented by stocks of materials processed, received, invested or issued by the warehouses of every unit, and the sums actually paid out as wages, the value of the equipment and the means of production in workers' hands, and the sums of money and credit at the disposal of said economic units. This, plus all related data not specified here but which is required for accounting and administration purposes, set out in such

a way as to furnish a sound foundation for the investigations, estimates and determinations of the Economic Council.

The agency and no other will, in accordance with the powers and licence afforded to it by the organisation under the accords of the plenum or at our trade union organisation's ordinary congresses and, failing that, at national or regional plenums, be empowered to mobilise the economic resources falling under the remit of this motion.

Centralisation will be effected from the economic units up towards the Local Industry Administrative Technical Councils, whereupon two processes will be set in motion: one will operate through several graduated stages (the Industrial Federation structure) while the other will be the Economic Councils arrangement.

The economic units forming the basis of this administrative arrangement are of two kinds:

- (a) Wholly CNT in composition, and
- (b) of mixed CNT-UGT or other composition.

The first of these categories comprises:

1. Collectivised undertakings or any which may assume such designation anywhere on the national territory, regardless of the legislation under which they may be legalised or licensed.
2. Socialised industries i.e. industries so designated by workers on account of their having achieved a fuller measure of collectivism in them, and of their being tied directly to the relevant Industrial Union, Regional Industrial Federation or National Industrial Federation.
3. Workshops, establishments or shops. This category should be understood as embracing all those workshops, etc. so designated on account of their being directly subject to the economic oversight of the Industrial Unions or through their being tied to their leadership and direction.
4. Production co-operatives, established in accordance with the laws in force or enforceable at any time, and where the co-operators are CNT workers.
5. CNT peasant collectives, regardless of how they may be governed or legalised.
6. Trading companies, however designated (Collectives, Joint Stock or Limited Companies) wherein the capital belongs to CNT workers.

We should add, as making up a special category and as a fundamental component, the three following bodies:

7. The branch office of the Iberian Trade Union Bank.
8. Consumer co-operatives or trading centres that the CNT may have set up or may yet set up.
9. Insurance mutual funds, Providence and accident mutual societies, trade union insurance-broking agencies etc.

The second category of economic units comprises all those bodies listed under sections 1 to 6 of the first category, but which have been set up in alliance with UGT workers, regardless of their numbers.

In the light of the above, the plenum feels obliged to outline a structure for:

1. Those economic organs making up a National Industrial Federation, and
2. The Economic Councils.

Structure of the Economic Organs of a National Industrial Federation.

The arrangement of the economic organs which, starting from the base in the production centre, must build up to the National Industrial Federation, is as follows:

1. The Production Centre (Administrative Technical Council or Delegation) level.
2. The level of the Industrial Section (Administrative and Statistical Technical Council).
3. At the level of the branch of industry (Administrative and Statistical Technical Council).

4. At the level of Local Industry (Administrative and Statistical Technical Council).
5. At Industrial Area level (Administrative and Statistical Technical Council).
6. At Industrial Regional level (Administrative and Statistical Technical Council).
7. At National Industrial level (Administrative and Statistical Technical Council, National Federation).

At the aforementioned levels there will be the councils specified below:

1. In every Production Centre and according to the centre's economic importance, there will be a Technical Administrative Council or merely a delegation to oversee those aspects of production indicated by its title.
2. Similar production centres will, together, make up the Section Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council. This will maintain technical, administrative and statistical supervision of the production centres making up the section.
3. The different sections from one branch of industry are to appoint a Branch Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council, which will collate all the figures from the reports submitted by the sections, ensuring at all times that there is good technical guidance.
4. The component branches of an industry are to be connected by a Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council of the branches making up the industry in question. This will oversee the Branch Councils.
5. Organised on a regional basis, the industry, following scrutiny of the industrial location of its centres of production, will stipulate the number of zones into which the region is to be divided and will fix the town wherein the Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council is to reside.
6. In each region, there is to be a regional Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council, for the purpose of overseeing the work of the Area Councils and collating the information furnished by these.

The Regional Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council will be linked to the Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council of their National Industrial Federation, which will see to the monitoring and supervision of industry.

Appointment of the Various Technical, Administrative and Statistical Councils.

1. The workers of each production centre are to appoint from among their number the delegates who are to make up their Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council or Delegation.
2. All the workers belonging to the same Industrial Section will appoint delegates to form their Section Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council.
3. In a general assembly of the Industrial Branch, the delegates who are to make up the Branch Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council will be appointed, as will the delegates who are to join the Local Industry Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council.
4. A general assembly of the Industry will appoint the three delegates — secretary, treasurer and technician — who, together with the delegates chosen by the branches, will make up the Industrial Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council.
5. The Local Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council, assembled as an Area Industrial Plenum, are to appoint three delegates to take charge of the aforementioned specific duties on the local body which, in concert with delegates who may be deemed necessary as council members (and who will be appointed by the Local Industry of the place of residence) will make up the Area Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council.

6. A Regional Plenum of the Local Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council will appoint the three delegates, whose duties have been indicated, to the Local and Area bodies. The locality in which the Regional Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council is to reside will supply the necessary councillors so that the Regional Council can be made up. The same plenum will at the same time appoint two comrades to join the National Council of the Industry as representatives of the region.

7. The Regional Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Industrial Council, gathered together in plenum, will select the three delegates who are to bear the heaviest responsibility on the Economic Council and these — together with the other regional delegates, plus any others who may be deemed necessary (and who will be furnished by the locality in which the Council resides) — will make up the National Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council of the Industry.

Periodical reports will be passed up from the grassroots economic body — the Technical Administrative Councils — to the agency immediately above, until they reach the National Council of the industry concerned and the Local Economic Council.

All of these bodies — from the Technical Administrative Council of the production centres, right up through the higher economic organs (Section, Branch, Industry, Local, Area, Regional and National) — are to participate, in a reporting capacity, in the meetings of the Economic Councils.

Regarding the Economic Councils

1. In each locality, Economic Councils are to be set up with duties delegated from the Regional Economic Council. These Local Economic Councils will have charge of the technical, administrative and statistical supervision of the locality in question as regards the industries that make it up.

The Local Technical Administrative Industrial Councils, in joint session, will appoint two delegates to make up the Standing Commission of the Economic Councils and who will have hold the positions of utmost responsibility as described by the superior bodies. This standing commission will be joined by delegates appointed by each of the industries represented in the locality concerned. The Local Economic Council will be completed by a delegate appointed by the Local Federation of Industrial Unions or, failing that, by the Amalgamated Trades Union, in an advisory and monitoring capacity.

2. In each region, Regional Economic Councils are to be set up: it will carry out functions delegated from the Economic Council. These Regional Economic Councils will have charge of technical, administrative and statistical supervision of their respective regions. The Regional Industrial Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council will appoint six delegates to make up the standing commission of the Regional Economic Councils and handle functions of the greatest responsibility defined by the higher agency.

This standing commission will be joined by two delegates who will be appointed by each of the Regional Industrial Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council. For the purposes of consultation and supervision, the Regional Committees of Industrial Unions will appoint two delegates to complement the Regional Economic Council and one of these delegates will serve on its standing commission.

3. The National Technical Administrative Council and Statistical Council of Industry will appoint eight delegates to make up the standing commission of the Economic Council, which will

be completed by one delegate from each of the main branches of each National Industrial Federation.

This standing commission will set up the following departments: General Secretary's office, Statistics, Control, Administration, Propaganda, Technical Guidance and whatever others may be deemed necessary.

The Economic Council is to have charge of the technical, administrative and statistical supervision of all industries, trading centres, or co-operative ventures belonging to the CNT, as well as banking agencies, Insurance Technical Brokerage, family payment fund, the National Association of Technicians and whatever others our organisation has or may yet set up. In order to facilitate its task, they will delegate such duties as it believes to be quantitatively appropriate, to the Regional Economic Councils so that the latter may, in turn, likewise devolve these to Local Economic Councils.

Three delegates appointed by the CNT National Committee, for consultation and supervision purposes, are to join the Economic Council and two of them will in fact serve on the Standing Commission of this Council.

Given that this Council co-ordinates every facet of the National Industrial Federations, from which it is to receive all information and briefings, it will be up to it to decide upon all matters affecting the economy at national level, whether technically or in administrative and statistical terms, and its decisions will be binding upon all.

For the purpose of allocating work, the Economic Council will appoint specific commissions to report upon the issues entrusted to each of them.

The corresponding Councils will have access to whatever auxiliaries of any sort they may need in order to perform their duties.

Delegates serving on the various Councils and staff answerable to the Councils will alike be economically dependent on the resources administered by them.

The appointment of delegates making up the local standing commission, as well as its regional and national counterparts, is subject to the endorsement of the Local Union Federation, and the CNT Regional and National Committees respectively.

The trade union committees parallel to the Local, Regional and National Economic Councils are to appoint the comrade who will serve as secretary on the aforementioned Economic Councils.

Valencia, January 1938; on behalf of the working party: the l'Hospitalet Local Federation, Elda Local Federation and Vilanova i la Geltrú Local Federation.'

After 19 July 1936, a range of forms of production spontaneously came into operation. The extended plenum was keen to shoulder the responsibility for outlining regulations governing the rights and duties of the producer, laying down a series of obligations and sanctions. In its preamble, the motion on item 11 of the agenda ('Establishment of working norms...') opposed 'a single concept and a single executive voice' and the belief that it should be 'left to chaos to work the miracle of bringing forth order.' 'The ideal,' it added, 'the libertarian ideal, posits the formula of responsible organisation as against these wrong-headed systems unsuited to the ongoing existence of a civilised people conscious of its dignity.'

Here are the prescriptions contained in the working party's recommendations:

'1. Work is to be organised through selection of those workers with the best technical capability and revolutionary credentials.

2. In production, the old output level is to be taken as the base figure, though this shall not preclude the introduction of norms in excess of that figure, should the needs of the economy so

dictate, and with the model of payment being the current equivalent percentage rise and never a sliding scale.

The overtime system is hereby abolished, and only in those industries where the strict requirements of the war may so ordain, will the Organisation be able to decide to introduce bonus payment for exceeding targets in production, it being understood that this is applicable only to war industries and for the duration of the war only.

Where the state is the employer, the Technical Administrative Council and the appropriate union junta will intervene with regard to what may be deemed excessive demands by the firm or by the workers, depending on the pertinent trade union. In other instances, the Technical Administrative Council will be the decision-making agency, along with the Economic Councils, according to the scale and situation of the industries concerned, through appropriate resolutions in partnership with the trade union bodies.

3. The Technical Administrative Councils and the Economic Councils, each within the parameters of its organisational jurisdiction, will be the agencies responsible for progress in work. They are to budget, hire, manage and set work regulations, determine movement of production units, procurement of materials, financial management, etc., appointing and staffing factory councils in accordance with the workforces of the industrial units.

In every department where work is on the basis of trades there is to be a job-allocator who is to be officially responsible for the work in progress, monitoring for quantity and quality and supervising the workers' conduct. Also the firm is to have a general manager in charge of important administration, answerable to the Technical Administrative Council and enjoying an authority which can only be curtailed by the factory council and the union control committees.

This general manager is required to submit monthly signed reports to the Technical Administrative Council regarding every aspect of the firm's experiences and progress. This general manager is to be classed as a technician, and the job-allocator as a skilled workman and paid in accordance with the prescriptions of the organisation.

4. The job-allocator operating as assistant manager in the trade section, site or on the union control committee, will be able to propose that a worker be dismissed and, with the agreement of the general manager, decisions are to be made speedily over the following:

(i) With regard to unjustified absence from work; (ii) with regard to incorrigible late-comers; (iii) with regard to those failing to meet production targets; (iv) with regard to those displaying defeatist tendencies by bringing workers into confrontation with works managers or with union leaders.

Once dismissal has been decided upon, the worker is free to appeal to the union *junta*, which, in consultation with the Technical Administrative Council, will have the final say in the decision.

When, acceding to the proposal made by an allocator, general manager or control committee, the union junta decides that a worker is to be dismissed for shirking or dishonesty, the Industry will have an obligation to find him work elsewhere, issuing him with the appropriate work permit.

If, in his new place of work, the worker should re-offend and be again dismissed under the formal procedures, he should not be afforded work in the same locality, but should be re-assigned to industry elsewhere, where he will be put to work, as deemed necessary.

If, even after such a change, a further offence should occur out of stubbornness, his record is to be noted in his work cards and union cards and it will be at the discretion of the union concerned to order temporary suspension from work, which course may be recommended as a last resort.

As all hiring of personnel in any firm is to be monitored by the offices of the union's Technical Administrative Council, all workers and staff will have a file cataloguing details of their professional and social life. The Technical Administrative Council will draw its personnel from the various sections of the union, and these will furnish evidence of their integrity and professional aptitudes.

5. On every work site there will be a union control committee that will sit in on meetings of the factory council and ensure that work is performed scrupulously. It is to cooperate and to seek at all times to assist in the improvement of working methods and in boosting productivity. The union control committee will brief the union junta on all of the characteristic details of the firm. It will propose charge hands and general managers for the Technical Administrative Council to appoint for the firm. It will help expose negative elements, reporting any instances of incompetence that come to light. It will take pains to make improvements in anything to do with the workers' material conditions. It will suggest promotions up the professional scale for those who merit them and whom the charge hand may have overlooked, making provision for a competency test to this end. It will concern itself with hygiene, propaganda and the strengthening of psychological bonds between workers in socialised labour. From time to time, it will audit the books and on that basis, endorse all complaints or commendatory reports to the Technical Administrative Council and to the union junta, and will place itself at the disposal of the work delegate for anything which he may require.

Factory councils and union control committees in the larger plants and sites (generally permanent), will examine and look to the establishment of co-operatives, primary and technical schools, recreational education, etc. under the administrative and moral direction of the Technical Administrative Council and the union junta of the Industry.

6. In connection with work accidents found to be slight and of dubious origin, the general manager and the union control committee will look into the accident, and should it be found that it is a sham designed to provide relief from work or forestall expected dismissal, it shall be so reported to the Technical Administrative Council.

Redundancy notices are to be issued by the Technical Administrative Council, acting on reports received from the managers mentioned, but will be withheld from those of inadequate moral character, who, in the event of recidivism are to be punished by bans similar to those noted earlier as applicable against a different category of undesirables. In the case of fortuitous accidents, the Technical Administrative Council will ensure full pay for the victims, ensuring that commitments given to insured firms are honoured, and making good out of central funds, any shortfall in payments so that the accident victim suffers no financial loss. In instances of protracted treatment, the Technical Administrative Council will arrange a home visitation service.

Final Consideration

In every instance the organisation has absolute authority to decide upon norms, sanctions, and all sorts of conversions and any sort of frictions that may arise among work managers, the Technical Administrative Councils and the Local Economic Councils.

The National Economic Council will issue a producer's card spelling out everyone's rights and duties under the economic contract of production, encapsulating the main accords of the extended Economic Plenum.

On behalf of the working party: the Puerto de Sagunto Local Federation, the Vilafranca del Penedés Local Federation, the Central Regional Peasants' Committee, the Badalona Local Federation and the National Railwaymen's Committee. Valencia, 22 January 1938.'

As indicated above, one of the tasks of the Plenum was to 'overhaul the National Industrial Federations'. It was also noted that, on a majority vote, an amendment was passed against the National Committee's motion. This amendment was backed by the delegations from Catalonia and the Centre and it asked that the number of existing federations be maintained, to wit, the following... the Farming, Fishery and Food Industry, the Iron and Steel Industry, the Transport Industry, Health and Hygiene, the Construction and Woodworking Industry, the Water, Gas, Electricity and Fuel Industry, the Entertainments Industry, Bank, Insurance and allied workers, Communications, Paper and Graphic Arts Industry, Chemical Industries, Public, Administrative and Judicial Staff. The National Committee's draft motion, backed by other members of the working party, increased the number of federations to 20, which is to say that the Tobacco, Railroad, River and Maritime Navigation, Mining and Petroleum Industries, etc. would get federations of their own. Both options were left hanging, pending a final decision by unions.

The Confederation's peasants also had something to say to the plenum. By way of a coda to our resumé, we reprint this extract from the comprehensive, well-documented report on national agricultural development:

'As far as the need to develop agriculture goes, now that the traditional obstacles in the way of organised planning of rational exploitation of the countryside have disappeared or largely been reduced, we, voicing the thoughts and feelings of the recent plenum, reckon that the time has come for the National Federation of Peasants to outline a standard scheme for the intensification and improvement of agricultural output. The area under cultivation in the whole of Spain stands at around 20 million hectares, of which only one and a half million are irrigated, the remainder, which is to say 92.5 per cent, being dry soil. The financial value of the produce from the dry and irrigated soils, if we are to take, say, the 1935 harvest, stands at 6,455,000,000 pesetas for the dry lands and 2,751,000,000 for the irrigated lands. It follows from these figures that average gross yield per hectare is very poor and that the keynote to date has been a pronounced poverty. This is precisely why there is an urgent need to increase yields and intensify cultivation, not merely through irrigation of dry soils — undertakings which require enormous capital investment and which are limited by the amount of hydraulic resources available to us — but by basing these upon an overhaul of our normal methods of cultivation and upon the nurturing of complementary industries.

We will get a fairly exact notion of how backward Spain is in such matters if we look at the shortcomings of our wheat harvest, the little that has been done in the hybridisation of maize with a view to developing strains of high yield, adapted to our dry soil conditions: the absolute absence of microbiology in the growing of leguminous plants, the essential nitrogenous factor that would annually save us from expending many millions of pesetas on nitrogen fertilisers; the lack of a powerful fruit-growing sector which, if one excepts citrus fruits, can scarcely produce enough to meet the home market; how poorly off our vine-growing sector is for choice varieties of table grape; the lack of agricultural industries designed to handle and utilise by-products; and lastly, the state of health of our crops, so inadequate that in Levante alone nearly 300 million pesetas are lost every year as a result of so-called farming blights, not to mention, of course, the sizeable figure which our exclusion from many markets abroad accounts for. The first step, if we want to solve the problem, must be to work towards recovery of the manpower resources we possessed prior to the revolt...'

As for intensifying and improving livestock resources, the peasants point to the following solutions:

‘... There are three ways of achieving this: first, massive importation of breeds readily adaptable to the various climates and conditions of our regions; second, identify in each species and breed those shared characteristics which are of interest to us arriving at bloodstock groups, establishing a standard breed for the provinces or non-political natural regions by means of a painstaking nationwide selection procedure, so as to foster those groups and progressively improve upon them; third, there is what we might term the mixed option, and in our estimation it is the most interesting one: once we have settled upon the standard breed to be utilised in the various regions, it must be cross-bred with imported beasts with kindred features until our stock is completely absorbed by the imported stock.

In order to effect an intensification of livestock farming, we propose to set up a national livestock breeding board, regional breeding stations, area livestock agencies and local livestock sub-agencies. The functions of these bodies and their structural format are set out below. Finally, a programmatic profile of the farming economy has been set out: this will make possible thorough training and a progressive improvement of agro-technical educational levels from the most elementary levels up to complete mastery of professional and techno-agricultural skills, without contact being lost at any time with the countryside, to which we have to feel ourselves deeply attached in that it is the decisive factor in output. Special reference is made to wheat-growing and to the fact that appropriate modification of the tasks and relationships involved in planting can triple the yield of that cereal crop. With a view to the speedy achievement of this state of affairs, the farm development section of the National Peasant Federation is cognisant of the need for an articulated plan whereby the following agencies may be established; a national board for intensive cultivation, regional agronomic stations; area agronomic agencies and local agronomic sub-agencies. There follows a detailed breakdown of the functions to be performed by each of these bodies. As regards a national livestock development plan, according to the findings of the 1934 survey, our economy’s intrinsic value rose by 21 million pesetas, bringing in six thousand millions a year. Now we know that livestock farming is in ruins, but Spain does have the potential to build up a superb livestock industry. Our stock-breeding economy is only a matter of improvement and of increased output.’

NOTES

Chapter Two: The New Trade Union Platform

On 19 January 1938 the *Diari Oficial de la Generalitat* made public a personal order (as the 22 January edition of *Solidaridad Obrera* emphasised) from Joan Comorera, the autonomous government's Economy Minister. Under it, the public entertainments sector in Catalonia, except for those facilities already subject to municipal control, was to be taken under control. A press release of 22 January gave to understand that Comorera's order had been prompted by the general strike of the Barcelona public entertainments sector. A commission from the union concerned visited the President's Under-Secretary and later called on Comorera himself. It was then announced that an amicable solution had been found to the dispute. What was that solution?

On 1 February the press made it public that in the Economic Department, the formal investment of the Public Entertainments of Catalonia Commission of Inspection had taken place, and that the minister had himself invested the inspectors from the Generalitat, Miguel Espinar, Rosalío Alcón and César Viaina, and the departmental Under-Secretary, Estanislau Ruíz i Ponsetí. The first three persons named belonged to the CNT as might be deduced from the fact that acceptance of the take-over order was conditional upon CNT personnel being included in the Commission of Inspection, albeit as Generalitat delegates.

The take-over order in question stated as follows:

‘1. Technical and administration inspection of all public entertainments concerns in Catalonia, for the purpose of ensuring their survival and the maximisation of economic improvements, is hereby agreed. This inspection is to be effected by a Commission of Inspection comprising three inspectors appointed by the Economy Minister and a delegate from the Finance Ministry, in accordance with what is laid down in current ordinances.

2. Generalitat inspectors are to enter into contact with the present organs overseeing public entertainments in Catalonia, with a view to arriving at as rapidly as possible at a joint administration with them and arranging a uniform working system. Until such time as this arrangement secures the approval of the Generalitat, the Commission of Inspection shall assume charge of the administrative and technical duties incumbent upon the management of the concern. One of these three inspectors, especially appointed, is to be president of the commission.

3. The Economy Minister in person shall prescribe the powers of these Generalitat inspectors who may not have been seconded by other official bodies or by the Department of Economy itself, until such time as this uniformity has been achieved.

4. The trade union representatives of the public entertainments workers shall appoint a working party made up of six delegates, to assume the duties of a Workers' Supervisory Committee at the same time. Of these six delegates, three are to be appointed by the CNT and three by the UGT.

5. The normal management of the amalgamated concerns is to be handled by the Commission of Inspection in ongoing consultation with, and under the supervision of the consultative working party in the taking of decisions of a general nature, especially such as may relate to the manner of amalgamating concerns and the rights of the workers concerned; the Commis-

sion of Inspection and the Consultative Working Party are to hold joint meetings, making up the Management Council which is to be chaired by that member of the Commission of Inspection especially designated by the Minister. Should there be any irreducible difference of opinion between the Generalitat representatives and the trade union representatives over matters referred to the Management Council for consideration, the ultimate arbiter is to be the Economy Minister.

6. The duties performed hitherto by the appointed Economic Committees or other bodies, are hereby transferred to the Commission of Inspection, which is to make the utmost haste to put the appropriate winding-up operations into effect.

7. Exempted from this take-over are those public entertainments facilities under municipal control at the time of issue of this order.

Barcelona, 19 January 1938, the Economy Minister, Joan Comorera.'

On 8 February the Generalitat's Economic Ministry published some explanatory comments about the Collectivisations Decree of 24 October 1936, pointing out that the powers of the Workers' Supervisory Committees, which overlapped with those of the Collectivised Firms' Councils, were being interpreted somewhat too liberally. The statement declared, in one paragraph:

'It needs to be spelled out clearly that in those firms where the employer is still in place, he retains all of his prerogatives of authority, representation and responsibility and it is the workers that should be more interested than anyone in ensuring that the prescriptions of the law governing such matters are scrupulously observed, so as to preclude partisan campaigns by persons interested in causing upsets to the actions and playing up the shortcomings of the new economic regime. Since the workers representatives were the ones who gave an undertaking, together with the political representatives of the petite bourgeoisie, to introduce the current system which still affords belligerent status to the latter estate.'

In the trade union world, important negotiations were being launched just about then between the representatives of both trade union associations. At a gathering of the UGT Executive Commission (in early February) approval had been given to a programme of action that was to be put to the Confederation's representatives. The UGT proposals would be set out by UGT delegates Amaro del Rosal Díaz, César Lombardía and Edmundo Domínguez.

The first encounter took place in mid February at the headquarters of the CNT National Committee in Barcelona, for, following the central government's removal to that city early in November 1937, immediately after the collapse of the North, all of the national bodies of a political and trade union character followed that example. The CNT was represented at the meeting by its general secretary, Mariano Vázquez, Horacio Prieto, and Frederica Montseny. But the exchanges of opinion remained just that until the terrible enemy offensive of 9 March that led to the collapse of the Eastern Front. Indeed, for the time being, they were confined to examination and discussion of the respective proposals. The UGT proposals were published in the press on 9 February. They were as follows:

'Army. The Liaison Committee acknowledges the tremendous progress made in the training of the Popular Army, in its battle-readiness and in the technical expertise of its commanders. It takes the line that the workers' organisation should assist the government to the utmost so as to build a powerful army imbued with a profound anti-fascist mentality and equipped with a uniform fighting spirit capable of crushing Franco and the foreign invaders. The Liaison Committee will have to concern itself constantly with the maintenance and reinforcements of the ties of fellowship between the members of the army, beneath the banner of anti-fascism. It appreciates that it is a fundamental task of the unions to avoid the raising in the rearguard of issues which

may distract government attentions away from its special mission, which is to win the war with all haste, thereby helping to build up war morale in the rearguard.

1. The unions will render intensive assistance to the government, falling into line with the latter's initiatives in the establishment of sturdy reserves capable of boasting the membership of the Popular Army and ensure the latter of continuity in advances and a regular policy of relief. To this end, the unions are to ensure that all their members comply enthusiastically with government mobilisation orders. Military instruction and weapons training among the workers are their concern: they are to co-operate in the provision of pre-military training, to avert the disarray caused in each industry by the absence of workers called into the colours, to which end they are to strive so as to ensure professional training for women and for those men outside the age of liability for military service.

2. The UGT and the CNT shall strive to engage in an intensive fortification, construction and road and railroad repair drive and the erection of shelters for the civilian population.

3. The Liaison Committee will make efforts to ensure that the functions of the War Commissariat, the backbone of our army, enjoy all possible aid from the unions so that its work may be daily more effective. Similarly it will strive to ensure that the fellowship and identification existing between the army's officers, whether drawn from the old army or promoted from among the people, may be the more forcefully consolidated with each passing day.

4. The unions shall at all times take care to maintain close contacts with the fighting men, to which end they shall continue to regard the latter as members and shall see to their needs and those of their families, without this implying an interference in those functions which are the prerogative of the military command.

Industry. The Liaison Committee appreciates the need to give a greater boost to our country's industrial output, most especially, in the war industries, by co-ordinating and stepping up the efforts of the unions in this respect. The Liaison Committee will make efforts to maintain an unflinching, disciplined rearguard and to imbue all workers with the spirit of selflessness and sacrifice that the present times demand, so that they may spare no effort in their work connected with military requirements. Within that spirit, the Liaison Committee shall defend the following measures:

War Industries. 1. The UGT and CNT will co-operate with government in the task of speedily constructing a powerful war industry. The unions will have to tackle, as an urgent and indispensable task, the business of creating among the workers a severe spirit of vigilance against any sort of sabotage or inactivity in work and in the improvement of the same, with an eye to boosting and improving output;

2. All factories and workshops whose circumstances make this feasible are to be converted to meet war needs;

3. All raw materials, chiefly those supplying the war industries, are to be brought under centralised control;

4. Militarisation and centralisation of all means of transport. Nationalisation of basic industries;

5. Basic industries will have to be nationalised as a matter of urgency. The government must centralise the nationalised industries and co-ordinate their development;

6. The nationalised industries will have to be run by experts in those industries, appointed by the appropriate ministry, but in allotting these positions account should be taken of the opinion of the workers;

7. Nationalisation of the railways;

8. The government must move towards a centralisation of banking operations, paving the way for nationalisation of the banks.

National Councils of Industry and the Higher Economic Council. 9. The Liaison Committee calls for the immediate establishment of National Councils of Industry with participation for the unions, charged with regulating the output of each industry, with fixing prices, wages, resources and the import and export of produce and materials, in accordance with government directives at all times. These Councils are to be answerable to the Higher Economic Council the establishment of which, by the government, is regarded by this Liaison Committee as a matter of the utmost urgency as the most effective means of organising and planning production.

Professional Training. 10. In addition to any measures the government may have established or may yet establish in the field of professional training, the unions will help to raise the levels of learning and professional skill of the workers by organising special courses for them.

Municipalisation of Services. 11. The Liaison Committee recognises the need to orchestrate and reorganise urban services, based upon the municipalisation of those which, by virtue of their importance and characteristics, require this, so as to work towards the elimination of the confusion which presently obtains. As all of the assets, chattels and properties of the prominent proprietors involved in the fascist revolt are the property of the state, urban properties are to be put to use by the municipalities by means of the legislation handed down by the government in respect of this.

Intensification of Agricultural Output — Co-operatives and Collectives in the Countryside. The National Liaison Committee declares that the two union associations shall make every effort to ensure that the produce of the land, the fruit of our peasants' labours, is respected at all times and priced in accordance with industrial prices. The Liaison Committee recognises the advances that have been made by the Popular Front government in the field of farm legislation. At the same time, it warns of the need to step up agricultural output so that not one inch of arable land may be left uncultivated, to which end it regards it as indispensable that there should be unity among the land workers in each district and that the collectivist and co-operative movement act as one in accordance with these principles:

1. the Liaison Committee calls for nationalisation and industrialisation of the land which will have to be given over in inalienable usufruct to the peasants and agricultural labourers, which may work it individually or collectively, with the proviso that the land allotted for cultivation by the individual not exceed the capabilities of that individual together with his family, account being taken of the peculiarities of the autonomous regions, provided that these fit in with the minimum prescribed by law in the remainder of the country. Rustic smallholdings of the farmers who directly cultivate the land must be respected;

2. both union associations are to defend all of the gains made by the rural masses, and will endeavour to step up farm output. This requires:

a. intensification of agricultural production. For the purpose of boosting the work inside the collectives, it may be broken up into tasks, with the farm-workers being guaranteed a minimum payment, with a quarterly review to determine the pertinent increases or reductions;

b. regulation of cultivation of the land so as to ensure that individual tillage does not hamper collective endeavours;

c. improvement to the standard of living of the agricultural workers on the basis of farm produce being so priced that the peasants may obtain prices that are due reward for their produce

indexed to the costs of the industrial products which they consume and for which a standard rate should be prescribed;

d. the government is to assist the peasants in the acquisition of machinery, seed, fertilisers, etc. and of credit through the National Farm Credit Bank, the creation of which is necessary;

e. the establishment of experimental farms (farming colleges) is to be encouraged: there will have to be at least one of these in each area, so as to train experts, machinists, organisers and administrators for the collectives and co-operatives.

3. The formation of farming co-operatives will have to be stepped up, with the aim being to establish just one in each district, in conformity with the government's ordinances concerning co-operatives, and collectives already constituted will have to be legalised immediately. Similarly, we must encourage the grouping of cooperatives into regional or provincial federations so they may take their place within the co-operative movement nationally and internationally.

Pay, prices and provisions. The improvement of the workers' standard of living and the struggle against the current high cost of foodstuffs and the difficulty of procuring the same are self-evidently necessary. So, the Liaison Committee regards the following steps as necessary:

1. the unions must step up their struggle against speculators, thereby assisting the endeavours of the government in that regard. This task is primarily incumbent upon the hotel and dairy organisations and other unions in the food and commerce sectors;

2. the formation of strong retail consumer co-operatives should be encouraged, along with the establishment of production co-operatives and the foundation of great wholesale centres for marketing produce, under state supervision. Likewise, a scheme should be drawn up for the importation of those crucial items which are the staple of the workers' diet, so as to ensure that the workers get the ration needed by their family at a fair price in accordance with the rates of pay existing. The government should also assume control of production and regulate domestic consumption of all those products which are the foundations of our export policy;

3. the Liaison Committee takes the view that a minimum wage should be introduced, tied to the cost of living and taking into account, on the one hand, professional grades and, on the other, the performance of each one of these. In this respect it will champion in industry the principle of "the greater and better the output, the greater the reward" as a bonus or premium regardless of sex or age. To this end, a National Pay and Prices Commission, with representation from the union associations, will have to be set up.

Workers' Control. The Liaison Committee understands that workers' control constitutes one of the most highly valued and meaningful of the workers' gains. It takes the line that a law on workers' control is at present a necessity in this country of ours, so as to prescribe the rights and duties of workers. And so, it is agreed that:

1. the government must promulgate a law of workers' control wherein the rights and obligations of workers in respect of supervision of production and monitoring of performance are set out, along with their participation in administration and profits, the working conditions and the defence of social legislation;

2. the control agencies are to be democratically elected by direct suffrage by all of the workforce of the same plant or workshop, thereby constituting an authentic labour democracy and ensuring that the interests of the workers are protected.

Social Legislation. Maintenance of the advances achieved by the proletariat being deemed appropriate, the Liaison Committee takes the view that current social legislation should be reviewed so as to incorporate dispositions covering the claims already won by the working class

and whatever others may result from those contained in these guidelines, or to eliminate precepts that may be at odds with these. Barcelona, 8 February 1938.'

The counter-proposals from the CNT were not long in coming. They were published in the press on 13 February 1938. They were as follows:

'Having examined the guidelines which the UGT has publicly submitted for consideration by the National Committee of the CNT with a view to arriving at an agreement between the two organisations, let us state that we are truly gratified by this gesture on the part of our sister association, in that we had been expecting it for many a long month, having looked for it on various occasions. And as we have been publicly put on the spot, without first having had a chance to express our views also, we are adopting the same procedure, albeit deploring its prejudicial implications.

The guidelines which we are making public and offering for discussion with the UGT represent nothing new for our organisation, but indeed conform with its accords and have been withheld for the drafting of a minimum programme of action common to all anti-fascist forces. In that the requests that we have presented time and again for the holding of joint meetings to elaborate such a programme of popular unity have fallen on deaf ears, we now spell out those accords and give extracts from them in accordance with the invitation issued to us, with the compromises necessary to discussion having a very definite limit.

Guidelines which the CNT puts to the UGT for Unifying the Activities of the two Organisations. The CNT and the UGT, forever preoccupied with guaranteeing the political and economic gains won by the proletariat during the revolution, and hoping to move beyond these always and everywhere, ratify the existence of the National Liaison Committee, endorsing its remit along the following guidelines:

1. the UGT and the CNT undertake to ensure that the proletariat is effectively involved in the governance of the Spanish state without prejudice to the proportionality due to the non-proletarian forces;

2. now and forever, the CNT and the UGT undertake to stand by a social system of true democracy, resisting any totalitarian pretensions on the part of any class or party. These being the fundamental premises of any cordial and lasting understanding between the two labour associations, we take the line that the immediate, short-term aspiration of both should be encapsulated in some general guidelines that outline a specific order of conduct.

National Defence. 1. The CNT and the UGT are resolved to bolster every measure which may facilitate the creation of an efficient people's army which may guarantee success in the war and in any possible external conflict which may derive from such victory.

2. The two organisations call for the retention and reinforcement of the War Commissariat and for fair representation within it of the anti-fascist forces, opposing any attempt to monopolise the Commissariat.

3. The CNT and the UGT recommend the creation of an Under-Secretariat for the War Industries, with representation for the government and for the unions through a National Council of War Industries which is to assume sole management of those industries.

4. In each under-secretariat of the Ministry of National Defence, there is to be established a Reconciliation Council whose main role will be to foster co-operation and avert partisan decision-making.

5. Transportation which, by its very nature is being deployed for the purposes of war, is to be placed at the disposal of the government and the latter must ensure that it is deployed strictly, lest output and trade in the rearguard be exposed to unsettling influences.

6. In all of the armed corps a National Council is to be set up which proportionally represents the anti-fascist masses and which will exercise advisory and supervisory functions. The idea which prompts the CNT and the UGT to agree upon these short-time demands is the need to defeat fascism speedily and resoundingly, to establish a positive democracy in every place where the war is organised and pursued, to accredit the Commissariat as a weapon for the purging and aggrandisement of the Popular Army, and to offer de facto assistance, with their experience and might, in the undertaking of governments by relieving these of much of their responsibility in the view of the agreed fact that no government is infallible.

Economy. The CNT and the UGT shall contribute every effort, all of their technical personnel and their capacity for sacrifice towards the industrial, agricultural and commercial reconstruction of the country. Such efforts, though they have been made already at all times and everywhere by the proletariat, might render more fruitful the form in which the two organisations envision the economic reconstruction, as set out below:

Nationalisation. 1. Those industries specifically turning out war materials must be nationalised speedily, with technical and administrative responsibility being assumed by the National Council of War Industries under the conditions prescribed elsewhere, the aim being at all times to achieve a national industry which renders the country immune to all external pressure.

2. Mines, railways, heavy industry, banking, telephones, telegraphs and aerial transport have to be nationalised with the greatest possible speed.

3. While nationalisation of banking is in progress, the state must guarantee the impartial award of credits to the collectives, this official undertaking being brought into line with the circumstantial existence of the Iberian Trade Union Bank set up by the CNT and UGT to this end. So that this industrial nationalisation plan may be implemented and also so that the general plan for the economy may become a reality, the CNT and the UGT call for the formation of a state-run National Economic Council, and made up of representatives from the state and from the two trade union organisations. This National Economic Council is to draw up the national economic plan and through the National Councils of Industry, organised along the same lines as the National Economic Council, will oversee output, distribution, credit, modes of payment and trade as a whole, availing of whatever services need to be set up if it is to perform its functions properly. The two trade union organisations will ensure that wages are so adjusted that in the shortest time-span the workers may enjoy the benefits of a wage that affords them access to their basic requirements and places them in a position, physically, to mount the effort systematically demanded of them. To this end, there needs to be a Mixed National Wages and Workers' Control Commission answerable to the National Economic Council to regulate pay in each industry and each locality in accordance with available figures and to undertake examination of family payment formulae through a purpose-constructed organism. The National Economic Council is to establish a work inspectorate in every one of the two organisations for this purpose, as well as the technical personnel required for the implementation of planning and the running of all state services, officials and technicians being infused with the same spirit of sacrifice which exists among the manual workers and whose encouragement is required as a matter of urgency. The technicians, whether from the collectives or the state, are to be supplied with all the wherewithal of study and mobility likely to help lead to improved performances in their scientific business,

both qualitatively and quantitatively. The two organisations shall also introduce work inspection into the collectives, plus some general guidelines liable to give a fillip to the morale of productive management and performance with an eye to achieving an immediate boost in output. The National Economic Council and the labour organisations are to set up trades and technical training schools in considerable numbers, maintained by the state. The government is to respect and to favour the decisions of the National Economic Council as a living organism linking popular management and state management, since it will be decidedly made up of morally and technically well-equipped individuals.

Agriculture. The CNT and the UGT declare that the soil and subsoil are the property of the nation and thereby agree that in agricultural policy:

1. the land is to be given over in usufruct to the CNT-UGT unions preferably, with the government showing favour to the collectives of those two organisations in the shape of credits, expert assistance and experimental training centres for cultivation, plus centres covering the commercial aspect;

2. recognition is to be granted only to those individual users who work for their own purposes and the employment of any waged labour is not to be countenanced on any pretext;

3. the National Economic Council is to embark upon the progressive industrialisation of agriculture by rationalising cultivation and operating on the financial basis of the assets of the Agricultural Credit Bank, until such time as banking may be nationalised. Be it understood that in all of the creative bodies spawned by the reconstruction of agriculture, the two trade union associations are to be represented alongside the state.

Collectivisations. The CNT and UGT ratify the existence of the collectives and intend to extend this arrangement, showing in practice that this is the form of labour organisation which best expresses the temperament and wishes of the Spanish proletariat for economic emancipation. For this reason, they advocate:

1. in industry, in the countryside, in trade, in all of those aspects of the overall economy which may not have been subject to nationalisation, the two organisations advocate collectives and will pursue a steadfast policy seeking legal and judicial recognition of them;

2. the collectives are to be acknowledged as having a right to organise among themselves, building up an economy of their own appropriately tailored to official ordinances for taxation purposes;

3. consumer co-operatives, a flawed form of collectivisation, are to be made known and encouraged by the CNT and the UGT so as to confront the present speculation and to combat the bourgeoisie's mentality in small trade, with the two organisations having a free hand to organise and sponsor co-operatives as they see fit, with the current legislation on co-operation standing in need of review.

Municipalisation. In respect of municipalisation, the CNT and the UGT resolve:

1. accommodation generally is to be undertaken under municipal control, with the exception of buildings declared property of the nation and those rendering a small rent;

2. urban public services and those which the municipalities consider suitable for organisation in defence of the common good without damage to different interests shall be so treated;

3. health and social welfare: the jurisdictions of the municipalities are to be brought into line with state legislation.

Trade. The two organisations are agreed upon the need to introduce a monopoly on foreign trade, in the import and export fields alike, as far as raw materials and the main foreign-currency

earning products are concerned. Trade is to be organised in accordance with these conditions, as follows:

1. the National Economic Council is to set up trade centres specialising in state commerce;
2. the workers are to have due representation on these centres;
3. the earnings of foreign trade are to be distributed without undue diminution, in the shape of national currency, to the producers, with the foreign currency being retained by the state;
4. a review is to be carried out of all taxes, with these being considerably reduced on imported foodstuffs and on trade conducted under the auspices of the collectives.

Social Action. The CNT and the UGT are of the view that there must be progress towards an overhaul of the country's legislation which amounts to an acknowledgement of the advances of the revolution, erasing any provision of the old legislation which implies within itself the return of the oppressor classes.

1. Legislation on worker control in those concerns not directly administered by the workers.
2. Legislation on accident insurance and social providence which enables the worker to avoid any privation or suffering as a consequence of accident, illness or old age, with favour being shown to the union organisations' own attempts to satisfy these beneficial aims.
3. Teaching being a crucial factor in the re-education of the Spanish people, a national mixed council subordinate to the state is to be set up, containing qualified representatives from the trade union associations, to work out the most rational educational methods and practices in tune with the scientific and moral progress promised by the revolution.
4. Special legislation on foreign firms in Spain, provision being made for the winding-up of their operations and the rescinding of contracts, without prejudice to the meeting of what claims may be demonstrated to be fair.

5. Repeal of all civil, penal, commercial legislation etc. and the opening at a suitable opportunity of a new constituent period which may enshrine the aspirations of the people within a democratic, federal, socialist republic. The CNT and the UGT stand ready to pursue a policy of aid in every sense...political, military and commercial...in this regard, by fostering all practices and methods considered likely to secure a speedy victory in the war. All trade union bodies, of a state or mixed nature which may be established for the purposes outlined, shall be formed with the CNT and UGT participating in proportion with the strength of each association, depending on the agency and location where such participation is to take place. The two organisations give an undertaking that upon conclusion of the struggle against fascism, the Spanish people and above all the working class, will be assured of the right to endow itself with that form of government consonant with the sacrifice presently being made and to maintain a true democracy in this country of ours. The National Liaison Committee shall at all times and in every specific instance analyse problems relative to the free expression of thought and the impartial enforcement of justice. All bodies of a trade union, state or combined character established for the purposes outlined, shall be formed with CNT and UGT participation proportionate with the strength of each association, depending on the agency and location where such participation takes place. Both organizations declare that the proletariat is the only agent capable of fighting the rebels to the finish: only the proletariat is capable of making the necessary sacrifices that will lead to victory – it is the only defence against the moral, political and economic disintegration of the country. Since the proletariat will play the decisive role in rebuilding the country, these two proletarian organisations are entitled to take a hand in the administrative governance of the country on their own account or through those whom they consider the representatives. The CNT and UGT are

firmly resolved that every clause and the entire contents of this document shall be implemented without delay, and they call for the immediate establishment of an Anti-fascist Popular Front and an overhauling of the government, both of which shall operate in accordance with the relative numerical presence of each party or organization [...] (22 lines blanked out by the censor here)

Final Considerations. This is the conclusion at which we have arrived, having scrutinised the UGT comrades' resolutions and married them with those tabled by the CNT in June 1937. The foregoing is the result of compromises voluntary made by the CNT and a necessary preamble to further discussions between the officers of the higher committees of the CNT and UGT.

We have no doubt that the principle of mutual accommodation will be shared by our UGT comrades and that we will, inescapably, arrive at common ground upon which to flesh out the aspirations and ultimate ambition of the Spanish proletariat, which wants to see its beloved organisations acting in concert to ensure eager and rapid progress along the road to victory.

On behalf of the CNT National Committee,

Mariano R. Vázquez (secretary)'

While these meetings were taking place and discussions being held, *Solidaridad Obrera* threw its columns open to sound out the opinions of leading political figures regarding the agreements and counter-proposals which had been advanced. The views transcribed below were those of the socialist militant and publicist Luis de Araquistáin:

'The PSOE has undergone a radicalisation, as evidenced by the resolution of the Madrid Socialist Association of March of 1936 to overhaul the old party programme. The UGT has also become more radical in political and trade union terms, the majority of its unions subscribing to revolutionary socialism and embracing the revolutionary vocation which Marx and Lenin contend is the proper calling of the trade unions in the period of transition from capitalism to socialism. The CNT has carried out socialisation in a way that acknowledges the role of the state in the development and consolidation of the revolution's gains at home and abroad. What a joy it is for a socialist to read the nationalisation, municipalisation and collectivisation proposals contained within the CNT proposals! These provisions look as if they might have been borrowed from our socialist programme and, especially, from the aforementioned draft reform from the Madrid Association. Bakunin and Marx could shake hands over this document from the CNT.'

Let us depart yet again from strict chronological order in order to reprint the CNT-UGT unity programme finally agreed on 18 March, under the pressure of Franco's invading armies:

'The CNT and the UGT, ever preoccupied with winning the war and guaranteeing the political and economic advances made by the proletariat during the revolution, and hoping to develop these whenever and wherever feasible, hereby endorse the establishment of the National Liaison Committee and reaffirm its remit on the following foundations:

National defence. The CNT and the UGT acknowledge the great strides made in the formation of the Popular Army, in its fighting ability and the technical training of its officers, and are resolved to reinforce all measures facilitating the creation of an efficient regular army, which can guarantee victory in the war and in whatever foreign engagements may derive from that victory. The CNT and UGT must be continually preoccupied with maintaining and bolstering the brotherly bonds between army personnel serving under the banner of anti-fascism.

1. The trade unions are to afford all possible support to the creation of strong reserve forces that may add to the numerical strength of the Popular Army and ensure that the latter continues to advance and that those on active service are regularly relieved. To this end, the unions are to ensure that their members enthusiastically implement mobilisation orders. They shall take

an interest in military training and weapons training among the workers and cooperate with the development of pre-military training. They shall avoid the disruption caused to individual industries by the absence of workers called to the colours, to which end they will strive to ensure that skills training is available to women and to men outside military age.

2. Both organizations lobby for the retention and invigoration of the Commissariat of War and for the fair representation of all anti-fascist forces within it. The UGT and the CNT are to ensure that such equitable representation obtains at all times and in all places. Attached to the Army Commissariat and performing the same functions, there will be a Naval Commissariat and an Air Force Commissariat. There will also be a Commissariat for the armed corps in the rearguard and it will perform the same functions. Both organizations will see to it that the existing mutual respect prevailing among military commanders, whether veterans of the former army or those promoted from within the ranks of the people, is consolidated more forcefully with each passing day, ruling out any resurrection of the shortcomings of the pre-19 July army.

3. The component organizations of the CNT and the UGT will have to secure from the government whatever is needed to implement an intensive fortifications policy, with the construction and maintenance of roads, highways and rail links and the erection of shelters for the civilian population.

4. The unions shall make it their business to keep in close touch with combatants, to which end they are to carry on regarding them as members and looking to their needs and to those of their families, without this being taken to the lengths of meddling in the specific prerogatives of military command.

5. The idea underpinning the mutual agreement of the UGT and the CNT on these short-term demands is the determination to deliver a quick and resounding defeat of fascism, strengthening the Commissariat as a means of screening and enhancing the Popular Army and making an effective contribution to the work of governments, relieving the latter of much of their responsibilities.

Industry. The CNT and the UGT are sensitive to the need to inject greater vigour into our nation's industrial output, most especially in the war industries. To this end, we must coordinate and boost the efforts of the unions. Both organisations shall strive to keep the rearguard sound and disciplined and to invest all workers, of whatever category, with the spirit of selflessness and sacrifice required at present, so that no effort may be spared in any work relating to our military needs. As part of this ethos, the UGT and CNT are to press for the following measures:

Industry and the war effort. 1. The Armaments Under-Secretariat would assume sole control of the war industries, by agreement with the National War Industries Council to be set up with CNT and UGT participation.

2. All suitable factories and workshops are to be adapted to the requirements of the war industries.

3. All raw materials are to be centralised, especially those vital to the war industries.

4. Such transportation resources as may be necessary for the prosecution of the war are to be placed at the disposal of the government, centralised and militarised, and with due respect for what is vitally necessary lest output and trade in the rearguard be subjected to unwarranted disruption.

5. The UGT and CNT shall cooperate towards the speedy establishment of a mighty war industry. The unions must assume as a matter of urgent and vital necessity the task of creating among

workers an austere spirit of vigilance against any sort of sabotage and lacklustre work practices and encourage increased commitment as a way of increasing and improving production.

Nationalisation. 6. The railways, heavy industry, shipping, the banks and other industries regarded as vital for the reconstruction of the country must be nationalised as a matter of urgency following verification of their importance by the relevant state agencies. The nationalised industries should be centralised and their development coordinated.

National councils of industry and the higher economic council. 7. The UGT and the CNT move that a Higher Economic Council be set up immediately, with both trade union organisations playing their parts, as a state agency for the implementation of this industrial nationalisation scheme as well as for the organisation and overall planning of production. This Higher Economic Council will draw up a national economic plan, and, through the National Councils of Industry, in which the unions will also have a part to play, will regulate — especially where the nationalised industries are concerned - output, distribution, credit, pricing and utilities, the importation and export of products, pay rates and trade, availing of whatever services may be necessary for the proper execution of its functions. In economic matters, the government will frame legislation in concert with the Higher Economic Council. The Higher Economic Council will set up a Labour Inspectorate for all production outlets.

Skills training. 8. In addition to whatever measures the government may have devised or may yet devise in terms of skills training, the unions are to help boost the cultural and technical levels of workers by organising special courses and schools with state subsidies.

Municipalisation of services. The CNT and UGT acknowledge the need for the overhaul or reorganisation of urban services, taking into municipal ownership those whose significance and character require this. The view being that real estate is the property of the state, urban properties, other than those bringing in low revenues, are to be made available for the use of the municipalities, with the government promulgating legislation to this effect.

Collectivisations. 1. The UGT and CNT see a need for formal legalisation of the collectives and to this end see a need for legislation on collectives determining which of these should continue in existence, setting the rules for their establishment and operation and state participation in them. Collectives not conforming to this legislation should be wound up.

2. The state is to help the collectives to adapt to said legislation, the economic advisability of which is conceded.

3. Legislation on collectives must be scrutinized and proposed to the government by the Higher Economic Council.

Wages, prices and provisions. Raising of workers' living standards and the struggle against the currently high costs of foodstuffs and the difficulties of obtaining the same are self-evident needs. To this end, the CNT and the UGT regard the following as necessary measures:

1. The unions should step up their watchfulness and struggle against speculators. Such efforts are primarily within the remit of the catering and bakery organizations and other foodstuffs and shop workers' unions.

2. Encouragement must be given to the establishment of strong retail consumer cooperatives and the establishment of production cooperatives, with the latter falling under the remit of highly restrictive legislation and the setting up of large sales outlets for most export produce under the strict supervision of the state and the Economic Council. Similarly, a plan should be drawn up for the importation of those essential items which make up the staple diet of workers, so as to ensure that the latter receive whatever allocation their family requires at a price appropriate to existing

pay scales. The government should also audit production and regulate home consumption of all produce central to our export policy.

3. The UGT and CNT reckon that a minimum wage should be introduced that is indexed to the cost of living, taking due note, on the one hand, of skills levels, and, on the other, the productivity of the individual. In this regard, in industry they are to stand by the principle of “the greater and better the output, the greater the reward” as a bonus or reward payment made without regard to gender or age for the duration of the circumstances brought about by the demands of national reconstruction. To which end, a National Pay and Prices Panel should be set up, with due representation from both trade unions.

4. Whether working for collectives or for the state, technicians should be afforded every facility for study and mobility which may lead to quantitative and qualitative improvements to the productivity of their scientific endeavours.

Trade. Both organisations are agreed on the need to introduce strict controls on trade with the outside world, whether in the form of imports or exports, raw materials or the main foreign currency-earning goods. The basis on which foreign trade is to be organised is as follows:

1. workers are to have appropriate representation on the boards of trade that will be specifically set up under the supervision of the Higher Economic Council;
2. profits are to be subject to overall legislation.

Workers’ control. It is the understanding of the Liaison Committee that workers’ control constitutes one of the workers most prized and significant gains. It is of the opinion that a law on workers’ control is required at this juncture in the country, so as to set out workers’ rights and duties And so it agrees:

1. that the government should promulgate a workers’ control law spelling out the powers of workers in respect of the control of production and monitoring of productivity, their share in administration in profits, the workers’ working conditions and defending social legislation;
2. the control agencies are to be democratically elected by direct suffrage by all of the workforce in the same factory or workshop, thereby laying the foundations of genuine labour democracy and ensuring that the workers’ interests are protected.

Agriculture. The UGT and CNT declare their support for speedy nationalisation of the land, the usufruct of which ought, preferably, to be handed over to collectives and farming cooperatives and, of the latter, especially to those set up by the UGT and CNT, respecting the wishes of those peasants who prefer to work the land individually and with the state pursuing a policy of support for the existing collectives, giving preference to those of the UGT and CNT, and those voluntarily formed in accordance with the law by the unionised farm workers. The individual farmer is to have his right to his smallholding respected, if he can show that his title has been come by lawfully and as long as the provisions of the law are observed. Both trade unions are to defend all the gains achieved by the rural masses and will strive to intensify farm output. To which end there is a need for:

- a) regulation of tillage of the land, the object being to ensure that the individual smallholder does not hinder the collective;
- b) the living standards of farm workers must be raised on the basis of proper payment for farm produce, the aim being that the peasants are properly recompensed in comparison with the costs of the industrial goods they consume, for which a fixed rate must be set;

c) the government is to assist the peasants and especially the (UGT and CNT) collectives and cooperatives in procuring machinery, seed, fertilizers, etc., and loans through the National Agricultural Credit Bank which is a necessity;

d) encouragement will be given to the establishment of experimental farms (agricultural schools), of which there ought to be at least one in every area, for the training of technicians, mechanics, organisers and administrators for the collectives and cooperatives;

e) ongoing industrialisation of farming and rationalization of crops.

Social action. The UGT and CNT reckon that there has to be an overhaul of legislation to take account of the advances by the proletariat and repeal anything that conflicts with these.

1. Legislation on accident insurance and social providence should ensure that the worker is not faced with deprivation or suffering in the event of accident, illness or old age.

2. The government must look into ways and means of introducing statutory family wage arrangements.

3. All civil, criminal, commercial law, etc., should be revised.

4. Both unions aim to safeguard the nation's wealth by organising the economy and making legal provision to ensure that the country's independence is comprehensively guaranteed. The CNT and the UGT stand ready to pursue a policy in every realm - politics, trade unionism, trade and work - giving encouragement to all those procedures and measures that are adjudged likely to expedite victory in the war. All representative bodies, trade union or official, which may be set up for the purposes outlined and with the agreement of both organisations shall have UGT and CNT representation proportionate with the relative strength of these organisations and depending on the body concerned and its theatre of operations. Both organisations undertake that, come the end of the fight against fascism, they will guarantee the right of the Spanish people, and especially of the working class, to endow itself with a form of government that reflects the sacrifices currently being made and that genuine democracy will be retained in our country. The National Liaison Committee shall at all times and in every specific instance analyse problems relative to free expression and the impartial enforcement of justice.

Addendum: the UGT and the CNT have scrutinised the proposals from the latter organisation concerning incorporation of the trade union organisations into government roles. Following discussion of this issue, it has been agreed:

1. the UGT, which has always considered itself represented in government by the PSOE and, currently, by the PSOE and the PCE, takes the view that it behoves the country's constitutional authorities and the political parties making up the Popular Front to pronounce upon this matter once and for all;

2. the UGT declares, acknowledging that the CNT is in a different position from its own, that this will be no impediment to the incorporation of the CNT into government functions. As a matter of the utmost urgency, the two organisations shall look into the matter of their incorporation into the Popular Front.'

Before analysing this compact we would need to examine all of the attempts (or at least the most important attempts) to unite the Spanish proletariat. But before we do so, it is no less indispensable that we review the historical record a little.

As we saw in volume I, on the eve of the First Republic there had been only one trade union organisation in Spain, the FRE, affiliated to the First International. At its congress in The Hague the First International split and the labour movement was deeply riven by disputes that had arisen abroad. Just as the International had begun to organise in Spain at the instigation of Fanelli, an

envoy dispatched by Bakunin, so too can its division be attributed to the handiwork of an outsider, Marx's son-in-law, Lafargue, who was dispatched to Spain with the apple of discord, which Marx used to split the international workers' movement.

In fact the Spanish split came in 1872 during a congress held in Zaragoza. During 1872 the breakaway faction was grouped around a newspaper, *La Emancipación*, and set up the *Federación Madrileña* (Madrid Federation), affiliated to the schismatic Federal Council in London. In 1888, at a congress held in Barcelona by the Marxists, it was resolved to lay the foundations of the UGT.

As for the Bakuninist majority, it went into decline as a result of the repressions which followed one another from 1872 on... 1872 being the year when, following a heated 15-day debate in Parliament, the Spanish section of the International was outlawed and thereafter subjected to implacable persecution. Heroically the libertarian organisation passed through a clandestine period after the Restoration and re-emerged into public life under a variety of names, one of them, *Solidaridad Obrera*, the forerunner of the CNT. *Solidaridad Obrera* (the organisation) founded in 1907 the newspaper *Solidaridad Obrera*, managed by Anselmo Lorenzo.

Now let us review the various attempts at unity.

The first compact between the CNT and the UGT was in 1916 and triggered a 24-hour general strike by way of a protest at the escalating cost of living. In 1917 both organisations were in touch again over the revolutionary upheaval of August, half-heartedly contrived by liberal-democratic politicians. Later on, Salvador Seguí negotiated a further CNT-UGT compact which a plenum at the end of 1920 disavowed. The refusal of UGT personnel to join the general strike declared by the CNT over the deportations to Maó once again ruptured the entente between the two trade union centres.

Well into the Second Republic, following the 1933 elections and under the shadow of the 'black biennium', Largo Caballero embarked upon a series of incendiary speeches and overtures directed at the CNT. The resentment generated by the two-and-a-half years of republican-socialist rule, and the quasi-Soviet stance of the 'Spanish Lenin' added to the reservations of CNT members. Nonetheless, the overtures from the caballerista socialists made headway among the Asturian militants who, as early as the CNT's 1919 Comedia Congress had spoken out in favour of 'fusion' with the UGT.

In February 1934 the need for a Workers' Alliance was discussed at a National Plenum of CNT Regional Committees. Under the accords of that plenum the CNT enjoined the UGT 'to make a clear and public statement of its revolutionary aspirations', bearing in mind that 'in speaking of revolution this should not be done in the belief that one was aiming at a simple power shift as on 14 April but the suppression of capitalism and the state.' On 23 June of that year, another National Plenum of Regional Committees was held and it recorded the UGT's failure to respond. But the Asturian Regional Committee arrived at the plenum with a bi-lateral pact bearing the signature of the UGT.

Let us briefly summarise the contents of this agreement. Both signatory organisations acknowledged as their ultimate objective the necessity of making a social revolution in Spain for the purpose of 'introducing a regime of economic, political and social equality founded upon federalist socialist principles.'

But that declaration left unanswered the essence of the question put by the February plenum of the CNT. Although the intention to abolish capitalism was taken on board, the same was not true of abolition of the state. As a result, for all its federalist socialist flavour, economic, political and social equality was as vague as ever.

Another of the crucial points in the agreement states that the labour organisations entering into the commitment should break off their relations with the bourgeois political parties in an automatic way. It is also understood that the PSOE is immune to the spirit and the letter of the anti-bourgeois declaration. And it could be assumed that if the signatory organisations were only to have dealings with proletarian parties, this was no impediment to the latter's having dealings of their own with the bourgeois parties. And that is exactly what happened. The Workers' Alliance, established nation-wide, was a Babel featuring more or less authentic proletarians, more or less pretentious intellectuals, socialists of varying degrees of moderation, republicans of the centre and of the left, petit bourgeois and Vaticanist nationalists, fascist-style separatists like *escamots* of Dencàs and Badia, and police, in and out of uniform. The latter, even as they rebelled against the central state on 6 October, stormed the CNT unions at gunpoint and jailed their most outstanding militants.

Nonetheless, the compact signed in Asturias prescribed in one of its clauses that the Executive Committee that would be established there would be subordinate to a National Committee charged with directing the revolt nationwide. The response to the problem of the state is perfectly expressed in the national programme of that revolt, made public after the Asturian revolution had been crushed. All in all, it was a state-socialist programme of the old school.

From 1934 on, the unity question made headway among even the most stick-in-the-mud CNT personnel and figured on the agenda of plenums and congresses. Prior to the Zaragoza congress, and at that congress, the CNT reiterated its invitations to the UGT in the usual terms. But the leftist honeymoon election period of February 1936 completely wiped out such concerns from the minds of socialists.

Not until August 1936, with the revolutionary period at its height, was there a further bilateral attempt at an approximation. We are referring to the agreement-in-principle of 11 August between the UGT of Catalonia, an offshoot of the PSUC, that party itself, the FAI and the CNT. The object of that pact was simply to create a Liaison Committee to 'render more effective the workers' revolutionary action against fascism and to reinforce and galvanise unity' and it set an example for the National Committees of the CNT and UGT.

That agreement went into a second edition in the month of October. And that new edition, endorsed by the same organisations and parties, was a repetition of the political declaration of the first Generalitat government to include CNT representation. It encapsulates all the legislation under consideration in respect of collectivisation, worker control, respect for small property, banking controls, municipalisation of accommodation, nationalisation, political and military collaboration with the central government, the struggle against 'uncontrollable groups', etc.

The earlier invitation to the national committees of the CNT and UGT was taken up in November 1936. The document endorsed then by the representatives of the UGT Executive and the CNT's National Committee was more of an establishing of a contract and an earnest fraternity (at the time both socialists and an anarchist figured in the central government). Largo Caballero described the aforementioned document as merely a 'non-aggression pact'.

Relations between the CNT and the UGT were further tightened up after May 1937. This climate of unity was enforced by the political crisis that ousted Largo Caballero and the CNT from power, and by the battle waged against Largo Caballero inside the PSOE and in the UGT itself. But in early January 1938, Largo Caballero went under, politically speaking, and was ejected from party and union. The UGT was left under the sway of the pro-communist socialist faction and it was with this new Executive that the CNT was to have to get along.

Let us now make a comparative study between the proposals of the UGT, the CNT's counter proposals and what was finally agreed by both organisations on 18 March 1938. For simplicity's sake we shall summarise all the proposals and clauses and set them out beside the respective anagrams. Which is to say, in the following manner:

Military Affairs. UGT: Suggests the establishment of a mighty army imbued with an anti-fascist spirit for the crushing of Franco and the foreign invaders. The unions are to offer intense support to the government and furnish it with every facility and assistance in the achievements of this objective.

CNT: Expands upon this outlook to the effect of strengthening the army with an eye to external war contingencies.

CNT-UGT: Agree to amalgamate both views.

COMMISSARIAT-UGT: The Liaison Committee which is to be set up will work to ensure that the unions support the work of the War Commissariat.

CNT: Adds that within the Commissariat the anti-fascist forces should be fairly represented, shunning all monopolistic tendencies.

CNT-UGT: Substantially embrace the CNT viewpoint.

War Industries. UGT: Both union organisations shall cooperate with the government in order to create, rapidly, a powerful war industry. It will oversee security against sabotage and the adaptation of industry for the purposes of war. Immediate formation of National Industrial Councils with trade union participation.

Role of these Councils: to regulate production, prices, pay, earnings, importation and exportation of products, in accordance at all times with government guidelines. Said Councils to be answerable to a Higher Economic Council to be established by the government.

CNT: Creation of an Under-Secretariat of War Industries and a National War Industries Council with representation for government and for the trade union associations. This Council to assume the absolute burden of the technical and administrative management of the war industries.

CNT-UGT: Accept the first part of the UGT view on the need to establish a mighty war industry and the responsibilities assigned to the workers. The Under-Secretariat of Armaments, already in existence, is to assume sole control in accordance with the War Industries Council, wherein the unions will be represented. Centralisation of all raw materials.

Nationalisations. UGT: Nationalisation of essential industries. Centralisation by the government of the industries nationalised. Management of these by experts appointed by the appropriate ministry, but account taken of the views of the workers. Centralisation of banking with an eye to nationalisation of banking.

CNT: Rapid nationalisation of industries basic to the production of raw materials: mining, railways, heavy industry, banking, telephones, telegraphs and aviation.

CNT-UGT: Espouse the CNT view. The government to assess the necessity of nationalisation. Industries must be centralised.

Banking. UGT: The government should aim at centralisation preparatory to the nationalisation of banking.

CNT: While nationalisation of banking is underway the state must guarantee impartial granting of credit facilities to the collectives. Seeks recognition for its project of an Iberian Trade Union Bank.

CNT-UGT: Make no special mention of nationalisation of banking nor of recognition for the Iberian Trade Union Bank. The state is to help those collectives of acknowledged economic value that conform to legislation.

Municipalisation. UGT: All assets, furniture and real estate, belonging to fascist proprietors are state property. Urban real estate is to be put to use by the municipalities in accordance with such laws as prescribed by the government.

CNT-UGT: Municipalisation of those urban services which may so require on account of their importance and characteristics. Real estate — state property (urban real estate, excepting those offering small returns) — shall be put to use by the Municipality by means of government legislation.

Economy. UGT: Creation by government of a Higher Economic Council to plan production.

CNT: Formation of a National Economic Council within the state, made up of representatives of the state and of the trade union organisations. It will manage output, distribution, credit, wage schedules, trade generally, work inspection, planning. To technicians from collectives and state alike, it will furnish the necessary research materials. It will set up state-subsidised trade and technical training schools.

CNT-UGT: Creation of a Higher Economic Council within the state, with trade union participation. It will prepare the national economic plan, and will, especially in the nationalised industries, regulate output, distribution, credit, prices and profits, exports and imports, payment, trade and work inspection. In economic matters the government will legislate in accordance with this Council. As for professional training, independent of what the state may do in this regard, the unions will help to raise the professional, technical and cultural levels of workers through special, state-subsidised courses.

Agriculture. UGT: Nationalisation and industrialisation of the land and its transfer in usufruct to the peasants who are to work it individually or collectively. Intensification of cultivation in such a way as to leave no arable inch of land uncultivated. Improvement of farm workers' living standards through raising prices for their produce. The government is to supply peasants with machinery, seed, fertiliser and loans through the Agricultural Credit Bank. Encouragement of experimental farms and agricultural colleges to train technicians and administrators.

CNT: The soil and sub-soil are national property. The land will be given over in usufruct to the unions of the CNT and UGT as a matter of preference. The government will favour farming collectives of both organisations through loans (through the agency of the Agricultural Credit Bank until such time as banking may be nationalised), expert assistance, training and experimentation centres. Progressive industrialisation of agriculture and rationalisation of tillage by the National Economic Council. In all bodies which may be set up with an eye to agricultural reconstruction, both union organisations are to be represented along with the state.

CNT-UGT: Speedy nationalisation of the land. This will be given over in usufruct preferably to the collectives and farming co-operatives of the CNT and UGT. Both organisations will defend all of the gains achieved by the peasants and will strive to boost agricultural production. Regulation of farming for the purpose of ensuring that individual tillage of the land may not prove a hindrance to the collective. Improvement of peasants' living standards through increased prices for farm produce. Progressive industrialisation of farming and rationalisation of farming.

Collectivisations. UGT: Identification of the collectivist movement and the farm co-operative movement. Respect for agricultural smallholdings worked directly. The land of which the individual farmers have the usufruct will be allowed to exceed the amount which each one of these

individuals with his family may be able to cultivate. Step up the formation of farm co-operatives (one for each locality) and immediate legislation of established collectives. Marshalling of co-operatives into regional or provincial federations and incorporation of them into the national and international co-operative movement.

CNT: Recognition, intensification and legal protection for the collectivist system in industry, in the countryside, in trade and in the whole economic complex which may have escaped nationalisation. Acknowledgement of collectives' right to organise among themselves and to create an economy of their own consistent with government and tax prescriptions. Propagation of consumer co-operatives to counter the bourgeoisie's speculation in small trade. Freedom in both organisations to encourage co-operatives according to their particular conceptions of these. Review of existing legislation on co-operatives.

CNT-UGT: Legislation of collectives. Determine which of these should continue to exist. Need to legislate on rules for their establishment and operation. State intervention in them. Those collectives which do not conform to legislation must go. Those in conformity with legislation and recognised economic necessity are to be assisted by the state. Legislation on collectives is to be proposed by the Higher Economic Council. Encouragement of the establishment of consumer co-operatives at the very least, and of production co-operatives subject to highly restrictive legislation. State support for existing agricultural collectives, with preferential treatment for those of the CNT and UGT, and those which may be set up voluntarily by farm workers in accordance with the law. On a preferential basis, government shall supply the CNT-UGT collectives with machinery, seed, fertilisers and loans through the Agricultural Credit Bank. Farms and experimental schools are to be set up to train technicians, mechanics and administrators for the collectives and co-operatives. The wishes of those peasants who prefer to farm on an individual basis shall be respected. The direct cultivator will have his title to land legally acquired honoured.

Wages. **UGT:** Establishment of a minimum wage indexed to the cost of living, but taking account of trade categories and the contribution of the individual. In industry the principle of 'better pay for increased and better production' will be implemented regardless of sex or age distinctions.

CNT: Overhaul of wages. Such payment as may make it possible to earn the minimum required to meet basic needs. Introduction of a National Mixed Wages and Workers' Control Commission, answerable to the National Economic Council, to regulate professional payment in each industry and area in accordance with statistics and to look into family wage schemes.

CNT-UGT: Adopted, the formula suggested by the UGT, plus the establishment of a National Wages and Prices Commission with representation for both trade union groupings. Government to embark upon an examination of family pay arrangements through the law.

Workers' control. **UGT:** The government must promulgate a law on Workers' Control to prescribe the powers and obligations of the workers in this regard. It should embrace workers' control of production, their take-over of administration and profits, working conditions and defence of social legislation. The Control Committees are to be democratically elected by direct suffrage of the workers in the factories and workshops.

CNT: Legislation on Workers' Control in those works not directly administered by the workers.

CNT-UGT: Adopted, the arrangement suggested by the UGT.

Social Legislation. UGT: Retention of the advances achieved by the proletariat. Review of existing legislation so as to incorporate into it these advances and to eliminate precepts at odds with the demands already secured.

CNT: Review for the purpose of acknowledgement of the revolution's advances. Elimination from this legislation of anything which may imply retrogression. Legislation on Workers' Control, Accident Insurance and Social Provision (for illness or old age), establishment of a National Mixed Educational Council, accountable to the state and with participation by both union groupings for the purposes of re-educating the people along rationalist lines, in keeping with the scientific and moral progress augured by the revolution. Special legislation for foreign firms, with an eye to retrieval of national assets. Overhaul of all civil, criminal and commercial legislation. In any bodies of a trade union, state or mixed nature which may be established, the CNT and UGT will have to have representation proportionate with their size.

CNT-UGT: Incorporation into existing social legislation of the proletariat's advances and elimination from it of anything found to be at odds with those advances. Legislation on Accident Insurance and Social Provision. Overhaul of all civil, criminal and commercial legislation, etc. Retrieval of the national wealth in order to ensure the freedom of the country. Policy of assistance on the part of the CNT and UGT in every regard in order to bring the war to a speedy and victorious conclusion. On all representative bodies of a trade union and governmental nature which may be set up to handle the various areas agreed in these bases, the UGT and the CNT are to have a presence proportionate with their membership in the location concerned.

Political Matters. CNT: Undertakes now and always to stand by a social regime of true democracy, to combat any class-based or party-based totalitarian ambitions. Initiation of a new constituent period which may incorporate popular aspirations into a Federal Democratic Socialist Republic. The CNT undertakes to see to it that the proletariat is effectively involved in the governance of the Spanish state, without excluding from this non-proletarian forces, who will be represented in due proportions. The CNT calls for the immediate establishment of an anti-fascist Popular Front and the reorganisation of the government...both of these on the basis of representation proportionate with the numerical strength of each party and organisation.

CNT-UGT: Both organisations undertake to ensure, after the war, that the people, and especially the working class, enjoys the right to endow itself with that form of government that, in a context of genuine democracy, corresponds to their sacrifices. Both organisations are as a matter of urgency to look into the matter of their incorporation into the Popular Front. The UGT states that it will raise no objection to the incorporation of the CNT into the functions of government.

With our dissection now completed, we note first that in military affairs the CNT aligns itself with the proposal to set up a mighty army under state control and build up the peculiar or internal attributes of that army with external ones of militaristic provenance, offering no assurances to the people other than the very meagre reassurance of a Commissariat which is also a creature of the state.

On war production, the CNT accepts only that unions should be involved through a Council which is in turn subordinate to the state, or to its offshoot, the Armaments Under-Secretariat. But the Under-Secretariat's assumption of sole control seems to contradict its operating simultaneously in accordance with the aforementioned Councils.

In the next respect, the CNT accepts *mutu proprio* nationalisation of basic industries and that such nationalisation be determined by the state's criterion. The state is still placed at the apex of

the social pyramid. The same thing happens with the nationalisation of banking which the CNT embellishes with a new bank: the Iberian Trade Union Bank.

On municipalisation the CNT strikes once and for all the colours of its classical thinking regarding free municipalities, which the Confederation had always sponsored by inscribing the struggle for libertarian communism as the chief of its aims. Libertarian communism always meant this: a social regime which had as its principle the autonomous and federal free municipality (commune), a notion diametrically opposed to state centralism and coexistence with the state. The best illustration of this was the resolution approved by the May 1936 Zaragoza Congress on the question of 'The conception of libertarian communism'. Under the CNT-UGT compact the municipality remained merely the administrator of the real estate of militaristic, centralistic, usurious state.

The best proof of the centralist bias of the compact we find in the section dealing with the economy. A Higher Economic Council within the state, made up of representatives of the state and of the trade union organisations, was to have a monopoly over economic affairs.

The state, master of the army, of industry, of the municipalities and of the entire economy, is master also of the nationalised land. And the peasants are but its sharecroppers. State usury persists through its nationalised lending banks.

The CNT and the UGT in concert reserved for the state the power (on the recommendations of the Higher Economic Council) to legislate on collectives and the highly refined power to oversee them. Plus the power to determine which ones ought to continue or to go under. Only those conforming to the legislation were to be given state aid.

Both organisations accepted the continuance of wage slavery and the scandal of wage differentials. And the Stakhanovite principle of 'the greater and better the output, the better the pay', regardless of sex or age.

The Control Committees were to be democratically elected by the workers, sure: but through legislation, the government was to establish the powers of these controllers who were at the same time to be controlled by the one called upon to be controlled.

The two contracting parties called for the incorporation into extant social legislation of the advances made by the proletariat and the elimination of all backward-looking features from that legislation. But as basically little or nothing had altered, the task of adding on and pruning away was going to be an easy one.

And to wind up, there are the short-term and medium-term political aspects. As for the latter, the CNT makes boundless sacrifices. It begins by whittling its irreconcilable incompatibility with the state down to a mere expression of a form of government. Takes exception only to the totalitarian state and forgets the lesson that every government carries a totalitarian baton in its kitbag. The CNT opts for 'a true social democracy', which is to say, for a federal democratic socialist republic, a hieroglyphic that perhaps sheds some light on its ensuing intention to initiate 'a new constituent period', which is to say, to intervene in election contests...abdication, pure and simple, of its apolitical past. And as if there was any lingering doubt, the CNT undertakes to yoke the proletariat to the chariot of the Spanish state.

Finally, by way of a rider, the Confederation is careful not to forget its immediate political demand for a place in the current government and any which may be formed thereafter, relying upon the UGT, upon the timeliness of the compact and, maybe, upon the prospect of a future electorate.

On 6 February the FIJL had sat down to the business of its Second Congress, its biggest gathering since its establishment in 1932. Its press organ, Juventud Libre, was coming out as a daily at that time. The gathering took place in the Teatro de la Metalurgia belonging to the CNT, and there were delegations from the Centre, the South, Levante, Aragón and Catalonia in attendance. Young libertarians serving with the military units on the fronts also sent representatives. One of the most sizeable delegations was from Catalonia, for among the main business of the congress was a debate on the insubordinate attitude adopted by the Catalan youth vis à vis the overall line of the youth organisation. Two tendencies, one centralist and the other autonomist, had been evident for some time past. The Congress had to pronounce its verdict upon a proposition which, centralistic in tenor, was endorsed by the bulk of the working party and on a minority report presented by the representative from the 119th Mixed Brigade (26th Division) that enshrined the federal aspirations of Catalonia. The majority inclined towards the proposition from the working party. Defeated, but not convinced, the delegates from Catalonia, with the backing of most of the delegations from the Aragón front, signified that, given the federalist nature of the youth organisation, they did not feel themselves this time obliged to abide by the outcome of the law of majorities.

In the end, the Congress proceeded to appoint a new Peninsular Committee. It was made up as follows:

General Secretary Lorenzo Iñigo
Organising Secretary Ramón Liarte
Propaganda Secretary José Leiva
Women's Secretary Carmen Gómez
Cultural and Sporting Secretary Prometeo Miralles
Political, Social and trade union secretary Manuel López
Administrative Secretary Jacinto Rueda
Military Secretary José Cabañas
Chairman of the AJA Serafin Aliaga
Delegate to the CNT National Committee José Consuegra
Military Secretary of the AJA Alfredo Camín
Delegate to the FAI Peninsular Committee Avelino Blanco

The Alianza Juvenil Antifascista (Anti-fascist Youth Alliance; AJA) had been set up in 1937 and was based mainly on the FIJL, the JSU and the youth movements of Izquierda Republicana and Unión Republicana. Here are the principles of the AJA:

'1. Youth and Revolution. The AJA, acknowledging the social, political and economic transformation, wrought in our country since 19 July last year, undertakes to consolidate the revolution's gains.

Likewise, the youth organisations will strive constantly for alliance of the CNT and UGT, for victory in the war and for prosecution of the revolution. Similarly they will look sympathetically upon the unity of like-minded political forces to the same end.

The AJA's members express the opinion that all of the political and social organisations of our people, marshalled in the anti-fascist camp, should be represented in the leadership thereof, in proportion to their numbers and influence, following the drafting of a common programme to speed our victory over fascism and to galvanise the progress of the revolution.

2. The Youth of the Popular Army. The AJA affirms that our combatants are fighting for national independence, for freedom and for economic and social emancipation. This war of ours is not just another squabble among the vested interests of capitalism.

Spanish youth knows that its future, the achievement of the right to culture, freedom and wellbeing hangs upon victory in the war being waged by the Spanish people against fascism. It is for this reason that we proclaim it the duty of every young person to abide by the conscription laws and serve within the Regular Popular Army as a loyal, disciplined soldier, heroic unto death. And as a result, the organisations below, which from day one of the struggle have given selflessly to the people's cause, sacrificing their finest militants, take upon themselves the task of educating the new generation of our country in the spirit of respect for the united command represented by the army staff and the government.

Competence, loyalty and heroism are the virtues which every combatant has a duty to display in full. For those who merit it, we demand ready access to positions of command in our glorious Popular Army. We need an army for which military technique holds no secrets. The popular war academies must look for their pupils among those who have most distinguished themselves in the fray. Should there be any among those equipped with the minimum learning required to embark upon professional training, the government must lay on induction courses to place with technical know-how in positions of command those who have earned this through their heroism and loyalty, since, in the last analysis, they alone are the guarantee of our army and thus of our victories.

The view of Spanish youth is that, as of now, it is possible to redouble the efforts made hitherto and that it stands ready to make ever greater sacrifices, and greater efforts in combat, furnishing hundreds upon hundreds of new fliers, tank corpsmen, sailors, gunners and dozens of thousands of new soldiers.

Spanish youth stands ready to improve still further upon its expenditure of unselfishness and heroism on the fronts, and its onward striving in combat until ultimate victory so as to press on then with the establishment of a just and free Spain. To this end it asks that, parallel with their heroic efforts, young combatants' welfare be guaranteed, whether these be workers, peasants or intellectuals. Likewise, these youths left disabled as a result of the fighting will have to receive from the state a professional education which may afford them a dignified existence so that they go on being of service to the people.

3. Youth in Production. Spanish youth wants the nation's war output to expand so that it may be able to manufacture in our country everything that we need for the struggle against the fascist invaders. We must manufacture more and better material than the enemy has and to this end we are ready to expand the super-production brigades and manufacture clubs with the great mission not only of increasing but also of making daily improvements in our war output. The government must help in the spread of these brigades and clubs and should withdraw from them those youths who distinguish themselves by their unselfishness and competence so as to turn them into the new technicians Spain needs. To develop the war industries the situation in our country so demands, the government should be directing into production the thousands of hands presently idle in our country.

To the same end, we propose that in the war industry, if it is to meet the required target, a National Armaments and Munitions Council be created, made up of representatives from the CNT and the UGT, under government direction.

4. Peasant Youth. Since the outbreak of the war, the peasant youth of Spain has given many thousands of lives to the people's cause, in conjunction with the rest of the youth. It too has a great mission to accomplish: to do what it can to boost the output of our agriculture so as to draw from the soil the greatest possible amount of produce with which to meet the needs of the country and of the war.

The Youth Alliance will struggle alongside peasant youth to secure these rights, for respect and support for the peasant collectives and to guarantee the property rights and unfettered development of small peasant proprietors.

We declare our opposition to all speculators and any who seek to turn the transformation of society wrought in the countryside to their own benefit in order to become a new class of proprietors. The Youth Alliance must, if need be, give its material assistance to the countryside and press tirelessly for the provision to it of all that is needed to afford the peasants a rounded technical training.

5. Youth and Culture. The revolution, in freeing youth of the exploitation of the big capitalists and landlords, in winning freedom and well-being for the new generation, has inspired the whole of the younger generation with the urge to learn, to equip itself with culture, to expand its intellectual facilities and creative capabilities. And so we welcome the creation of the Workers' Institutes, an endeavour which must be continued so that the higher centres of learning, the universities, etc. are opened to all young people of ability. This, together with the unstinting campaigns to eradicate illiteracy in rural areas and in the army, through the Cultural Militias, libraries on the fronts, educational missions to the peasants and the spread of the "Alerta" movement for the pre-military, physical and cultural training of Spanish youth, will ensure that the generation of the revolution may be the start of educated, healthy and sturdy generations which will reaffirm in the future those political and social gains for which we today are striving.

All of the young workers who find themselves denied the ability to make their contribution to society through their labour, whether through physical weakness, congenital or acquired illnesses, must receive appropriate aid from the state. The Spanish youth also hopes that a requisite watch will be kept on the hygiene of the working environment, with workers being assured of health care in all of the places of production.

6. General Remarks. The Youth shedding its blood on the fronts for the revolution and, together with it, the whole of the Spanish younger generation, regards it as necessary that there should be a solid revolutionary order in the rearguard if the struggle against fascism is to be waged victoriously.

The organisations named below declare their respect for the free self-determination of the several Hispanic regions which display the characteristics of nationhood, without this meaning separatism, whose foes we shall always be.

As a moral principle, the Youth Alliance will employ loyalty and will openly combat coarse and aggressive language, calumny and any sowing of discord, whether on the fronts or in the rearguard, which tends to undermine the unity of anti-fascist forces.

Through the unity of the anti-fascist and revolutionary organisations we wish to unite all Spanish youth, whatever their political or trade union organisation, on the basis of what they feel for the cause of Spain's independence and the revolution.

With that formidable weapon, our country's youth will pursue its revolutionary struggle for a Spain free of exploiters, where all of the wealth is in the hands of the people, where all young people are assured of well-being and of their right to culture and freedom.'¹

Now let us focus our attention upon military events (so full of implications for political events), which began in mid-December 1937 and continued through the whole spring of 1938.

NOTES

¹ *Nosotros*, 2 December 1937

Chapter Three: From Victory at Teruel to Disaster in Aragón

At the time of the military developments that were to culminate in the collapse of the Aragón front, our lines on that front were snaked from north to south, from the border with France as far as the Broto valley; thence they shifted south-west as far as Biescas, crossing the highlands parallel to the Gállego river and then swung in an easterly direction across the massif and Gratal heights and through a succession of villages until they formed a sort of noose around the city of Huesca. From Cuarte they crossed the massif from the Almudevar highway, entered the Sierra de Torralba and the Vedado de Zuera as far as the environs of Leciñena. From there they led in a southerly direction, swept along the Ebro as far as Osera and then westwards via Fuentes, Puebla de Albornón and Fuendetodas, before heading southwards again, to encircle the city of Teruel.

Ever since the end of the northern campaign, the enemy had been marshalling his forces with a view to a decisive push against Madrid. The object of the enemy concentration was to breach the front at Guadalajara.

On 15 December 1937, the day on which the attack on Teruel was launched, the newspapers carried an article lifted from the *Boletín Oficial del Estado Mayor del Ejército de Tierra*. The article closed like this:

‘The geographical factor operates in favour of republican Spain, which is to say the only feasible Spain. Today we constitute, militarily, strategically, economically and politically a homogeneous whole, well co-ordinated and capable of energetic responses. We can reply to attacks not merely by resisting but also by attacking. Naturally we shall say nothing of the plans of our commanders. Actions will do the talking at the opportune moment. As for the enemy’s plans, the reports reaching us are confused, various and contradictory. Will the attack come via Huesca against Lleida, via Teruel against Castelló, via Sigüenza against Guadalajara, via Arganda against Alcalá de Henares, Pozoblanco, Jaen or Almería? Will there be an overall combination of attacks? Or will he concentrate on just one sweeping and crucial operation just as he did in the North? Will there be a flurry of feinting movements to mislead us? We know, of course, that many of his northern forces have been transferred to the East and the Centre. We know too that Italian, German and Moroccan contingents continue to disembark on the Peninsula, and huge consignments of war material with them. We know that Non-Intervention continues to do us enormous damage... But we know also that we have an army at our disposal.’

The push against Teruel was admirably prepared, but left much to be desired in its execution. There was but slight cohesion among the units and even less mobility in the troops. Troops were pinned down unduly in protracting mopping-up operations against die-hard pockets and no account was taken of the capture of advantageous positions by means of pressing home the advance. This afforded the enemy time to reply with a series of rapid and powerful counter-attacks. These counter-thrusts brought him the benefit of the capture of the Sierra Palomera heights, and so he was able to press on southwards and capture the heights overlooking the city

without undue difficulty. In this way, he was able to re-take the city after 70 days of bitter fighting and implacably inclement weather conditions (-18°). With his lines secured on that front, the Francoist commander then redeployed his attacking forces and, within the space of one month, had removed his entire war machine to the Aragón front.

On 15 March 1938, the CNT National Committee forwarded to Prime Minister Negrín, a document signed in Barcelona by its general secretary, Mariano Vázquez, wherein a number of criticisms were made of the government's war policy. Beneath the heading 'Critique of the capture of Teruel', admiration was expressed for 'the planning and execution of the operation against that city', although a distinction was made 'between that which culminated brilliantly in the seizure of the city under attack and what subsequently led to the catastrophic straits in which we now find ourselves.' The catastrophic straits had been caused by the collapse of the eastern front following the three-month operation centred on Teruel.

As its primary criticism of the prosecution of that operation, the document went on to say:

'Above all, one has to single out the incomprehensible relief of the attacking forces when, having entered the city victoriously, they found themselves replaced in the task which, just like the task of eradicating the rebel pockets lingering in the city, was not merely the finishing touch to all that had gone before, but indeed the very key to capitalising upon it. Next, one has to point to the miscalculation implicit in the failure to amend — in the light of the unexpected overwhelming nature of the outcome and of the resultant boost to the troops' fighting morale — the plan which had initially been sketched out, cautiously and applying to Teruel only, for complementing the units which had borne the brunt of the operation with the reserves which had remained intact and for deploying every last man of them until reaching the point where the Guadalaviar and Alfambra separate from the Jiloca, establishing a line of resistance stretching from the Sierra Palomera to the Sierra de Albarracín, whereby the exposure of Teruel to enemy artillery fire might have been averted...'

The report advances the suggestion that the attack had been only a diversionary move, calculated simply to drawing off enemy troops who had been marshalled with an eye to other fronts. That being so, the document goes on, it ought not to be overlooked:

'...that these troop concentrations, which the Command deemed sufficiently important for it to be necessary to break them up, were strategically located in communications centres which, by virtue of their distribution and the fact that they afforded the enemy the benefit of being able to move along internal lines (of communications) made it possible for him to re-deploy his forces within a matter of days upon the Teruel front: in the light of which, it was a mistake to content oneself with displacing him from the theatre of war, and to assume, frivolously and gratuitously, that the enemy would remain out of action, instead of steps being taken to force a change in his strategic situation...'

The Command ought to have ensured that the enemy would believe that their plan of attack had not ended with the capture of Teruel: but that no effort would be spared to fend off a supposed greater danger, rebuild their military prestige, their international standing and the morale of their rearguard. The document goes on:

'So we see, that, with the fall of La Muela on 31 December, and with the enemy located no more than 500 metres outside of Teruel, the Command not only failed to take appropriate steps to face up to this new and extremely serious situation (and even without the perils implicit in the initial situation, this was absolutely inexcusable), but decided to withdraw the Army of Manoeuvres and to cut down other important resources, which, at the very moment when the enemy (at a point

when the offensive had been run down) was concentrating in order to engage us on the front to which we had carried the fighting, implied dissipating those resources, thereby deploying them to no purpose on other fronts where nothing of any seriousness could be attempted and where, since the nationalist troops were inactive, nothing needed to be done.'

But, with the enemy's intentions already discernible, the Command determined upon hopeless and suicidal action which boiled down to a counter-attack mounted by a single reserve Division. But that plan, which of itself might have been correct, went awry when efforts were concentrated on securing Cerro Gordo without the necessary resources being available and when there was insufficient emphasis upon serious harassment of the enemy's flanks. The Teruel operation, the document goes on to say, might have been effective had it been linked to another offensive designed to secure an important base for supporting movement by the Army of the East.

'The upshot of so many, so very many sins,' it concludes, 'in terms of actions, such as withdrawing significant resources from the army units located in Teruel and dispersing them on other fronts; and in the shape of omissions such as the launching of a push in the direction of Singra without adequate resources, and the failure to match it with due complementary activity, was not long in coming: the enemy, his first tentative attacks upon the centre having failed, brought exploratory pressures to bear upon the flanks and, upon discovering on the left flank, exactly where the Armies of the East and of Levante knit together, a weak spot, in that the average density along the fronts there was not in excess of 120 men per kilometre, hurled himself through it to seize Sierra Palomera and Alfambra, as a result of which some days later he re-took Teruel and occupied positions posing a real threat in the Maestrazgo, whereas our Command, with inconceivable insouciance set about not only moving our most battle-hardened forces at a whim, but also disorganising them, in that the secondment of significant numbers from our units to others has resulted in some Divisions being left with only their officers and staff.'

In General Rojo's book *España Heroica*, one may read the following explanation for the aforementioned criticisms:

'That the manoeuvre had been a success was already apparent from the fact that the enemy decided to call off the offensive against Madrid, and hastened to Teruel to give battle with his reserves. What had turned out to be a favourable situation had to be capitalised upon. In Teruel we had enough forces to fight on defensively, but not for pressing home the attack and it was advisable to strike elsewhere. Just as this plan was about to be set in action, the situation altered unexpectedly and so radically as to preclude any other action on our part, forcing us to move up all our reserves to Teruel. The enemy had attacked the external front once again on the 29th but at this blow the front gave way due to panic: significant positions were lost and our adversary captured ground as far as the city itself.

...Teruel, which had been left totally unmanned by our troops in the early hours of the night of the 31st (a detail which is telling but unknown to many people) was reoccupied four hours later by the very same unit which had given it up, without which neither the enemy, nor those under siege nor the back-up troops would have been aware of such an unfortunate accident.'¹

The Teruel operation involved some 40,000 men. The enemy garrison was reckoned at 10,000. Among the attacking forces, a significant role was played by the 25th Division. Shortly before the city was lost once more, the 125th and 126th Brigades of the 28th Division (likewise made up of CNT personnel) were moved to that front. As for the republican losses, one account among

¹ Vicente Rojo, *España Heroica*, Buenos Aires: Americalee, 1942, pp.140-141

the many reckons them at 2,100 dead and wounded together (750 from the 25th Division). Not until 22 January was the last enemy redoubt in the city mopped up, according to General Rojo, and by then fascist reinforcements were at the gates of Teruel. As we shall see anon in greater detail, the promotions set-up suffered on this occasion from the usual partisanship. Only Lister, the commander of the 11th Division, was promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

At around this time, the FAI issued the following circular to its affiliates:

‘To the Anarchist Groups. Respected comrades: Of late the situation at home and abroad has deteriorated considerably. The recent Teruel disaster is before all our eyes.

On the international scene, Hitler’s speech, the resignation of the British Minister of State, the hurried meetings of the chancelleries and general staffs of a number of countries signify a deterioration of the situation which may at any given moment bring us to the brink of a ghastly prospect: a European and maybe a world war.

Undoubtedly, this whole train of events, nationally and internationally alike, is a considerable deterioration of our internal situation. All the more given that every moment foreign intervention is growing more blatant, albeit in an apparently generalised way, in every facet of Spanish life.

The Peninsular Committee, which is closely monitoring developments affecting the struggle in which we have been intensely embroiled since 19 July, in issuing this circular to the organisation today, does so in order that at any moment, *au fait* with the serious circumstances around us, the anarchist movement may not be taken unawares by any significant new events impacting upon the outcome of our struggle.

Our activity must be stepped up intensely in every sphere. In addition to ongoing contributions to the war fronts and the labour fronts, at the front and in the rear, the exertions of anarchists in concert with the people must be increased so as to avoid the penetration into their ranks of the poison which some would introduce “from above” for disreputable ends.

We ought not to lose sight of the fact that, unfortunately, in many anti-fascist political quarters, little has been learnt during these long months of struggle. The proletariat’s spontaneous and disinterested contribution means nothing to them and they seek to capitalise upon its exertions in order to ensconce themselves in the machinery of state, turning the functions of government into a family affair and serving the interests of the petite bourgeoisie disguised as prietista-style socialism, which have absolutely nothing in common with the overall interests of the working class.

Lurking around are appetites and ambitions, the mere manifestation and contemplation of which signify a betrayal of the general interests of the fight against fascism. There is talk of wholesale militarisation and of an ineluctable duty of utter obedience to the Prieto-Negrín government. Lots of other things are mooted also...things which, in view of their seriousness, we deliberately and responsibly have no desire to mention. But what is incumbent upon us is that we should alert the groups against genuinely counter-revolutionary work, since it goes hand in hand with the obstacles consciously erected to impede understanding between the two great trade unions and, with no less significant difficulties, ensured that the Libertarian Movement is not represented in the administration of the country.

All of these contingencies that require prolonged deliberation, also, require of us that we escalate our activities against the Fifth Column, exposing those who make its actions possible.

In the strictly organisational dimension, liaison with the established committees, from district right up to peninsular levels, must be improved and extended.

Within the municipal councils, the representatives of the FAI must give a lead in the performance of their duties, working flat out so that the living conditions of the people who have entrusted them with the administration are permanently improved, and reporting back quickly to the relevant higher committees on the political intrigues which prejudice the functions entrusted to them. Moreover, they should, at all times, by agreement with the CNT representatives, be in permanent contact with the people, keeping them briefed on their work and seeking to involve them in it.

We reiterate: the Peninsular Committee is monitoring developments with the utmost attention. The criminal ambitions of those who seek to do everything “from above”, striving unsuccessfully in this way to disguise their hatred of the creative energies of the working people, have not escaped us. Nor are we oblivious to the nefarious role of certain ministers and high ranking officers. We know, too, the damaging effect of the politics in which a certain party — the PSOE — is engaged, in competition with its cousin, the PCE, when it comes to sharing out state posts and places. And we will know how to do our duty when the time comes.

That duty will be the result of the proletarian masses’ work of conquest: it will be the result of the determined endeavours our groups in striving to improve upon their daily efforts; and a direct consequence of the responsibility displayed by the militants of the FAI: responsibility in work, in war, wherever their efforts are deployed unceasingly and where they will increase and grow further, until they strangle the freedom-killing ambitions of those who appear to forget that we are fighting against totalitarianism, and that we do not want fascism, even should it seek to hide behind a different name.

And, to this end, the Peninsular Committee of the FAI exhorts anarchists organised in their groupings:

Multiply your efforts a hundredfold. Increase your contact with the people. Step up the production entrusted to you, thereby rendering the state’s inept interference impossible. Demonstrate that responsible collectives are the only acceptable face of the present economy. Remember, remember at all times that only our efforts, the creative, determined efforts of the labouring people, thwarted the fascists on 19 July.

We hope that you will have taken this circular to heart and will be able in a responsible way to respond to all that is asked of you, demonstrating yet again that our organisation’s glorious initials have an indestructible, constructive, responsible content.

Fraternal yours and anarchy’s, on behalf of the Peninsular Committee of the FAI, **Germinal de Sousa** (general secretary).’

The Aragón disaster began on 9 March 1938 with an enemy push against the 12th Army Corps, driving towards lower Aragón. The front under attack was manned only by the four conscript units. The remainder of the front was defended by a part of the 21st Army Corps. In the rear there was the 18th Army Corps which was in the process of being reorganised, and the local reserves of the Army of Manoeuvres were still in position in the Maestrazgo and in Teruel, covering the approaches to Levante. The 12th Army Corp’s front collapsed completely during the first three days of the offensive. The majority of its units were smashed and the reserves arrived too late to contain the enemy’s motorised incursion. On 15 March, there was not a single organised unit to be found in the area between Caspe and Calanda. Once the enemy reached the Caspe-Alcañiz line, he attacked in the Quinto sector. The enemy crossed the river via Belloque on 23 March at daybreak and skirted the 26th Division’s left flank, making for Bujaraloz, Fraga and Lleida. Almost instantaneously, he launched phase two of his offensive on the Huesca front — which also

collapsed — pressing on towards Lleida and the border. The 26th Division, made up of just two brigades, the 119th and the 120th (the 121st having been seconded to the makeshift Autonomous Ebro Army since the early days of the onslaught on the 12th Army Corp's sector), found itself in desperate straits in its outlying positions towards Zaragoza. The situation worsened on 25 March, when the right flank was left exposed by the retreat of the 137th Brigade which held the gap between the 26th Division and the Huesca front. That very day, the erstwhile Durruti Column began its own withdrawal, a tragic retreat across the Sierra de Alcubierre and the flatlands of Serriñena towards the Alcanadre, the Cinca and later towards the Segre (at Balaguer). By around 15 April, the offensive against Catalonia had ground to a halt, more than anything else, because of the enemy's commitment to focusing maximum offensive thrust against Levante. On 15 April itself, communications between Levante and Catalonia were severed when the enemy reached the Mediterranean port of Vinaroz. In Catalonia, the front stabilised along a line which stretched from the French border, to the north of Seu d'Urgell and meandered towards Tremp, Balaguer, Lleida, the environs of Mequienza, Flix, Mora d'Ebre and thence followed the course of the Ebro as far as Tortosa and the Mediterranean. The whole of Aragón and much of Catalonia had been lost and the enemy pressure would continue towards Levante, leaving Castelló in its wake (24 July) and the whole massif of the Maestrazgo until the front there stabilised on a line from south of Teruel to the sea, between Nules and Sagunt. Valencia lay just 35 kilometres from the combat zone. The republican command had claimed to have discovered that the objective of the manoeuvre through Aragón and the Maestrazgo was Barcelona. General Rojo has acknowledged that then, with less exertion and in less time, what was to be achieved in February 1939 might have been encompassed by May 1938: 'The circumstances', says Rojo, 'favoured him [the enemy]: a larger disproportion of resources and manpower, lower morale in the rearguard, worse organised and trained units and more inadequate officers'.²

In Barcelona, where the central government had already set up shop, the repercussions of the disaster were vast. The most alarming rumours were current among every stratum of the population. Such rumours were aggravated by the presence of soldiers, who had successfully eluded the vigilance of the recovery teams, fleeing from the fronts. On 13 March, the national representatives of the CNT and the UGT issued a joint statement. The issue of *Solidaridad Obrera* which appeared that day did its best to give encouragement to workers by stating that both union associations had come to an agreement on all of the items of a programme of unity. On 16 March, enemy aircraft initiated a spate of bombing raids on the population. The following day, Barcelona suffered similar attacks. Terrified, workers began to quit their factories. The upshot of the air-raids during 16, 17 and 18 March 1938 was a total of 67 dead, 1,200 wounded, 48 buildings demolished and as many damaged. Later the following figures for the bombing raids suffered in Catalonia were released: 77 naval bombardments and 219 air raids. Casualties: 1,342 dead and 1,425 wounded.³ The number of bombs dropped by plane was 5,024 and of the navy's projectiles, 398. On 5 March, Almería was bombed by the German fleet in retaliation for an attack on the *Deutschland* by republican aircraft in Balearic waters, and on 6 March, the *Baleares* was torpedoed and sunk by the republican fleet and air force in an engagement 40 miles off Cartagena.

A typical document from this time in 1938 is as follows:

² Vicente Rojo, *¡Alerta a los pueblos!*, Buenos Aires, 1939

³ The number of wounded when compared with the death toll suggests these figures may not be accurate.

‘The CNT and UGT Weaving, Textile, Clothing and Associated Industries unions of Barcelona would be defaulting upon the overriding duty required of them by the anti-fascist struggle were they to fail to take the urgent measures which production and the war expect of trade union bodies. To that end, and with a view to ending the recent irregularities and absenteeism which have been noted in our industry, the two unions have reached the following agreement, which must be implemented and acted upon across the board and without delay, by the Factory Councils, Control Committees and trade unions.

1. All workers who fail to report for work within 24 hours of publication of this notice shall be regarded as having quit our industry completely.

2. Any holiday leave which may have been awarded by the Enterprise Councils or factories, offices or Control Committees are hereby rescinded, and the workmen and women should report back for work within 24 hours.

3. Male and female employees who fail to report for work within the allotted time shall be liable to the same sanction as outlines in the articles above.

4. Male and female workers who fail to show up for work on grounds of illness, either their own or that of their children, husbands or parents, will have to produce a medical certificate of the utmost reliability.

5. The Enterprise Councils and Control Committees are to be answerable for failure to comply with this circular.

6. The names of those male and female workers liable to the sanctions noted, are to be forwarded to the War Fortifications agencies.

7. The two Weaving and Textile Union Groupings expect that the same sense of responsibility will prevail in all trade union and official bodies.’⁴

On 18 March, the text of the CNT-UGT joint programme which we mentioned earlier to the reader, was made public and a new National Liaison Committee was immediately formed of the following: Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Horacio Prieto and Roberto Alfonso (CNT); Secretary and Vice-Secretary, Rodríguez Vega and César Lombardía (UGT). One of its first moves was to hold meetings to publicise the agreement jointly arrived at in Valencia, Madrid, Ubeda, Almería, Castelló and Alacant.

On 30 March, the FAI Peninsular Committee issued the following circular:

‘To all Anarchist Groups. Respected comrades: the grave situation in which the eastern war fronts find themselves compels all anti-fascist sectors, and, first and foremost, the Libertarian Movement, to make every effort to help achieve the single objective of winning the war.

Two days ago, on a summons from the leader of the government, representatives of every organisation and party, including those of the Catalan region, came together and Dr. Negrín explained to them the seriousness of the situation and the need for all to waste no time in collaborating with the government in the work which it must carry out, by making whatever suggestions they may regard as helpful in improving the fight against the enemy.

As a result of this gathering, yesterday two further meetings were held, attended by the PCE, the PSOE, Izquierda Republicana, Unión Republicana, the Partido Sindicalista, the CNT, the UGT and the FAI.

At them, our organisation broached the basic necessity of setting up a body to channel the activities to be pursued in conjunction with the government, a body which could be a broadening

⁴ This note was carried in much of the press on 20 March.

of the nationwide Popular Front or, should that not be deemed appropriate, a body could be established that will have room in its ranks for all of the responsible expressions of the national anti-fascist organisations, excluding none.

The representatives of the PSOE and the UGT were insistent that the most urgent steps be taken first, and, according to them, these consisted of the publication of a manifesto, the organisation of the recruitment of 100,000 men and fortifications; in this they had the active support of the PCE and the passive support of the republican parties.

This matter brought us to a discussion of the meetings held the day before and in the end it was agreed, in keeping with the view we expressed, that the Popular Front should meet today to agree upon or reject a widening of its ranks to accommodate other anti-fascist groups.

This very evening, a further meeting is to be held, at which we will possibly be in attendance and upon whose outcome we will report to you speedily.

So, independently of any action which may have to be conducted through the Popular Front, should this be broadened, which is likely, or through any other national agency, it is necessary that our movement, through its anarchist groups or the CNT unions, should take the initiative in launching a great propaganda campaign in every locality, summoning all anti-fascist organisations to join in with it.

That agitation and propaganda campaign focusing on war needs might have the following objectives:

1. The immediate formation of an anti-fascist Popular Front charged with collaborating intensely and responsibly with existing agencies and which will be the vital nerve centre of all activities to be pursued and which will have to be set up by all local political and trade union sectors, setting itself as its immediate tasks:

- a. Mobilisation of the rearguard in the exclusive service of the war, dispensing for the moment with unproductive or secondary tasks and incorporating womenfolk into production on a large scale. Men all to be employed on war-related tasks, fortifications, etc.

- b. Establishing surveillance and intelligence commissions against suspect elements, to prevent loss of morale among the populace or that “moles” (emboscados) should capitalise upon the gravity of the situation to provoke disturbances.

- c. Removal from all positions of responsibility, be they military, economic, judicial, etc., of all suspects, incompetents and defeatists and their replacement by capable and tried anti-fascists.

- d. Close surveillance of all output and the whole of public life, accepting no failings, no dereliction and intervening in any place where such dereliction may have come to pass, assuming a rapid change of the whole life of the country.

2. Campaign for the replacement of that portion of the forces of public order, which should be dispatched to the fronts by responsible personnel from the organisations not included in the call-up.

The situation, let us repeat, is serious. And that being so, the Libertarian Movement just as it has always done in like circumstances, must have the initiative and solutions to problems which can help towards the achievement of victory, imposing its dynamism and enthusiasm on whatever incompetents and defeatists there may be.

In the monumental moments through which we are passing, in these times when everything is to be deployed with our eyes fixed upon the single goal of victory, the anarchists and all libertarian militants must, as in July, whether off their own bat or in concert with other groups, strike an optimistic note and not let themselves be overpowered by any secondary considerations.

The war will be won despite the present problems. And any who may oppose the contributions that the Libertarian Movement, now as ever, may make towards overcoming current difficulties and salvaging the situation should be denounced as a traitor.

We hope that the guidelines indicated here will be speedily put into effect, and we reaffirm that we are yours and anarchy's. On behalf of the Peninsular Committee, **Germinal de Sousa** (general secretary).'

At a meeting held on 24 March, the CNT's National Committee agreed to proceed quickly with the formation of battalions of volunteers. On 31 March, the Popular Front of Catalonia was given a broader base when the trade union federations, Estat Català and the FAI were accommodated within its ranks.

The Popular Front manifesto, published on 1 April, ended with these words:

'100,000 volunteers must be mobilised as a matter of urgency in answer to Premier Negrín's appeal, to defend the Republic and the liberties of Catalonia. We have to rally to the appeal of our President, Lluís Companys, president of all Catalans⁵, and, united behind one single determination to win the war, make 100,000 volunteers available to the government of the Republic. We need to place on a war footing ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND volunteers to defend, in the glorious lines of the Popular Army, the independence of our homeland. We must immediately mobilise 50,000 builders so as to confront the enemy with a double barrier of cement and men ready to perish rather than let a yard of earth be wrested from them. To arms, Catalans! For the Republic! For Catalonia! For freedom! They shall not pass!

For the CNT, García Oliver and Joan Domènech; for the FAI, Josep Xena and Josep Tapia; for the ERC, Josep Terradellas and Josep Andreu; for the PSUC, Miquel Valdés and Rafael Vidiella; for the UGT, Josep Moix and Miquel Ferrer; for the Rabassaires, Josep Calvet and Joan Bertrán; for Estat Català, Viçent Barrell and R. Andreu; for Acció Catalana, Ramon Peypoch and Rafael Tassis.'

At around this point, the Confederation in Catalonia held a Regional Plenum of District Committees. At this plenum, the following accord, later made public by *Soldaridad Obrera*, was arrived at:

'CNT — Against the [word erased by the censor here]. As agreed by a Plenum of District Committees held on 10 April, we hereby inform all CNT unions that no individual who, through cowardice which defies description at this juncture, quits his post in the vanguard or abandons his obligations in the rearguard, should be considered a comrade nor even as a mere affiliate.

With prejudice to the punishment prescribed by the law's being applied to such individuals, we recommend to our comrades that they begin to implement the most basic procedures as they may deem fit and lawful, to get over to the persons concerned in the most effective fashion, the contemptible nature of their conduct.

The plenum reckons that in these difficult times it is more imperative than ever to demonstrate the historic rationale of our movement vis à vis collective responsibility.

⁵ At around this time, the fascist command had announced the abolition of the Statute of Catalonia which had, de facto, been repealed by the Negrín government: 'In political terms, the national rising has meant a breach with all the institutions that stood for the negation of the values which it proposes to establish. And obviously, whatever may be the conception of local life which may inspire future norms, the statute of Catalonia, erroneously granted by the Republic, is bereft of any value in Spanish legality since 17 July 1938' (from Canon Carlos Cardo's book *Histoire spirituelle des Espagnes*)

Against traitors there must be no quarter given, and a militant of our movement today who shows cowardice, must be regarded thus.

On behalf of the Regional Plenum of District Committees, the secretary, **Joan Domènech**.⁶

According to circular no. 7 from the FAI Peninsular Committee, dated 1 April, the committees of the Libertarian Movement had got together on 1 March and agreed upon the following immediate tasks to be tackled:

- ‘1. Prepare for general mobilisation;
2. Prepare for immediate suppression of those production areas regarded as superfluous;
3. Involve women in the pursuit of productive activities deemed useful to general requirements.

In Military Matters:– Commands to be filled by trustworthy servicemen with a capacity for the task to be performed. Exemption from sanction of the volunteers who are mobilised and incorporated into the drafts. Immediate regimentation and equipment of those called up.

In Political Matters:– Incorporation of the CNT and the FAI into the Popular Front. Immediate incorporation of the CNT into government functions. Immediate implementation of a policy to exterminate the Fifth Column. Immediate formation of a political Commissariat in the forces of Public Order.’

The circular closed by urging all anarchist groups to work flat-out in the areas indicated. But it is evident from the document that implicit in the call for the ‘immediate re-incorporation’ of the CNT into government functions was the endorsement of the FAI Peninsular Committee and this is something to be borne in mind.

About this time, given the gravity of events, the central government was obliged to pay heed to the CNT’s repeated requests for a share in governmental responsibility. When a crisis arose, requiring a cabinet re-shuffle, this was resolved on 6 April by the formation of the following cabinet:

Premiership and National Defence: Juan Negrín (PSOE)

State: Julio Álvarez del Vayo (PSOE)

Justice: Ramón González Peña (PSOE)

Home Affairs: Gómez Sáez (PSOE)

Public Works: Oñate Velao (Izquierda Republicana)

Public Education: Segundo Blanco (CNT)

Finance and Economy: Méndez Aspe (Izquierda Republicana)

Agriculture: Vicente Uribe (PCE)

Communications and Transport: Francisco Giner de los Ríos (Unión Republicana)

Labour: Jaume Aiguader (ERC)

Ministers without Portfolio: José Giral (Izquierda Republicana), and Manuel Irujo (PNV).

In the cabinet reshuffle it can be seen that the communist Jesús Hernández, Indalecio Prieto and Julián Zugazagoitia were dropped, and Álvarez del Vayo, González Peña, Paulino Gómez and CNT member Segundo Blanco brought in.

Irujo stayed on as minister without portfolio, as did Giral, who had been ousted from the Ministry of State. Negrín gave up Finance to Méndez Aspe, to take up the Defence portfolio. Méndez Aspe, although a member of Izquierda Republicana was also a quasi-communist or *libelático* (idolater), as those who, though members of one party, served the interests of another

⁶ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 2 April 1938.

party were generally described at the time. The main ministries were still in the hands of the pro-communist socialist faction. As for Segundo Blanco, Abad de Santillán has stated that 'he was a minister chosen by Negrín himself.'⁷

What ensued was as follows. As a result of the serious situation created in Catalonia by the collapse of the eastern front, and of the CNT-UGT pact, which specified that the UGT would not put obstacles in the way of the incorporation of the CNT into government office, the Confederation's insistence that it be given a place in the government was more fruitful. Prepared now to yield on this point, Negrín asked the CNT to supply a list of three names from which he might select the one who would be minister. This highly questionable suggestion was debated at a meeting of the Libertarian Movement, at which opposition to this deal surfaced. Yet again, Mariano Vázquez and Horacio Prieto managed to swing a decision in favour of acceptance. The short-list presented contained the names of Horacio Prieto, García Oliver and Segundo Blanco. Negrín plumped for Blanco who, as time wore on, turned out to be just another *negrínista*.

The government sought and was awarded full powers and resolved to delegate its authority as far as the territory outside of Catalonia was concerned, to General Miaja. General Pozas and Eduardo Castillo were stood down as Commander and Commissar of the Army of the East, respectively, and were replaced by Lieutenant-Colonel Juan Perea and Ignacio Mantecón respectively. Several classes of conscript were called to the colours.

On 13 March, the following bulletin was carried by *Solidaridad Obrera*:

'A special invitation is extended to all members of the CNT belonging to the call-up classes of 1926, 1927 and 1928, due to be mobilised, to enrol as a matter of urgency with the volunteers, and all Committees, union and groups, youth and militants are required to commit themselves with the utmost zeal and enthusiasm to the campaign to mobilise volunteers for the units of the glorious Popular Army, by making contact with the organisation's relevant committees.

The men of the Libertarian Movement should require no other encouragement than the prick of their anti-fascist consciousness and their love of liberty in order to mobilise.

[We therefore summon] to voluntary mobilisation, all of those falling within the call-up classes of 1926, 1927 and 1928, with all enthusiasm, seriousness and vigour of the very first moments, in order to crush fascism and achieve independence for our homeland!

The Executive Committee.⁸

The following day, the same paper reported the departure for the front of the 2nd Volunteer Battalion of the Libertarian Youth.

Aside from an honest sense of military responsibility, the Libertarian Movement's recruiting of volunteer battalions also has this dual objective: to divert anarchist militants and sympathisers away from the recruiting offices so far as possible, as they were likely to wind up in Marxist brigades through those offices; and to bring fresh blood into the CNT units which had been virtually decimated as a result of the Aragón disaster. Virtually every one of these volunteers was absorbed directly into the 26th Division.

The Libertarian Movement's Executive Committee had been set up by a plenum of anarchist groups, delegates from the unions, militants and committees from the three organisations (CNT, FAI and FIJL), held in Barcelona on 2 April 1938. We know that on 1 April, there was a Plenum of District Committees of the Catalan CNT, in whose name the bulletin printed above (signed

⁷ *Por qué perdimos la guerra*, p. 205.

⁸ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 13 March 1938.

by Joan Domènech, the secretary of the Regional Committee) had been made public. Now then, are we dealing here with two different plenums, or the same one? If we go by the only known resolution of the one held on 2 April (which is not endorsed by any district representative) it is possible that the second one was an immediate follow-up to the first.

What we do know about the latter plenum was that García Oliver delivered to it a pathetic analysis of the military situation; the aforementioned Executive Committee, quite patently at odds with every one of the traditional teachings and practices of the anarchist and union organisations, arose out of that situation.

Here is the text of the resolution establishing and prescribing the powers of the Executive Committee:

‘Resolutions of the Working Party appointed by the Plenum of Groups, Union Delegates, Militants and Committees of the Three Organisations of the Libertarian Movement, held on 2 April 1938.

The assembled representatives of the three libertarian organisations are agreed upon the necessity of establishing, for the duration of the circumstances created by the war, a committee, executive in character, to oversee the functions of the Libertarian Movement.

This Executive Committee shall be made up of three representatives from the CNT Regional Committee, two from the CNT Local Federation, two from the FAI Regional Committee, one from the FAI Local Federation, one from the Regional Committee of the FIJL and another from the Local Federation.

Each organisation will appoint the members of the Executive Committee and must select the best-equipped individuals.

This Executive Committee shall be governed by the following internal mechanism. All accords shall be taken by unanimous vote or by majority vote and, whenever there is deadlock, the members of the Committee are to be replaced in their entirety.

All local and district organs of the three movements are to support and implement the resolutions of the Committee.

The Executive Committee of the FIJL is to be assisted by a Military Commission whose task it will be to brief it in advance on any such problems.

The Executive Committee shall be empowered to select, in concert with the movement’s other committees, personnel equipped to make up the Military Advisory Commission and the Political Advisory Commission.

The Committee’s executive powers shall extend to final expulsion of those individuals, groups, unions, Local or District Committees who fail to abide by the general resolutions of the movement and who damage the movement by their activities.

It will also proceed against any who lend assistance to those expelled from the three organisations for the reasons outlined above.

The Committee’s executive and sanctioning powers are to be applicable to the front and to the rearguard without distinction.

Fundamental Decisions Reached by the Libertarian Movement and which it will be up to the Executive Committee to see put into Effect:

1. To support the war against fascism as long as a single patch of land remains in enemy hands.
2. To accept militarisation with all of its implications.
3. To afford no shelter to deserters and runaways, obliging them to report to the units of the Popular Army.

4. To step up production in every sphere of work.
5. To shut down all branches of production that may be deemed superfluous and then to re-deploy their workforce on war-related tasks. To absorb women into every facet of production.
6. Not to harbour or shelter those who sabotage output.
7. Not to harbour or shelter those who cause breaches of anti-fascist order.
8. To defend only those comrades who may be imprisoned due to error or lack of understanding on the part of the authorities.
9. A share for the CNT in the governments of the Republic and the Generalitat, in the municipalities and in all of the nation's administrative and leadership organs.
10. To keep the CNT and FAI always in the Anti-fascist Popular Front of Catalonia.

Barcelona, 3 April 1938.

On behalf of the working-party: for the CNT Regional Committee, Joan Domènech; for the FAI Regional Committee, J. Tapia; for the FIJL Regional Committee, J. Seva; for the Local Federation of CNT unions, M. Molero; for the Barcelona Local Federation of Anarchist Groups, J. Merino; for the Barcelona FIJL, L. Rufinelli; for the plenum, Juan García Oliver, Manuel Escorza, Juan Giménez and Federica Montseny.⁹

Fidel Miró was appointed secretary to the Executive Committee, and on 20 April 1938 *Solidaridad Obrera* carried a communiqué signed by him, summoning comrades Francisco Tomás, Moro, Orille, Magro, Capell 'and whatsoever militants from Lleida who held positions of responsibility until the capture of that city.' Some of those comrades were indicted on several counts and punished by being dispatched to the battlefronts. One of those so punished was the prominent militant Francisco Tomás who died shortly afterwards in actions against the enemy.

During the second half of April a Plenum of Regional Committees was held in Valencia. It was chaired by Mariano Vázquez and the Regional Committees from the Centre, Levante, Andalusia and Extremadura were in attendance. One of the most important accords was that a National Sub-Committee of the CNT should be formed for that zone. Comrade Galo Díez, secretary of this sub-committee died a short time after this in an unfortunate accident. His place was taken by Manuel López. The FIJL, and FAI as well as all the political parties, trade unions and liaison agencies also moved their respective representations to the zone. On 27 April, the CNT National Sub-Committee published the following manifesto:

'The possible separation of Catalonia from the rest of loyalist Spain, should it be achieved by an invader who has the whole might of Italy and Germany at his disposal, will not in any way diminish the capacity and enthusiasm which the good people of Spain put into their pursuit of victory. Instead, their tremendous valour increases in the face of yet another peril: and in the face of every enormous difficulty which they have already had to contend with, and which would have left a less determined, less daring people immersed in complete defeat, free Spaniards stand courageous and defy the danger with bravery that grows in keeping with the scale of the adversity.

For our part, we give a public commitment to fight on to the end, given that it is a worthier fate to die fighting for liberty, bread and our well-being and that of future generations, than to bow the knee before a shameful surrender, and so the severance of communications can have only one meaning: that we must redouble our efforts and multiply them a hundredfold, improving it in every way, especially as regards the productivity of our contribution to the anti-fascist cause.

⁹ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 20 April 1938

In order to channel this effort insofar as it can, being profoundly alive to all of the worries implicit in its realisation, the CNT National Committee is transferring some of its members to this zone and, with the endorsement and express assistance of the Regional Committees of the Centre, Andalusia, Extremadura and Levante, is setting up a National Sub-Committee which will keep the revolutionary anti-fascist sentiments of the Confederation workers based in this part of loyalist territory constantly alive.

The Sub-Committee has already been established. And on the solemn date of the commencement of its existence, cognisant of the lofty mission entrusted to it by the Confederation, it sends this message of greeting to all fighters for freedom, the precursors of the social justice of the Spain which is coming into existence, to the producers, the unions and to all who feel their breasts beat deep down to the burning flame awakened by the struggle for our political, economic and social independence, urging them to prosecute with gusto, with the same faith they have hitherto placed at the service of anti-fascism, the struggle we are waging against the invaders and military traders who rose up against the people in order to foist an onerous tyranny upon them.

Know, ye soldiers of freedom, that the banner you unfurl on campaign stands for the cares of millions of workers, seventy years of social struggles and precious gains which will founder should you allow our enemies to sweep them forever aside. Know that above and beyond your personal pride in being Spaniards, you are the vanguard of that legion of peoples who are on the march to a better world, where human miseries may be laid to rest, where castes and privileges foisted upon men who were not born rich are no more.

Do not forget, anti-fascist fighters, the eloquent example of those peasants from a village in Levante who, without rhetoric or fuss, in their mountain fastness have agreed to work from sun-up to sundown for as long as the war may last, lest those who fight should want for anything.¹⁰ They who wrestled with the bourgeois a hundred times over to achieve the legal wage have discovered no other way of increasing production than to increase their working hours, severely punishing the traitors who may bring themselves to default upon our organisation's mandate.

Within our grasp we have the powerful levers of victory...the trade union alliance of the two mighty movements which embrace the productive masses of the nation and the unity of political action sustained through the Popular Front, at the heart of which all the anti-fascist sectors who assumed honourable positions on the field of battle whenever drunken or perverse generals sought to revive on our soil the tragic age of military pronunciamientos, share the same concerns; in order to achieve a speedy victory, we have set up a government of war and national unity wherein all parties and organisations are represented.

Thus everything is in our hands. Never more than now could we have felt ourselves so in charge of, and so committed to giving all that our energies may allow. Watchful at its post, the CNT will be able to pick up the gauntlet which history has hurled down before us, with the pride and the same gallantry with which we would want all honourable, worthy anti-fascists to take up the challenge.

Through this National Sub-Committee for liaison between the Confederation members here and the organism which presides over those in the whole loyalist territory, let us seek to strengthen the ties which logically ought to exist between all Spanish anti-fascists, and let us

¹⁰ A reference to a resolution of the CNT peasantry in Beniguacil (Valencia) as published in the newspapers around the time.

make them a living reality with the hopes expressed by all revolutionary producers along the way.

May this greeting, a manly promise of libertarian consistency, serve as encouragement for the anti-fascists in the van and in the rear who know how to stand by their posts with steadfastness, unhesitating and convinced that the final victory will be ours and that we will be able to achieve regardless of Mussolini's and Hitler's hirelings.

Long live the unity of the workers and the anti-fascist people! Let us soldier on today so that we may be victorious tomorrow! Let us be worthy of those who fell, mowed down by fascism!

The National Sub-Committee.'

As a result of the pact between the national labour organisations, the CNT and the UGT of Catalonia in turn signed a fresh agreement on concerted action, and this was made public on 20 April. Here is the text of this new document:

'The CNT and UGT in Catalonia, acknowledging that the imperative of the times in which we live requires of us all the greatest contribution to the struggle against fascism until such time as it is utterly eradicated, and reckoning that unity of the workers increases their capacity for resistance and is a mighty aid to victory, do, this day, in defence of the liberty and independence of the Hispanic people within the Republic and at all times in the constructive and liberating feats of the proletariat, respecting those traits which are proper to them and upon which their *raison d'être* is based, subscribe to the following

PACT OF UNITY OF ACTION

Article 1. The CNT and UGT in Catalonia are in agreement with the programme of united action signed in Barcelona on 15 March 1938 by the Executive Commission of the UGT and the Committee of the CNT, adopted to the needs of Catalonia, in solidarity with other Hispanic peoples and workers, adapted to Catalonia's Statute and to the gains achieved by the workers.

Article 2. The UGT and CNT in Catalonia undertake to pursue the struggle against fascism to the end, deploying all of their material, moral and human resources to ensure that:

a. They will monitor the implementation of the military mobilisation orders which the government of the Republic may issue, will track down and denounce "moles" (*emboscados*), deserters and their accomplices, will encourage the training of reserves and will assist with the basic military training so as to have ready at all times the comrades included in the three call-up classes promptly to be drafted, and to ensure that our Popular Army grows stronger each day so as to hasten the final victory over fascism.

b. They will keep in close touch with the combatants, organising joint visits to the battlefronts, and will concern themselves with the comrades drafted into the Army, and with their families.

c. They will see to the implementation of compulsory civilian mobilisation orders for the purpose of building fortifications and shelters in settlements in the immediate vicinity of the front and coastline, for repairing and building of roads and highways, to which end they will encourage volunteer labour and co-operate in passive defence measures.

d. They will help with the purging of the rearguard by exposing Fifth Column personnel, defeatists, profiteers and speculators: they will create an exacting vigilance among the workers of city and countryside.

(...)

Article 6. The UGT and CNT in Catalonia will lend every support to improving the operations of the Industrial Economic Federations, General Councils and the Economic Council of Catalonia and likewise to any parallel agencies which the government of the Republic may yet create.

Article 7. The CNT and UGT in Catalonia will ensure that industries in general and especially war industries are supplied with the necessary raw materials for the stepping up of production to the maximum degree and so that they can redouble the efforts which the workers are ready to make to increase output.

Article 8. The UGT and CNT in Catalonia will see to it that workers and their families have access to a minimum amount of foodstuffs at prices indexed to the prevailing pay model: they will encourage all worker families to join consumer co-operatives and the establishment of popular canteens, collective or factory canteens, children's canteens, school canteens, etc. It will be the especial task of the unions of the Food Industry and of shop workers to watch out for and campaign against hoarders and speculators.

Article 9. The CNT and UGT in Catalonia will defend the revolutionary gains of the rural workers as partly reflected in the new agrarian legislation passed after 19 July, introducing the necessary reforms into them.

Article 10. The UGT and CNT in Catalonia are in favour of united action between their peasants' organisations and the Rabassaires' Union, on the basis of the principle of acceptance of the broad lines of the present Pact.

Article 11. The CNT and UGT in Catalonia will not acknowledge the existence of any other industrial workers' union organisation which may seek to establish itself in our country.

Article 12. For all matters relating to this pact of unity of action, there shall be set up a CNT-UGT Standing Liaison Committee with jurisdiction over the entirety of Catalonia, in close conjunction and fellowship with the National CNT-UGT Liaison Committee.

Article 13. The Standing CNT-UGT Liaison Committee in Catalonia will have its base in Barcelona.

Article 14. The Liaison Committees which may be set up in Catalonia are to be governed by the provisions of this pact and any of a national character which may have been agreed between the CNT and the UGT, subject to their adaptation to Catalonia.

Article 15. This pact may be improved and extended by subsequent agreements accepted by both organisations.

On behalf of the UGT, Josep Moix, Tomás Molinero and Miquel Ferrer (general secretary); on behalf of the CNT, José Jiménez, Antonio Marco and Joan Domènech (secretary). Barcelona, 18 April 1938.'

The Aragón disaster was exploited to the detriment of the anarchists' alleged predominance on the eastern front. A report from the FAI Peninsular Committee, dated 1 April 1938, opens with these words:

'The causes underlying the collapse of the Aragón front can be classified under several headings: one, strictly military; others of a political-psychological nature but always dependent on the politico-social complex which has become the sponsor within anti-fascist Spain of a muted but bitter struggle between parties and persuasions despite the repeated calls made for unity and an "anti-fascist front", a front which never managed to become a reality, precisely because there were parties and groups which merely sought and seek still their own hegemony at the expense of the vital interest of the broad masses of the people.'

Among the military factors was the enemy's overwhelming material superiority. The offensive had begun with a formidable deployment of air power. Up to 150 planes were in the air at any one time in the very limited area, and were able to bomb and strafe the lines and the rearguard from

very low altitude. Also involved were masses of men protected by tanks and artillery aplenty. The report goes on:

‘Upon comrade Yoldi’s assuming command of the 24th Division, he forwarded several reports to the Staff of the Army of the East, remarking therein upon the inadequacies of the fortifications in his Division’s sector, which is to say the one through which the enemy launched his offensive: and about the inadequacy of the armaments of the 153rd Brigade, in the light of which he would not be responsible in the event of its being attacked, in that it was impossible for it to fight back with the weaponry it had. None of this was heeded. The enemy broke through the front through the area manned by the 153rd Brigade which, despite its magnificent efforts, was unable to ward off the disaster.’

Yoldi’s dispatches, which were to end up with the Central Staff, where dispatches from the artillery observation posts of the 9th Army Corps were also arriving (the latter indicating heavy convoys of enemy troops in movement), were dismissed as ‘seeing things’.

A complicating factor in the situation was the military policy followed by the government, to wit, the ousting of genuinely anti-fascist commanders and their being made to take second place to dubious individuals whose talents lay in matters political, and to reactionary military figures. The so-called ‘propagandising’ with which we shall deal anon at greater length, had succeeded in demoralising and disconcerting the army. The Trojan Horse of this hard-sell campaign was the Commissariat: even at staff levels, not to mention in the ministries, there were persons dedicated to factional activity, officers or commissars who were drawn from any opposing organisation or party were sabotaged.

We have already dealt with the government’s reactionary policy in Aragón, which region had been swamped by Líster’s henchmen. With the repression and murders perpetrated by those troops, with the onslaught against the collectives and with the conversion of town councils into ‘management commissions’ made up of personnel drawn from a number of parties but excluding the CNT. Líster handed over authority to Governor Mantecón but Mantecón forged ahead with Líster’s work.

The army had been worn down by political-style military operations like the Brunete offensive and the operations in early September 1936 south of the Ebro. In those operations, the CNT divisions, made up largely of battle-hardened peasants familiar with the terrain, were virtually dismantled, in that they were placed under the command of outside commanders who failed to earn their confidence and who, due to their subscribing to a certain political ideology, were content to humble the divisions and humiliate their original militia commanders. The military ineptitude and political zeal of these sectarians ensured that the chief objective, namely Zaragoza, could not be achieved. And what partial successes were achieved ... namely the capture of Belchite, etc., were achieved by CNT troops, by the 24th and 25th Divisions (the former of which included the 153rd Brigade, which was then indicted on a charge of being chiefly to blame for the disaster on the eastern front).

As the 9 March offensive got underway, the 24th Division and the 127th Brigade (attached to the 28th Division) put up a dogged resistance, several times repulsing the enemy, and succumbing only because of his material superiority. The front collapsed and during the initial stage of the collapse, the high-ranking officers from the army corps were nowhere to be seen. No preventive measures had been taken and an army of 70,000 men was left to cut and run in disarray under strafing from planes which faced no challenge for control of the skies. However, there were instances of heroic resistance, such as the resistance put up by the 121st Brigade, and of orderly

withdrawals such as the retreat made by the bulk of the 26th Division. The indulgence shown the higher officers was not available to the troops and their more closely associated officers. Yoldi, commander of the 24th Division, was the target of an assassination bid, which he survived by a miracle, only to be arrested afterwards. Stalinist International Brigaders, themselves withdrawing without a fight, performed this punitive mission on the ground. Máximo Franco, commander of the 127th Brigade suffered a similar fate to Yoldi's, but Franco was released by troops from his own brigade.

The 127th had been summoned on 9 March from its billet in Albalate de Cinca. With what troops it was possible to transport, and with basic issue equipment, the 127th arrived at the front to meet with a chaotic situation. Due to the rout, these troops were necessarily swept along by the avalanche. Máximo Franco himself states in a report to the Libertarian Movement's Defence Section, dated 16 June:

'The reasons behind the "stampede" phenomena to which the Brigade was exposed are:

1. The fact that, as our troops arrived in the environs of Muniesa, where the front had been established, there was a Division in disorderly retreat. At the same time, neither the 12th Army Corps nor the 30th Division were able to furnish specific intelligence as to the enemy's position and the situation of lines close by.

2. The failure to link up even once on either of the flanks of the front we manned, which offered no personal security but a high chance of being surrounded and cut off, as befell the odd unit which, obedient to the letter to the watchword of resistance issued by the command, were taken prisoner by the enemy.

3. The disproportion of the equipment available to the enemy, and its quantity and quality, in that whereas he attacked with tanks and artillery, under tremendous aerial cover we had only the odd automatic rifle and the occasional hand grenade with which to resist. If we add to this that our troops were not dug in behind any sort of fortifications, the disadvantage obtaining between our troops and the enemy's becomes apparent.

4. The dismal performance of the units seconded to the brigades by way of Service Corps, Transport Corps, etc., due to which personnel were left rather neglected, the supply arrangements and other facilities very necessary on campaign could not be seen to.

5. The fact that many of the officers failed to supervise their small units at all times for, although the enemy was bragging about his material superiority, and of his platoons and sections having responded well to the withdrawals which had been ordered throughout, the command could, on more than one occasion, have counter-attacked, outflanking the enemy, with the assurance that his advance would have been slowed.

The demoralisation which spread among the troops when they observed that neither the wounded nor the dead could be evacuated.'

Máximo Franco and his entire staff were arrested by the commander of the 5th Army Corps, the communist Modesto, while on rest and recreation in a rearguard position. They were subjected to all sorts of humiliations. The 127th Brigade itself was disarmed and marshalled near the line of fire. Needless to say, such measures were not employed against all units...not against, say, the 30th Division to which the 127th Brigade had been subordinated, and on the instructions of their superiors, during the incidents in question.

As we have already noted, three battalions from the 121st Brigade (26th Division) went to occupy the Sástago sector on orders from the Headquarters of the Army of the East. Their task was to stem the enemy advance and prevent him from crossing the Ebro through that sector.

It was also their task to marshal and organise the troops who were routed and who included the 11th International Brigade. There were commanders and officers galore who had lost contact with or abandoned their units. On some occasions force had to be used to coax the stubborn ones whose intentions were to press on towards Bujaraloz and Caspe, and this triggered a number of incidents.

A report drafted by the then Commissar of the 26th Division, Ricardo Rionda and dated 18 March, stated among other things:

‘I was summoned to the 11th Army Corps by the Commissar of the Army of the East, to attend a meeting. Before the meeting opened, the Commissar of the 11th Corps showed me a telegram from the Minister of National Defence ordering the arrest of the Commander of the 121st Brigade for one month, without specifying the grounds and charges. As soon as the Commissar of the Army of the East showed up, I lodged a strenuous objection against such behaviour and was assured that the arrest would not be made, because neither he nor the Commander of the Army of the East knew anything about it. At the same meeting, after matters relating to the misfortunes of the 12th Army Corps had been examined and discussed, the 44th Division’s Commissar presented a list wherein there was a request that the 121st Brigade hand over 700-odd rifles, 14 automatic rifles and a batch of Maxim machine guns which that unit had extracted from him “at gunpoint”.’

Another report, this time from the CNT-FAI Liaison Committee in charge of liaison with the front, and datelined Lleida, 22 March, deals with the determination of the 26th Division’s command to resign after the 121st Brigade had been removed from his command. In contrast to the conciliatory line of the Committee, which countenanced the move to some extent as a war requirement, Sanz insisted that he was not prepared to put up with any further humiliation, stating that he would not be bound by the orders of cowards and incompetents:

‘Sanz’s indignation knew no bounds when we told him that Lieutenant Colonel Montaner was to assume command of the 11th Army Corps. Sanz’s reaction was, word for word, as follows: “With what moral authority is a coward who took to his heels at El Sillero and did not stop until he got to Bujaraloz about to give me orders? I steadfastly refuse to abide by the orders of traitors!” He says he reckons the time has come for our organisation to demand respect and that but for the 26th Division the disaster would have been even greater. The injustice being meted out to the 26th Division now is not without precedent. Here he recalls the humiliation to which he and other officers were subjected at the time of the push that culminated in the capture of Belchite. The Division’s Command Post was showered with abuse. He is still waiting for an explanation. Communist troops labelled the Division’s militiamen and officers as cowards. But for the heroic endeavours of those so insulted, that push would have been a complete failure. Well, he is still waiting for justice to be done, since they have been completely forgotten about. Not only will he quit or else they will dismiss or shoot him, but every one of the Division’s commanders will do likewise. He concluded by saying: “Go and pass that on to the organisation! I stand by my unshakable intransigence! Let every individual shoulder the responsibility that is his!”’

Sanz also based his stance upon orders that had come down from Division warning him to hand over, without delay, the weapons which they had recovered from deserters who had dumped them and upon the month-long detention of the 121st Brigade’s commander, Gil Montes, who deserved nothing but commendations. The report closes by saying:

‘So, for the time being, the issue has been resolved in the manner indicated, namely: they will do their best to act upon the order to give up the weaponry they recovered from the runaway troops. In accordance with the promises made to them, the 26th Division will retain control of

the 121st Brigade and the arrest warrant against Commander Gil Montes will be shelved and a dead letter.’

By way of a summary of this episode, we reprint below the most interesting portions of a report issued by the Executive Committee (Defence Section) of the Libertarian Movement of Catalonia on 15 April 1938:

‘Time and again we denounced the sabotage and disorganising work carried out by the Engineers’ General Command of the Army of the East, effected by the PSUC and commander Montserrat Fenech. Our complaints, an uninterrupted succession of them since July 1937, failed to alter the fact that the seven Works and Fortifications Battalions are still in disarray: that commander Montserrat Fenech would scarper to France, that a captain of the Transport corps and several officers vouched for by the UGT of Catalonia were arrested and sentenced for attempting to defect to the enemy, and, what is more to the point, that no serious effort was to be made with regard to fortifications in the Army of the East or that the Cinca works, the works on the front and on the coast, etc., would be at a standstill, which led to the straightforward collapse of the front.

The same thing happened in the Transport Corps where even now there is no car pool operational, nor any adequate organisation to cater for the most elementary requirements of the war.

Similarly, we registered timely complaints about party propaganda and sabotage in the war industries and the vandalism on an unbelievable scale among the personnel of the Armaments Under-Secretariat whose performance in Catalonia led to a 70 per cent to 80 per cent drop in war production as compared to what was achieved previously in spite of all the difficulties obtaining for reasons which are common knowledge.

When the operations were mounted on the Eastern front in August 1937, with the capture of Belchite, Codo, etc., ... we furnished plentiful documentary evidence to show that the party of Cardón, Almendros and Llanos had thwarted the capture of Zaragoza. The undermining of our units and the communist commanders’ ignorance of the terrain were the causes of the failure and of the ongoing demoralisation of our comrades. When Walter¹¹ iniquitously abused comrade Seba, commander of the 153rd Brigade, we duly complained, yet Walter is still in command of troops and continues to do as he pleases.

Some very suspicious things occurred during the Teruel operations: Líster was promoted, the 25th Division was kept in the line for a tremendously long stint and was seven times redeployed without being issued with new weapons. These suspicious incidents are very well documented in a report by comrade Ejarque, Commissar with the 25th Division, and in the complaints made by the National Committee, which have no effect.

Along came the collapse of the 12th Army Corps, and comrade Yoldi, whose performance was unequalled, is put on trial, his Division disbanded and Walter organises his murder. Meanwhile not a finger is lifted against Walter who had retreated without due cause. The 24th Division is disbanded, whilst the 30th reorganises and so is the 44th. The 153rd Brigade (the erstwhile Tierra y Libertad) has been seconded to the 30th Division and its men have had no rest for 40 days, and only cold rations.

In connection with the same episode, comrade Máximo Franco, Commander of the 127th Brigade is arrested, when he has done the most sterling work and when his brigade is the most pugnacious. The comrades took it upon themselves to get him out of jail and replaced him at the

¹¹ A German Commander in the republican army.

head of the Division. The comrade in question is presently separated from his brigade, having been stood down and tried.

Commissars who acquitted themselves in exemplary fashion, such as Villaverde of the 153rd Brigade, or Sánchez, commissar of the 153rd Brigade battalion, a 58-year-old who has displayed truly exemplary courage and integrity, have been stood down, whereas the only Communist commissar with that Brigade, a man who deserted on 11 March, has been kept on. Other comrade commissars have been stood down unjustly, as in the case of Justo del Valle, Sanz and Valentín López Escribano.

It can be proved that the 32nd Division commander, Major Gancedo, of the PCE, has murdered several comrades: we have obtained the minutes of a meeting of the 141st Brigade of that Division, at which there was talk of eliminating personnel, officers and commissars who were not members of the PCE: copies were made and these were forwarded to Negrín and Prieto. Gancedo and other communist commanders are still in charge of the 32nd Division, obviously endangering the Division commissar, comrade Señor.¹²

Almendros has been appointed Commissar Inspecting Rearguard Services, at which we protest: nonetheless, he later appointed commissar of the Southern Group of the Army of the East, handing over to Quiles of the PSUC, a man included in the draft and one-time commissar of the Military Training Centre of Catalonia.

We have passed on documentary evidence proving the culpability of Amancio Martínez, commissar of the Barcelona Military Command, and of Durán Rosell, without their having, thus far, been condemned: indeed, Rosell has been formally appointed Brigade Commissar.

We have passed on a complaint from comrade Santiago Gaspar, major of militias, and from his battalion commissar, a PSUC member, against the commander of the 135th Brigade, who abandoned his brigade, leaving Gaspar to salvage equipment and personnel. On the 14th, we received a postcard from comrade Gaspar, telling us specifically: "The commander of the 31st Division has ordered me into the castle." This speaks for itself.

The Defence Section of the National Committee, on its visit to Mantecón was told by him of the news that he was considering standing down "Juanel". When "Juanel" was informed of this, he stated that this was a ploy, since he was not tired nor anything like it.

We pointed out to the National Committee that to appoint Pérez Salas as Under-Secretary of the Army was tantamount to paving the way for a break-up of the army, given his well-known ineptitude and dishonesty. Subsequently, after the crisis point, the appointment went to Colonel Cerdón against whom the National Committee's Defence Section had made complaints to the ministry concerning his performance as chief of staff of the Army of the East and later as Operations Officer with the Central Staff.

This individual, a rabid Stalinist, has already embarked upon his arrogation of powers. Although it was not his place to do so, he has indicted comrade Máximo Franco for trial. Yesterday a disposition appeared seconding the Intelligence and Control Bureau to the Under-Secretaryship, whereby he will have the fate of officers in his hands and will be able to engage in blatant propaganda and hang the label of fascist or anti-fascist on personnel who may not be to the liking of the PCE.

In the Commissariat, disarray and "propaganda" linger on and on. Countless comrades have been stood down unjustly. The communists hold the positions and make the appointments as they

¹² We deal at greater length with these examples in Chapter 32.

please without waiting for official confirmation. Witness the instances of the Military Command in Girona, or in the 11th Army Corps, etc. Proportional allocation of appointments is as yet a distant hope.

The International Brigades continue to be a tool of the PCE and nothing has been done to counter this, except on the part of some foreign comrades. It has to be borne in mind that these units are topped up with Spanish recruits drawn from the drafts and which include lots of comrades who suffered vexations and harassment, and indeed some of them have even been done to death.

The “moles” in the Under-Secretariats of the Air Force, Navy and Armaments have not been eliminated, nor are there any apparent intentions of doing so.

Whether through their own intrigues or because of help from General Rojo we do not know, but in the Army of the East, 80 per cent of units belong to the PCE and there is serious infiltration in every military rank.

The commander of the Central Staff, General Rojo, has been a resounding failure, yet he remains in his post, as a result of which the mistakes go on and defeat follows defeat at hectic speed. The organisation forwarded reports to the then prime minister, Negrín.

It seems certain that the Commissar-General who is to be appointed is Jesús Hernández, by which the communist influence would be increased. However, that post belongs by rights to the CNT, because the leading commissars general associated with the PCE (Álvarez del Vayo) and the PSOE (Bilbao) have been resounding failures.

The Medical Corps is a complete shambles: wounded are not being tended to, they are being classified arbitrarily according to favouritism and there is no sign of steps being taken to remedy this state of affairs. Due to incompetence and planning failure, health equipment is in short supply, though such equipment is readily obtainable abroad.

The military courts are teeming with fascists and “moles”, most of them card-carrying members of the PCE who devote their time to shooting soldiers and NCOs, but who delay sentencing superior officers, the ones chiefly responsible for all the planning failures and defeats.

We offered to organise a Pyrenean battalion completely outfitted for specialist personnel and *dinamiteros*, but the General Staff had only to say no for that special battalion to come to naught...

Here are some of the things that happened since the beginning of the year.

On 11 January, the Catalan CNT killed off the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils and other unformed corps. The then Secretary of the CNT Catalan Regional Committee said, in reply to certain leaflets circulated by these bodies (he was Joan Domènech):

‘Above all we find ourselves obliged to head off this contemptible ploy in that it is not certain that the CNT authorised any leaflet, much less one by the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, an agency that was disbanded by a Generalitat Decree.’

On 13 January, Miguel Cerdón, director of the CNT newspaper *Cartagena Nueva*, was jailed in Cartagena for publishing an article. On the plus side, Court No. 6 of the Supreme Court notified the Defence Minister on 8 March of its decision to review the charge against Major Francisco Maroto and consequently to rescind the sentence of death which had been hanging over Maroto for several months past.

The socialist Máximo Muñoz, who was Commissar of the 9th Army Corps of Andalusia, later wrote: *Dos conductas: Indalecio Prieto y yo*:

‘...Shortly afterwards, at the request of Colonel Prada and his sons who were, as already noted, members of the communist youth movement, the Standing Tribunal of the Army of Andalusia

passed sentence of death on a CNT leader, Maroto. The sentence, bearing the endorsement of Colonel Prada, was passed to me. I probed the matter thoroughly and refused to endorse the sentence. Aside from the fact that unquestionable political rancour had been a factor in the charges, I was unable to put my reputation at risk, whereby the shooting of such an outstanding libertarian might trigger grave disturbances on that front. Suffice it to say that the communists posted placards on the trunks of the olive trees calling for Maroto to be executed, and the CNT people replied with other posters threatening to quit the front should their co-religionist be shot. So I proposed that the matter be placed before Court No. 6 of the Supreme Court of Justice, not that this was any more to the liking of the communists, because it was so done.’¹³

Let us say, in parentheses, for the sake of Maroto’s standing in the eyes of history and to the discredit of his accusers, that when the war ended, and after the drama of the harbour at Alacant, Maroto, whom the communists had accused of being in cahoots with the enemy, was arrested and shot by the Francoists.

The same Supreme Court later cleared General Asensio who had been Largo Caballero’s assistant as Under-Secretary at the Ministry of War. Asensio had been indicted and locked up in San Miguel de los Reyes over the capture of Málaga and following a campaign waged by almost every newspaper, *Solidaridad Obrera* foremost among them. The latter paper, following the absolution of Asensio, who was given a clean bill of health by such a highly placed court, reconsidered the virtues of this former accused. Upon being released, Asensio was to state at a public address, the following:

‘The enemy is big: he stands for half of Spain with 10 million inhabitants, six million from Portugal, 40 million from Germany, and 35 million from Italy, giving a total of 91 million of a population versus some 12 million Spaniards loyal to the Republic.’

At the end of February, the reactionary news agencies reported the transformation of the ‘*Burgos Junta*’ into the full-fledged government of Spain, and on 21 March, in an address to the Reich, Adolf Hitler stated that in the Spanish war, Italy and Germany were at one in their resolve to ‘assure the independence of nationalist Spain’. And so the following cabinet was formed in the rebel zone:

Premiership General Franco
 Vice-Premiership and External Relations General Jordana
 War General Orgaz (or General Dávila)
 Navy Admiral Cervera
 Air Force General Kindelán
 Home Affairs Serrano Suñer
 Public Order General Martínez Anido
 Public Education Sáinz Rodríguez
 Public Works Alfonso Pina
 Labour González Bueno
 Finance Suances
 Justice Conde de Rodezno
 Agriculture Fernández Cuesta.

Martínez Anido died on 24 December that year. The Vatican and Portugal recognised this government on 24 June.

¹³ Máximo Muñoz, *Dos conductas: Indalecio Prieto y yo*, Mexico, 1952, p.177

On 1 April there was a measure of activity around the international labour movement. The IWA had held an Extraordinary Congress in Paris from 8 to 17 December 1937. It had been held at the suggestion of the CNT 'to examine the Spanish situation and adopt resolutions which might lead to direct intervention by the world's proletariat in solidarity and in defence of the Spanish proletariat's very own cause.' In addition to the Spanish CNT, there were direct representatives at the Congress from the anarcho-sindicalist unions of Sweden, Portugal, France, Holland, Italy, Chile, Germany, Belgium, Poland and Argentina. The IWW in the United States and Uruguay's FORU sent messages of support.

From the Boletín de Información CNT-FAI published in Barcelona on 31 December 1937, we reproduce the main resolutions of this IWA Congress:

'Worldwide Proletarian Front against Fascism. After hearing the report from the CNT, and having studied the Spanish situation and its international implications at length, the Congress decides:

To allow the CNT full scope to carry on with its plans and, under its responsibility, with the experiment in progress.

As a result of this decision, the Congress invites all of the sections of the IWA to assist the CNT in its mission, by whatever means they may adjudge the most appropriate to the situation in their respective countries, with a view to ensuring the speediest possible victory in the anti-fascist war and revolution in Spain.

The Congress grants the IWA Secretariat urgent powers to make overtures to the International Trade Union Federation with a view to organising a worldwide boycott of Italian, German, Portuguese, Japanese and Brazilian shipping, merchandise and produce, and possibly of these from elsewhere wherever fascism may attempt to gain a foothold. An approach will also be made to all workers at whatever affiliation in order to ensure support for this Section.

In the face of fascism and given cowardice of the democracies, this Extraordinary Congress resolves to foster the formation of an anti-fascist Workers' Alliance which, embracing all workers' organisations, may prescribe effective action that allows the mobilisation of all worker energies for the crushing of the imperialistic fascism which rides rough-shod over popular freedoms.

For its part, the IWA Secretariat shall immediately embark upon a study of a sweeping scheme for sabotaging and boycotting fascism. This scheme will be implemented simultaneously by all of the Sections of the IWA in so far as this may be feasible for them.

The Secretariat will have to take all necessary steps to publicise this decision, and to have it accepted by the labouring masses of every land, and to issue an appeal to them to put those steps into effect with the least possible delay.

Boycott will be no more than the opening shot of a plan of attack which the Secretariat will put to the sections and which each of these will implement on its home terrain, drawing inspiration from a general plan of action against fascism, the execution of which will have to be maintained until such time as that monstrous regime will have disappeared completely.

Mobilise the Working Masses against Non-Intervention. The Extraordinary Congress expresses its whole-hearted admiration for the Spanish comrades who have been battling against international fascism for the past 17 months.

It is convinced that victory will ultimately crown their efforts and that capitalism, of which fascism is the modern face, will be defeated in this decisive contest.

Pre-eminent among its concerns, the Congress places the restoration of all its international rights to lawful, anti-fascist Spain.

Consequently, the Congress determines that the IWA as a whole must take strenuous steps to secure the cessation of Non-Intervention (which is, in effect, merely the armed intervention of the fascist countries against anti-fascist Spain) and [to secure] the lifting of the blockade and controls which merely prevent republican Spain from supplying and arming herself, whilst affording every sort of facility along those lines to the fascists.

The Congress thus determines that all IWA sections should strive to these ends: they should as a matter of urgency issue an energetic appeal to and mobilising the toiling masses in order to compel the so-called democratic governments to put an end to Non-Intervention, the controls and the blockade which paralyse the military action and economic activities of the anti-fascist forces.

Convinced that its decision will be well received by all workers marshalled within the IWA, the Congress asks them to put these decisions into effect everywhere with a lofty sense of self-discipline, which is the essential moral strength of our international movement, whose obvious wish is to afford as speedily and completely as possible, to the CNT and the Spanish revolutionary war, its total support and broadest assistance.'

The Congress's agreement to empower the IWA Secretariat to make overtures to the International Trade Union Federation (ITUF) was followed up by a meeting on 1 April 1938 in Paris between the secretariats of these two international labour unions. Judging by the press reports, the only outcome of this meeting was that the IWA representatives handed the ITUF representatives a document or technical draft scheme for a boycott and embargo on merchandise from the aggressor fascist countries. Once the document had been scrutinised by the latter, final guidelines would be thrashed out for its implementation.

These noble intentions never were realised.

NOTES

Chapter Four: The Libertarian Movement's Crisis Within

The month of May saw a growing preoccupation with diplomatic activities. Overwhelmed by a defeatist outlook, government figures and scandalmongers were taken in by wishful thinking, the great balm of Iberia, or turned their eyes in the direction of the *deus ex machina* in Geneva.

The seat of the League of Nations had just seen rejected a proposal by the Spanish representative Álvarez del Vayo calling for a suspension of those parts of the Non-Intervention Agreement injurious to the interests of the rightful government of Spain. When it came to a vote, there were nine abstentions, including one British dominion (New Zealand). Nevertheless the government press made a song and dance about some supposed forward progress for Spain's cause. Another reason for contrived optimism was the equally alleged break-up of the Francoist rearguard. According to rumours in circulation, Yagüe had supposedly rebelled against Franco, was a prisoner or had taken his own life. The only certain fact was that General Cabanellas had died — in bed. The newspapers displayed a livelier interest in foreign policy issues than in domestic issues proper. The rosy ripple of rumours went so far as to exaggerate the difficulties of the British government, which was alleged to be on the brink of collapse under the assault of the opposition's 'terrible' attacks.

At the beginning of December 1937, the leader of the British Labour Party, Clement Attlee arrived in Spain at the invitation of the leader of the government. On 9 December, the conservatives put down a motion censuring him in the House of Commons — he was charged with having breached 'his undertaking to refrain from all activity contrary to the British Non-Intervention policy'. The issue had arisen out of a visit paid by Attlee to one of the International Brigades, specifically to a British company. A newspaper of the Brigade itself carried this message from Attlee's own pen:

'I am delighted to send my warmest greetings to the whole brigade and especially to the British company. We felt proud to learn of the high repute that it has earned. I can assure them of our admiration for their courage and devotion to the cause of liberty and social justice. I shall try to pass on what we have seen to our comrades in England. Workers of the world, unite!'

The incident had no further repercussions.

From time to time, government optimism made to cleanse the atmosphere of defeatism by re-floating the oxygen balloon of the miracle of the Marne. In the spring of 1918 the German armies, which had freed themselves of the nightmare of the Eastern front through their peace with Russia, were marching determinedly westwards. On 21 March they breached the British lines and in four days reached Amiens. On 14 July they crossed the Marne, making for Paris. But on 18 July the Allied counter-offensive began. And within three months the war was won — with assistance.

Throughout 1938 several attempts were made to re-enact that great miracle of the First World War. The first one was in the month of May. Indeed on 25 May, a tremendous manoeuvre was

begun in the Balaguer sector and in the Tremp basin. In the latter, the three brigades of the 26th Division occupied two towns and captured two battle-hardened enemy battalions, the Arapiles and the Ceriñola battalions, which had participated in the major enemy offensives, especially in the Centre on the Madrid front and in the north, in breaking through the famed 'ring of steel' around Bilbao. The war booty taken by the 26th Division in the May operations was as follows — the towns of Bast and San Romá de Abella were captured: 1,000 prisoners were taken, including 15 sergeants and 13 subalterns; upwards of half a million cartridges; 1,500 rifles; 12 mortars of the 50 and 81 calibres; 20 machine-guns; 20 automatic rifles; and 5,000 hand grenades; a stores depot, a large amount of pack animals and 50,000 pesetas in rebel currency. The communist Trueba, who was to have attacked on the right flank of the CNT troops met with complete failure, aggravated by the confusion created among his own troops who, in error, attacked one another, resulting in a large number of dead and wounded. In the course of this operation, there was a no less resounding failure by Del Barrio, the commander of the 27th Division facing the Balaguer bridgehead, and also by Lister and El Campesino on the same front: their troops went into action most ostentatiously.

In the rearguard, the political controversy had abated somewhat. Recruitment of volunteers and the frantic campaign to construct fortifications and shelters continued. Worthy of note is the news item carried by the press at the time, to the effect that, under an order included in the *Diario Oficial del Ministerio de Defensa* cavalry colonel Segismundo Casado had been appointed head of the Army of the Centre, under the command of the chief of the Centre region army group. Special courts were taking a dim view of desertion and defeatism. And the entire press was accusing a Fifth Column of speculators of speculating upon the food shortages. To ease the hunger beginning to gnaw at the populace, a chimerical increase in output, a policy of fixed price levels and an end to favouritism were advocated. According to *Solidaridad Obrera*:

'War needs with the absorption of most young people into the ranks, had presented the Libertarian Youth Movement with a problem of an organisational nature: the problem of replacing those cadres scattered by the mobilisation, but where hitherto it had militants aplenty, today the only ones left are those who, by dint of excessive youth, are of no use in the direct activities of our war.'¹

This point was laboured in the same edition:

'By reason of the war, the unions had been left bereft of militant. Some have offered up their lives at the start of the revolution and in the trenches, face to face with the enemy, fighting like lions: others occupy posts in government circles in loyalist Spain. The bulk of our youthful membership is on the fields of battle doing its duty, resisting, attacking and filling with glory the historic pages of the proletarian cause. One has to acknowledge with pride that in the unions there is a manpower shortage, a shortage of active and talented militants, whom the struggle against fascism has wrenched away from us. Leadership and administrative posts fall to three or four comrades left behind in the rearguard by reason of their age.'²

And from time to time there was a revival of the usual demands of the Catalan CNT vis à vis the Generalitat government. As *Solidaridad Obrera* pointed out:

'The CNT, which has been some time in the Generalitat government, did so in order to be of service to Catalonia, without being called *catalaniste*. It was a common endeavour that needed

¹ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 26 May 1938

² *Solidaridad Obrera*, 26 May 1938

to be made regardless of labels of party political considerations. Our representatives, Castilians some of them, did fruitful work on behalf of the Catalan people and on behalf of anti-fascist unity. No one will dare dispute that. Nonetheless, it seems that some have forgotten that in these times, co-operation in good faith is useful: more than useful...necessary and indispensable: and that exclusivist attitudes are injurious and harmful for everybody.’³

In matters military, there was a wistful harking back to the old guerrilla wars. This was a cunning way of exalting the glorious militias in comparison with the bruised and battered Popular Army.

The running in this campaign was made by none other than the Peninsular Committee of the FAI.

‘A guerrilla army forward of the advance positions, infiltrating the enemy camp, cutting lines of communication, blowing up bridges, attacking convoys, water supplies and villages and raising rebel bands in the enemy’s rear: nomads and warriors reliving feats from our past, carrying out harrying exercises, affording no rest to the foreigner, nor to the traitor who invited him to trample the blessed soil of his homeland which we alone love, we, the “anti-patriots” as they describe us...Let us follow the example of the Moors of Africa who waged that sort of warfare: of the Chinese who are even now doing so, and of our legendary heroes of the War of Independence, the Carlist war, the Reconquest from Covadonga to Granada...We need a regular army, who would doubt it? But we also have need of these guerrillas who, by keeping the enemy constantly at full stretch, erode his morale and drive him to distraction, forcing him to divert his forces.’⁴

On instructions from the Executive Committee of Catalonia, the veteran militant Josep Viadiu took over as manager of *Solidaridad Obrera*, a position which had been occupied by Jacinto Torryho since late in 1936. The CNT’s Catalan-language daily, *Catalunya*⁵, ceased publication and gave way to *CNT* which, like a paper of the same name issued in Madrid, came to be the mouthpiece of the National Committee; it was managed and administered by Acracio Bartolomé and Fermín Arce, respectively.

On 31st of that month there was the awful bombing of Granollers, which left 100 dead and 450 injured.

But as we have noted above, one of the most worrying problems for the civilian population was the ongoing shortage and expense of foodstuffs, a process aggravated in Catalonia when that region was cut off militarily from the Centre zone and especially from Levante, and because of the government’s pernicious supply policy. Those sectors most closely connected with the government sought to make capital out of the growing misery among the people, aiming to shift responsibility for the predicament on to the collectives and most especially blaming it on the Workers’ Control committees. *Solidaridad Obrera*, in an effort to get to the nub of the problem, revealed the flaws in the revolutionary legislation, legislation in which, moreover, such pride had been taken.

³ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 29 May 1938

⁴ *Servicio de Información de la Prensa del Comité Peninsular de la FAI*, 27 May 1938. In July 1936 well-trained groups of guerrillas could have undermined the rearguard of the enemy, but the CNT and the FAI had only schooled its fighters in barricade-building and street-fighting, the insufficiency of which was observed in all the pre-1936 insurrections. In 1938, it was too late to remedy this.

⁵ This evening paper first appeared on 22 February 1937. Belatedly, the CNT recognised the need for a newspaper in Catalan.

‘The Workers’ Control Committees which, in accordance with the decrees of the Generalitat on 24 October 1936 and 18 January 1937, operate in firms which remain in the private ownership sector, cannot be responsible for the situation of their respective employers in the unwarranted price-fixing which the authorities have so properly been cracking down on.

We give our approval to the campaign begun against the runaway speculation to which shameless traders, whose sole aim is to hinder us in our struggle against fascism, have been devoting themselves.

But let us add straight away that we are greatly pained that there is a desire to use the issue to reflect discredit upon the new regime of collectivisations and worker control which Catalonia, with the assent of every anti-fascist sector, from Acció Catalana through to the FAI, has sought to equip itself with.

Indeed: under the established legal provisions, what possible hand could the control committees have in the fixing of sale prices and in the establishment of the margin of profit to be charged on goods? Neither in the Collectivisations Decree nor in the one issued later prescribing the role of these bodies can we discover any clause affording them any role in this.

Quite the contrary: Article 13 of the Decree of 18 January 1937 specifically states: “The employer’s representatives will assume charge of the conclusion of contracts, of the custody and use of finances, of the use of the firm’s signature, etc.”, which is to say that the employer to all intents remains just that and he alone bears all direct and delegated responsibility.

Furthermore, section (g) of Article 9 of the same Decree states that one of the things the employer will have to submit for approval to the Control Committee will be “the account of expenditure and income”, which is to say, that all inspection takes place after the fact, without the workers’ representatives having been able in any way to initiate anything in this respect.

We believe that these points needed to be spelled out so as to avoid misleading public opinion and, where feasible, the application of sanctions.

To finish, we will add only that we find it extremely odd that, in defiance of all logic and clarity on this matter, the campaign which some have sought to whip on this issue has managed to find an echo in workers’ newspapers which ought rather to be the ones primarily concerned to defend the workers’ gains.⁶

But the political event of that May was Dr. Negrín’s so-called ‘13 Points’. The press on 1 May reported this important ministerial statement, which explained the government’s war aims. The document read as follows:

‘The government of National Union which enjoys the confidence of the parties and trade union organisations of loyalist Spain and which represents those Spanish citizens subject to constitutional legality solemnly declares, for the benefit of its compatriots and the information of the world that its war aims are:

1. To guarantee Spain’s absolute independence and total integrity. A Spain wholly free of all foreign interference, of whatever nature and provenance, with its territory and its possessions intact and safe from any attempted dismemberment, expropriation and mortgage, retaining the protectorate areas allotted to Spain by international agreements, until such time as said agreements are amended with her participation and consent. Conscious of the obligations inherent to her tradition and her history, Spain will tighten with other Hispanic countries the bonds imposed

⁶ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 26 May 1938.

by a common stock and the sense of universality which has always been a characteristics of our people.

2. Liberation of our territory from the foreign military forces which have invaded it, as well as from those elements which have journeyed to Spain since July 1936 and which on the pretext of technical cooperation, interfere in or seek to dominate Spanish juridical and economic life to their own advantage.

3. A Popular Republic, represented by a vigorous state which rests upon democratic principles, which acts through a government endowed with full authority conferred by the universal suffrage of its citizens and which is the symbol of firm executive power answerable at all times to the guidelines and plans laid down by the Spanish people.

4. The juridical and social format of the Republic will be the work of the national will freely expressed, by means of a plebiscite which is to take place just as soon as fighting ends, conducted with every guarantee, without restriction or limitation, with any who participate in it being protected against any possible reprisals.

5. Respect for regional rights without injury to Spanish unity. Protection and encouragement of the development of the personality and characteristics of the peoples that make up Spain, as required by a historic fact which, far from signifying a decomposition of the nation, represents the best adhesive between its component elements.

6. The Spanish state will assure the citizen of his full rights in civic and social life, of freedom of conscience and will guarantee the free exercise of religious beliefs and practices.

7. The state will guarantee property, lawfully and legitimately acquired, within limits which the supreme national interest and protection for producer elements may impose. Without prejudice to individual initiative, it will prevent the accumulation of wealth that might lead to either individual or collective exploitation and impair the state's overseer activity in economic and social life. To this end the spread of smallholdings will be encouraged, family possessions are guaranteed and encouragement will be given to all measures which may lead to an economic, moral and racial betterment for the labouring classes. The property and legitimate interests of those foreigners who have not abetted the rebellion, will be respected, and with an eye to appropriate indemnification, damages not purposely caused in the course of the war will be looked into. To investigate such damage, the government of the Republic has already established the Foreign Claims Commission.

8. A thoroughgoing agrarian reform which may put paid to the old, aristocratic, semi-feudal property-holding which, being devoid of a sense of the humane and any national and patriotic sense, has always been the greatest obstacle to development of the country's great potential. The new Spain to be established upon a broad-based and solid peasant democracy, master of the land upon which it works.

9. The state will guarantee the rights of the worker through advanced social legislation in accordance with the specific needs of Spanish life and economics.

10. A primary and fundamental preoccupation of the state will be the cultural, physical and moral uplifting of the race.

11. The Spanish army in the nation's service will be free of all ideological and party hegemony and the people must see in it a reliable instrument for the defence of its freedoms and independence.

12. The Spanish state reaffirms its constitutional doctrine of renouncing war as an instrument of national policy. Spain, faithful to her pacts and treaties, will support the policy symbolically

represented in the League of Nations, and, as a Mediterranean power, claims a place in the comity of nations, prepared at all times to co-operate in the strengthening of collective security and in the overall defence of peace. To make an effective contribution to this policy, Spain will develop and intensify its defensive potentiality.

13. A full amnesty for all those Spaniards desirous of cooperating in the immense task of reconstructing and making Spain great. After a gory contest such as the one bloodying our land, in which the ancient virtues of heroism and the idealism of the race have resurfaced, anyone who fails to curtail and overwhelm any notion of revenge and reprisal so as to embrace instead a concerted effort of sacrifice and toil, which all we sons of Spain have a duty to make for the sake of her future will be committing a crime of treason against our country's destiny.'

And how did the Libertarian Movement react to such a sensational document? If we judge by its public declarations, the reaction was one of absolute compliance. On 10 May, the CNT-UGT Liaison Committee issued the following statement:

'Our Popular Front government, in its recent programme, summarised into 13 points, has encapsulated the fundamental requirements of our struggle: complete and absolute national independence; defence before the world, and from vanguard positions, of the present and future of civilised humanity, sparing neither effort nor sacrifice, winning for our homeland, in the community of nations, the position which she deserves, defended with collective interest: the right to dispose of the destinies of our country and that it may be the national will that awards the Republic those juridical and social structures and substructures for living together which may be deemed humane and just.

Such aims provide the wherewithal and the strength to desist from our efforts until victory for our cause is achieved. And as the struggle to the end, or to victory, expresses in words the steadfast will of the proletariat that we represent, so this National CNT-UGT Liaison Committee identifies with our Popular Front government and affirms and looks upon those declarations as its own.'

Did that statement speak for the whole of the Libertarian Movement? On 3 May, the FAI Peninsular Committee issued a circular (no. 17) to its Regional Committees, wherein it stated:

'The note made public by the government with regard to the aims pursued by the Republic in this war represents a momentous document in that it enshrines a line of conduct which to all intents signifies a return to the regime existing prior to 19 July, with all of the implications that might have for the proletariat. This restoration process, which is being pursued in a shameful manner, doubtless has to accelerate now in a manner open and above board. There is no doubt that the basic motive behind this declaration resides in the difficult situation of our war and is focused upon inclining international policy to some extent in favour of anti-fascist Spain. It is a question of making more or less definite offers to Franco-British capitalism so as to secure the hoped-for shift. But there can be no doubt that it also fits in with the wishes, harboured for some time back by those presently in government, to erase any hint of revolutionary transformation in Spain. Then again, given the international situation with its imperialist forces at work, it is logically to be expected that, in the event of such a shift by the democratic powers in favour of the Republic, this would take the shape of an outright intervention in our domestic arrangements, with all of the assurances that the Anglo-French bourgeoisie will seek to impose in favour of its interests.'

The circular, after stating that the government note was accepted 'as a necessary fact, something imposed by superior forces' against which the FAI could not openly offer opposition with-

out causing a real catastrophe to anti-fascist Spain, concluded by saying that the anarchist organisation would have wished the CNT not to share in the responsibility for the note. But that the FAI 'free of such commitments, should and can go on being the vehicle of anarchism's revolutionary aspirations and concerns.'

On 6 May, the same Peninsular Committee sent out its Circular No. 18. According to that circular, at a cabinet meeting on 27 April, Negrín had announced that an extraordinary cabinet meeting would be held shortly to debate and agree a programme of government. And that the drafting of the programme had to take place within that cabinet, since intervention by political and union sectors would make the task unduly laborious. Nonetheless, it was hoped to have some knowledge of the draft prior to its being voted upon so that debate would be possible. But by 30 April the programme was definitively approved without the text's having been seen beforehand by the National Committee of the CNT.

The circular went on:

'From point 3, which prescribes a parliamentary regime, up to point 13, which promises an amnesty for Franco's supporters, the entire content is violently at odds not only with our ideas (which we did not expect to see reflected in a governmental document) but also with the established reality in antifascist Spain since 19 July. Especially telling in the document is that which is missing from it. We find neither the merest allusion to 19 July, to the counter-revolutionary forces which then rose up in arms against the people and were radically eliminated from public spaces nor do we find in the draft any formula guaranteeing the gains of the labouring and peasant class, such as the right to collective operation and worker control of production. Instead, the State undertakes to guarantee property rights, individual initiative, the free exercise of religious practices, to encourage the development of small ownership, to indemnify foreign capitalism, etc., etc. ...'

The view of the CNT National Committee on the matter was reflected in two circulars — no. 9, dated 1 May and no. 12, dated 10 May. It was reported in the former that at the cabinet meeting held on 30 April, the premier had presented the cabinet statement to his ministers. The CNT representative, Segundo Blanco, set out the views of his organisation, namely, that the note, in view of its importance, should be made known to organisation and party leaders. Negrín opposed this, alleging that it had to be released to the public that very day and delivered to the British Embassy. That the aim of it was to show the outside world, especially France and England, 'that there was no extremism nor red peril here', but merely a struggle for an advanced Republic. That to submit it to the parties and organisations would be to whip up a debate, for no one would find his doctrinal viewpoints reflected in the text. As to the political impact of the note, the circular added that, that same day, the ministers of France and Great Britain were examining the Spanish question in depth, and that France, in negotiating with Britain over recognition of Italy's conquest of Abyssinia had imposed the withdrawal of volunteers from Spain as a precondition for talks.

The circular continued:

'Our representative, in keeping with the mandate issued to him, withheld his vote, not on account of the content of the declaration, which he did not dispute, but because it would first be circulated to the organisations.'

And so the note was endorsed, with the leader of the government specifying that it was not to be taken literally, since, more than anything else it was a statement for effect aimed at the outside world, devised for the meeting in London and for the purpose of providing ammunition for the opposition in the House of Commons.

In its Circular No. 12, the National Committee set about making a thoroughgoing analysis of the 13 points in order to show that there was there 'plenty of scope for advanced achievements' and to give lie to the negative arguments of the defeatists. And then it dissected the 13 points one by one:

1. Assertion constantly reiterated by us since 19 July and by which, if anyone can feel themselves upset by it, it will be communist elements when it says: free of all foreign interference of whatever nature and provenance.

2. We have to agree with and subscribe to the text. But for clarity's sake we will point out that in referring to technicians, expression is being given to a formula accepted by the government for application to the problem of controls upon the withdrawal of volunteers. The problem of technicians has been raised because it is not enough that some fine day the volunteers may be withdrawn and "technicians", who swamp the fascist zone in war as in civilian activities, remain. In a declaration one cannot refrain from placing this point on the record, and that is our demand.

3. At the September 1937 plenum it was agreed that we would adopt as our own and would espouse the thesis of electoral consultation under the aegis of a "federal democratic socialist republic". In the guidelines submitted by us to the UGT and adopted by the National Plenum of Regional Committees, we inserted one clause which encapsulated the September agreement. The government's declaration changes the tack and speaks of a Popular Republic, which does not conflict with our thesis.

4. One consequence of our agreements as spelled out above is acceptance of electoral consultation. It is understood that once the struggle is over, of course, things will not be "as in the old days", but rather that there will be the usual necessary interval required by an election. But there is a further point. Abroad, hopes are entertained of imposing mediation upon us, proceeding with a plebiscite which may determine our future arrangements. This would be sponsored by the League of Nations and would guarantee defeat for the will of the people of Spain. But will the same thing happen if the government of the Republic handles it? We already know what elections mean if the person in government wants the people's wishes to be acted upon. This being so, in addition to this business of a plebiscite being something we accept – upon its outcome depends the structure and social advances to be stamped upon the country (the advances will be all the more notable when popular feeling triumphs and begins to legislate) – this clause indicates a heading off of Britain's ambition to mediate. We say: let us proceed with the plebiscite with assurances for us all, through the government of the Republic, refusing to let outsiders mount it. This is a follow-up to point 4.

5. What might we add to this item? It is our doctrine, our outlook. Federalism, identity and respect for the characteristics of peoples. Here too, if anyone could complain, it would be the communists. Not we, if we wish to be consistent.

6. Could any other declaration be made? It is de rigueur that in any programme type declaration we register our respect for religions, when we know that today this plays an important role, especially in Britain and America. In both countries it is tremendously important that we win Catholic opinion to our side. Working in this field, José Bergamín⁷, in America, is doing sterling support work which is not, in its outcome, unconnected with the possible rescinding of the

⁷ Born in Madrid in 1895, he was an active supporter of the Catholic-republican movement during the Second Republic, editing the journal *Cruz y Raya*. Like many intellectuals, he gravitated towards the PCE during the civil war. Perhaps in an attempt to ingratiate himself with his new comrades, he excelled himself in his tirades against the POUM and heterodox communists. After the civil war he went into exile in Mexico.

neutrality laws in America, and which has such a tremendously significant part to play in our war.

7. Of revolutionary importance, since it has to do with the economy and property. We should have liked a statement on socialisation, collectivisation etc., but could we have forgotten that this is the “nub” of our foreign problem? Can we suddenly ignore what we have lost sight of, that neither Britain, nor France nor America nor any other democracy can go for socialisation, welcome nor assist in the success of a regime of collectivisation, socialisation or even nationalisation run by the workers, on account of what this precedent would mean and its implications in economic and revolutionary terms? If we want to be consistent with our deepest convictions and with actual experience, we necessarily have to acknowledge the existence of the aforementioned factors. And to conclude that the government of the Republic could make no other declaration as far as the outside world goes, in view of the above considerations, that the one which it has made on this point. But let us dissect it, and, despite these crucial considerations, we will discover elements that open up a route to a truly reborn future, without our lapsing back into the situation that existed prior to July.

It says: “The state will guarantee property lawfully and legitimately acquired within limits which the supreme national interest (and a supreme national interest can mean as much as one wants it to mean), and protection for producer elements (a protection which could be taken to unexpected lengths)”! And it goes on...“without prejudice to individual initiative, it will prevent the amassing of wealth that might lead to exploitation. Let us, to bring out its importance, repeat this prohibition on the sort of capital accumulation that may lead to exploitation.” And it does not even say that it may lead, but rather that it can lead. How much might be made of this! And this point goes on: “To this end the spread of smallholdings will be encouraged, family possessions are guaranteed and encouragement will be given to all measures which may lead to an economic, moral and racial betterment for the labouring classes.”

Since 19 July we have been harping on the message “let us respect small property”, on account of the reckoning that such a declaration was crucial lest we come into confrontation with a huge mass of interests which would ally themselves with fascism unless we did not respect them. The declaration, and let us be clear, does not say respect but encouragement. But is not that perhaps a proper, logical, consistent and necessary declaration on the part of a republican government? Is it not the mark and the norm of the advanced democracies? Is it not perhaps that in Mexico, regarded as the most advanced country in revolutionary terms, not counting Russia? But then a declaration follows that measures will be encouraged that may lead to economic and moral betterment for the workers. How much might not be encompassed in this respect? How far might one not travel down that road, meeting overlapping points aplenty with our aspirations which can also be encapsulated theoretically and practically as securing improvement and constant betterment for the working masses? It then goes on to talk about respecting foreign interests and of compensation. Well, that is another declaration that we have already made. But even if we had not made it, could the government have avoided making it when we are dependent upon those foreigners, obliged to ensure that they do not fall out with us, asking favours of them day in and day out, to ensure that they do not close the frontier, because if they do close it the war will be over with fascism triumphant? This clause is no obstacle to social achievements in economic matters.

8. Another important point, this. Let us dissect this one too. It states, after asserting that the old aristocracy has been done away with, “the new Spain is to be established upon a broad-based

and solid peasant democracy, master of the land upon which it works.” There is no doubt that we can endorse the implications of the above phrase. Peasant democracy — which we have never opposed — “master of the land upon which it works”, we find gratifying because it does not specify — it speaks in the plural — if the peasant is to be the owner of the land which he works individually or collectively, and thus collectivist arrangements may subsist in the countryside, with their peasant members being deemed owners of the land that they work.

9. Advanced social legislation congruent with the requirement of life and economics. A repetition of what we said, the UGT and the CNT, in other words, in the bases which we signed.

10. We cannot possibly raise any objection to this, since the moral and physical betterment of the people’s is one of the premises of anarchism.

11. A repetition of what we have been calling for to counter the intrigue and expansionism of the communists: a hegemony-less army of the people, in the people’s service.

12. A peace declaration indicative of pretensions to military might. The only debatable item is affiliation to the useless League of Nations. But was there any point in seeking confrontation and making a concrete statement to it when we had recourse to it in order to make our voice heard? If Geneva is to be taken to task, this is not the proper time to do so, on the government’s part at least.

The last point, much talked about. Let us dissect this one also. It says: “A full amnesty for all those Spaniards desirous of cooperating in the immense task of reconstructing and making Spain great.” This declaration is an important one as far as the outside world goes by virtue of the altruistic content which cannot be neglected by a government that wants to be regarded as victorious. And it is of importance in the rebel zone in that it offers hope to those who daily confront the Italo-German invasion. One need only follow incidents in the enemy camp to realise the scale being assumed by the intestinal struggle between Falangists, Requetés, cedistas and foreigners. It is excellent policy to foment this. To be sure, there are many ways of doing that, including more accelerated and efficacious ways. It will be seen that these are employed. But it does not preclude another little addition. And the point is just that.

One more thing: if the war continues and we take the territory that is in rebel hands, or if his rearguard collapses and we overrun it, victorious, who will restrain the people’s impulses? Who will stay the avenging arms? The people which has been two years under the fascist yoke, made serfs by invaders will, on the day it finds itself free, call to accounts and take action beyond what is anticipated in the law or in writing. This is inevitable. It is unimaginable that it should come about otherwise. At least the Libertarian Movement can spare a thought for nothing except victory. It is not permissible for our membership even to imagine that our war can be concluded by mediation. Others may think it, not we. Will it come to pass? That cannot be foretold. But we must be firmly convinced not. And reckon on victories.

Consequently this point is for pure effect. The document is adorned with phrases. In practical terms, we must agree that point 13 is worthless in that implementation of it is not feasible.’

The CNT National Committee’s reasoning suffered from a formal deficiency that had grave underlying implications. Justification of the points analysed took as its premise a series of precedents or faits accomplis: What is stated in the note is what we ourselves have been saying since such and such a date, anything beyond that fits in with what was agreed at a plenum of the Movement; a constituted government cannot say anything else: to say otherwise would be to put us in a bad light with France and Britain; the intention to socialise, collectivise and indeed nationalise etc., cannot be made in the name of a democratic state.

Flawed reasoning. One cannot cite one mistake to excuse another one. In any case, one ought to demonstrate that no such mistake is present in the comparison one is taking as the basis of one's reasoning. One has to show that what was said or agreed yesterday was correct and suited to reality. Only then might it furnish the groundwork for a rational construct. A democratic government, any government is precluded from making certain declarations. Correct. What is not so correct is that any organisation may make them through the mouth of that government. If it comprises part of it, yes: but in that case it would have to examine the logic of belonging to such a government. By concentrating simply on precedent anything might be justified, and more. Justification might be found for the following historic event, to take just one.

On 15 April, the *Gaceta* carried a decree establishing a General Commissariat of Electricity. The Defence Minister offered the post of Commissar-General to the former minister Joan Peiró who, by agreement with the CNT National Committee, accepted the appointment. But on 28 April, Negrín himself issued an order dissolving the Unified Electrical Services of Catalonia. In keeping with the order, the Commissar-General of Electricity would appoint state auditors to each of the undertakings that automatically recovered their individual identities, that is, their erstwhile status as limited companies, and he would disband the Company Councils and Workers' Control Committees.

Under the logic of the precedent or the *fait accompli* to which the CNT National Committee subscribed, Negrín's manoeuvre would be fully justified. But not everyone subscribed to this adventitious form of reasoning.

The Confederation registered its strenuous objections to such a blatant assault upon the Collectivisation Decree. *Catalaniste* political groups did likewise against what they took to be central government interference in Catalonia's autonomous interests.

On 7 May the FAI's Catalan Regional Committee forwarded to the Peninsular Committee a letter in which it registered its wholehearted agreement with the contents of Circular No. 17. The letter sent to the FAI's Peninsular Committee by the CNT National Committee, dated 10 May, adopted a very different tone:

'To the Peninsular Committee of the FAI — Dear comrades: In view of the latest Circulars forwarded by the FAI Peninsular Committee to its Regional Committees, this National Committee finds itself compelled to deal with the matter of orientation of the membership. We must stop seeking to pit one Committee against others, with some appearing to be more revolutionary and more consistent than the rest, for this will show itself as divisions dangerous to the integrity of the Libertarian Movement.

The Secretariat of this Committee, having got together with delegates from its Regional Committees, has concluded that it was vital that a meeting be held of the three National Committees of the Libertarian Movement and that developments be dealt with clearly so as to see if it is possible to avert the continuance of events whose outcome must be of benefit only to political adversaries and to the enemy.

In consequence of this, we invite a delegation — five or six delegates from this Committee — to the gathering, which is to take place tomorrow, Wednesday, at 11 am, at the offices of the secretary of this National Committee.

In confident anticipation of your attendance, cordial greetings on behalf of the National Committee. *Mariano Vázquez.*

At the meeting the FAI was represented by Germinal de Sousa, Pedro Herrera, Manuel Escorza and Jacobo Prince, the FIJL by Lorenzo Iñigo, Serafin Aliaga, and José Cabañas and the CNT

by Mariano Vázquez, Galo Díez, Laborda, Gallego Crespo, Manuel López, Juan Arnalda, Delio Alvarez, Francesc Isgleas and Avelino Entrilgo.

According to the minutes kept by Galo Díez, the discussion was quite heated. The minutes were rejected by the FAI Peninsular Committee in a letter of 14 May to the CNT National Committee on the grounds that they had been drafted 'in an adequate and confused form', and it had resolved not to endorse them even as 'a reliable *précis* of the discussions at the meeting.' At the meeting, the FIJL Peninsular Committee had played the peacemaker's role and, according to the minutes, a proposition from the Committee comprised of the following points had been approved there:

'1. That for the sake of the union of the Libertarian Movement generally, none of the three National Committees may issue to their organisations circulars or writings which imply an affront to the conduct and standpoint of any of the three organisations of the Movement, and that, should any of the Movement's organisations be at odds at any time and in any circumstances, the organisations' National Committees should come together, jointly to have full discussion and to reconcile differences in outlook on what problems may exist, to prescribe and adhere to a homogenous line of conduct and policy for the whole Libertarian Movement.

2. Meanwhile, and on a regular basis, that the Political Section of the National Committee, with its triangular representation (CNT-FAI-FIJL) be the one which, upon examining the suggestions and reports of a political nature, lays down the guidelines to be followed by the Libertarian Movement through its three National Committees.'

To its members, the FAI issued a resumé of its contributions to the aforementioned meeting and claimed to have stated at this its intention:

'not to accept control over our attitudes and positions, since our organisation is the only one called upon to inform us as to the suitability or unsuitability of a stance adopted by the Peninsular Committee, and as regards the dispatch of reports or circulars, we have nothing to submit before other committees outside of the FAI, since we have no wish to have prior control of the reports or circulars that they may issue to their bodies.'

It also spelled out its readiness to participate in the National Policy Commission:

'provided that it be a truly efficient organ and not what it has been to date: that all policy issues are submitted to it, upon which it alone may report, draft proposals and offer advice, so that the National Committees may then decide upon them. And thus, chastened by a period of inadequate performance by the Political Section of the CNT's National Committee, we declare our readiness to participate, provided we receive these assurances.'

On 12 May, at an ordinary meeting of the Popular Front, the PSOE moved that a vote of confidence be passed in the ministerial declaration. The FAI's representative refused for the moment to endorse this, alleging ignorance of the opinion of his Committee, and he confined himself to requesting a copy of the aforementioned note. On that very day the Peninsular Committee issued a circular, no. 23, to its Regional Committees, wherein it stated:

'to demand of us an unconditional vote of support for this "Declaration", when we were not consulted prior to its drafting and release by the government, strikes us as unduly demanding, and we take the line that they are requiring of us a sacrifice greater than we can deliver. It is already enough that we should tolerate said Declaration without registering a public objection...

...The Peninsular Committee, realising perfectly the importance and seriousness of this situation, and before delivering a definitive opinion of the Popular Front, urgently calls upon the Regional Committees to let us know by telegram their feelings on the matter broached here, within three days at most.'

The FAI's Catalan Regional Committee, on the grounds that in Catalonia there was a Libertarian Movement at one in its conduct and outlook, left its reply up to the Executive Committee of the region. And this, in a letter dated 15 May to the Peninsular Committee, summarised its reply to Circular No. 23, in the following points:

‘1. The 13 points are a declaration made by government with an eye to the outside world, which makes it obligatory that it be put to all its component parties and organisations.

2. The implementation of the 13 points domestically hinges upon an end to the war and the establishment of a government or broadly democratic government policy.

3. Commentary upon and dissemination of the 13 points on the domestic scene would be prejudicial to their implementation and would lead to profound disagreements because there is no proportional, democratic sharing of the political power of the state.

4. The 13 points do not constitute matter for the Popular Front to make propaganda from, unless the Popular Front first organises a proportional, democratic sharing of the political power of the state.

We have met the requirement made of the Regional Committee of the CNT and of the FAI by the National and Peninsular Committees in their respective circulars, and hereby set out is the outlook and position of the Libertarian Movement of Catalonia.

Fraternal greetings to you, on behalf of the Libertarian Movement of Catalonia: Acting Chairman, **Josep Xena**; Secretary, **Fidel Miró**.’

There can be no more graphic expression of the fact that what mattered to this Executive Committee was not the counter-revolutionary content of the 13 points, but the prospect of ‘proportional and democratic sharing of the political power of the state.’ But upon seeing this reply, the Peninsular Committee badgered its Regional Committee in Catalonia (16 May):

‘With all due respect on our part for the opinion set out by the Executive Committee of Catalonia and however important it may be, we, the FAI Peninsular Committee are concerned to know your specific opinion as far as this matter is concerned, even though it may be, as we imagine, the same as that put to us by the Executive Committee of Catalonia.’

In point of fact, the reply from the FAI's Catalan Regional Committee, dated 17 May and signed by its secretary Josep Xena, wholly reiterated the sentiments expressed by the Executive Committee. The reply from the Asturian Regional, based in Catalonia since the complete loss of the north, was openly favourable to concession:

‘We also accept as monumental the note containing the Government's 13 points, but not that the note signifies a return to the state of affairs obtaining on 19 July 1936. Although we also declare that the note cannot meet the revolutionary aspirations of the FAI. But this does not diminish the fact that it espouses an extraordinary position vis à vis the war and concerning victory.’

Aragón, on the other hand, took the same line as the Peninsular Committee. Not until 27 May was a reply to the same effect received from the Centre Regional Committee, by which time the Peninsular Committee had already made its decision.

On the suggestion of the Executive Committee of Catalonia, a meeting of the Political Section of the CNT National Committee was held on the evening of 17 May. As Executive Committee members, the meeting was attended by Germinal Esgleas, Francesc Isgleas and García Oliver; the CNT was represented by Luque, Prieto and Vázquez; the FIJL by Cabañas and Serafín Aliaga; the FAI by Germinal de Sousa and Jacobo Prince. In the light of the replies received from its Regional Committees, the Peninsular Committee had met that very morning to consider the matter. In

the event of the delegations at the joint meetings taking the line that the FAI should endorse the Popular Front note, it would accede to this, but with a solemn declaration that the anarchist organisation in no way abjured any of its views.

That same Peninsular Committee, in a Circular of 27 May, summarised the business of this meeting of the Political Section.

‘We attended the aforementioned meeting and found that all of the delegations represented argued that the FAI’s Peninsular Committee should not withhold its signature from the National Popular Front’s note, supporting the 13 points.

For our part we once again set out our by now well-known views concerning the government note and argued extensively, denying that the FAI’s dissenting stance would compromise the movement, in that we took the view that it would bring it greater prestige overall when it was found that the CNT and the FAI were two distinct organisations and that, at a given point, they might present themselves in public with differing opinions on the same issue...

But in view of the insistence of the delegations present, though not sharing their views and getting round the FAI’s responsibility in all that was said, and without prejudice to raising the issue again when opportune, we declared that we would endorse the Popular Front’s note.’

That note, as published in the press on 19 May, read as follows:

‘The note in which our government has just encapsulated the war aims of anti-fascist Spain, enjoys, as is only logical, the support of the Popular Front which sees reflected in it the aims so insistently voiced by us and so cunningly negated by our foes within and without.

Spain — the authentic Spain — which rallies under the republican banner, is fighting for the supremacy of the civil power, transgressed by the military revolt. This is a fight for her independence, upon which the fascist traitors have fixed a price and for the personal liberty of her citizens in every facet of ideology and respectable beliefs, whether timid or forward-looking: for respect for property that is not based on exploitation of the worker, for a people’s army, for the people and not for sectarianism, or for any leader cult (*caudillismo*), and for human generosity. In other words she fights for her moral and material growth, leaving the way wide open for boundless political and social progress, founded exclusively upon the free determination of the country.

The offshoots of the Popular Front have, in this government note, a superb pathfinder and working guide. From this moment forth, the actions of Spanish anti-fascists should be geared to ensuring that all may understand and act upon this code of conduct, and the National Committee wholeheartedly invites them so to act.’

The always latent internal crisis of the Libertarian Movement had grown worse as a consequence of the events of May 1937, or rather of the ‘pacification’ of those events. The ‘ceasefire’ order had been followed by an ongoing demolition of popular gains, and some militants were beginning to appreciate that if they continued along that road, what remained of those gains and the very life of the Libertarian Movement had their days numbered. Daily, more and more important ground was being lost. The movement was, to all intents, living on borrowed time. For a time, though, there had been the hope that the war might be won. But come the Aragón disaster, the inevitable conclusion of the fighting was taking shape clearly in the minds of many. And, albeit belatedly, a timid backlash was emerging from some libertarian militants who hitherto had stubbornly refused to acknowledge certain facts of life. In writings and speeches it had become fashionable to take to task the slightest wavering of belief in the infallible dogma of victory (‘we libertarian militants are prohibited even from imagining the possibility of defeat’); but when this object of winning the war to which everything had been sacrificed — the lives of militants and the

most sacred principles — and for which unspeakable humiliations had been endured, was dealt blows as rude and repeated as the enemy's recapture of Teruel, followed by invasion of Aragón, Levante and Catalonia, some militants wound up wondering whether there was anything left to sacrifice or to sacrifice it for.

As the conviction that the war was lost took root in the minds of those militants, there occurred storms like the one we have just outlined. Two tendencies had surfaced: the CNT National Committee, on the one hand, which had sacrificed everything to success in the war, and which now, perhaps to shrug off the torment of uncertainty, was looking to the *negrinista* drug of diehard resistance for the optimism needed ('and let us stop the mouths of the defeatists and pessimists who refuse to listen to reason and seize upon incidents or details — as with the case of the 13 points — to talk of revolutionary losses, cave-ins, betrayals and liquidations' — Circular No. 12 from the CNT National Committee, Barcelona, 10 May 1938): and the tendency represented by the FAI Peninsular Committee which, albeit belatedly, aimed to salvage its honour by its opposition to the methodical and ongoing advance of counter-revolution. This latter faction, as Abad de Santillán intimates in the last two chapters of his oft-quoted book, intended, in mid-1938, to contrive an armistice akin to the one contrived (and worsened by the anti-communist backlash) in March 1939. Then again, the none-too-gratifying military panorama had led many anarchists to share almost Prieto's 'it's hopeless' line and in this regard important negotiations or overtures with influential figures in Spanish politics were initiated.

NOTES

Chapter Five: The August Crisis and the Battle of the Ebro

On 25 June 1938 a plenum of area delegations of the Libertarian Movement of Catalonia, convened by the Executive Committee, sat down to business. There was but this single item on the agenda: 'Report from the Executive Committee.' And the notice of convention had added:

'No area federation of the Libertarian Movement's three branches should omit to send along a properly authorised delegation sufficiently trustworthy to pronounce upon the resolutions.'

It is striking that, summoned by the Executive Committee, these delegates arriving to consider an unknown quantity were required to have the same executive powers vis à vis the grassroots whom they were representing.

As to the proceedings of the plenum, the report carried by the press of 26 June could not have been more nebulous. It was recorded there that Germinal Esgleas, who delivered the promised report, spoke for the entirety of the morning session and for part of the afternoon session on the following subjects: the reasons why the Executive Committee had been set up, its structure, powers and operation; the Executive's activity in regional and national politics and within the Popular Front; encouragement of the fighting men, volunteers and other matters related to the war; the Executive's dealings with regard to public order, the prisoners issue and the reorganisation of the Regional Legal Commission; its activities in relation to economic matters, production and supply; the reorganisation and strengthening of the union, specific and youth movement; intensification of propaganda to bolster fighting spirit against defeatism and, lastly, relations with the national committees of the Libertarian Movement.

The press stated that the report had the (almost) unanimous endorsement of the delegations. It also reported the favourable impression made in the provinces by the creation of the Executive. The plenum spelled out the perfect understanding which existed between the three branches of the Libertarian Movement, while the delegates' report hinted at the sound condition and activity of the cadres of the organisation, due largely to establishment of Local and Area Liaison Committees embracing all three branches — union, anarchist and youth — which streamlined the organisational machinery and had established a unity of action that could not have been bettered.

The item adds:

'Nearly every single delegation stressed the need to make use of the Executive Committee in the most libertarian sense of the word and stated its firm determination to win the war and strengthen the Libertarian Movement everywhere.'

From 2 to 10 August, Valencia was the meeting place for a National Plenum of the Regional Committees of the CNT. Every Regional Committee attended, including Catalonia as well as those that had emigrated to Catalonia (such as Asturias and the North). Solidaridad Obrera carried the following briefing:

'The plenum fell into two parts: the one political and trade union, the other economic.

In part one, the Secretariat of the National Committee delivered a comprehensive report on the political and military situation, on the CNT's record in government and in the Popular Front, on the UGT-CNT National Liaison Committee and on dealings with other political parties, whereupon the report was endorsed, as was the stewardship of the National Committee.

Likewise ratified was the written report on its stewardship as already submitted to the organisation by the National Committee.

The plenum reaffirmed the resistance watchword advocated by the government, under which the struggle must be prosecuted zealously until victory is achieved. The only option is the pursuit of a victorious conclusion to our war for independence, liberty and the collective well-being of the people. This entails a permanent struggle at the front and in the rearguard.

As for dealings with other parties, unity must be upheld among all anti-fascist parties and organisations...

The plenum showed especial solicitude in its examination of concerted action with the UGT, unanimously expressing the wish and need for this to be strengthened, stressing the role of the liaison committees and endeavouring to ensure prompt implementation of the various provisions of the pact signed in March relating to the creation of a National War Industries Council, a Higher Economic Council and a Commissariat of Armed Rearguard Forces.

Several problems of an internal character were gone into, with appropriate resolutions being adopted in each instance. Likewise, the definitive overhauling of the Industrial Federations was approved, the number of these being reduced to 20...

Regional Economic Councils, already in existence under the accords of the Economic Plenum in January, reported at length upon their operation...

The agreement to set up an Iberian Trade Union Bank was endorsed, with the National Committee being empowered to do so at the opportune moment. Approval was given to the resolutions passed by the CNT Economic Council, and especially to those relating to management of economic resources and distribution of surpluses and profits, as well as the rules governing deployment of tools and all manner of resources in activities furthering the interest of the nation's economy.

Guidelines were sketched for interpretation of the Extended National Economic Plenum with regard to the setting-up of Area and Zonal CNT Economic Councils and to coordination and liaison between Federations and Councils. The Centre was authorised to set up a Compensation Fund with purely administrative functions, until such times as the Confederation, at another plenum, may determine the manner in which this compensation arrangement can be applied nationwide...

The plenum was briefed on the regulations laid down by the CNT Economic Council concerning the operations of the Union-controlled Wholesale Distribution Service in accordance with the prescriptions of the January plenum. There was lengthy examination of a general scheme to be enacted immediately and progressively, for the professional training of women and their absorption into production, managerial and administrative functions which might be compatible with their biological, natural and temperamental aptitudes — and the scheme was approved. They also looked into the re-skilling of workers currently engaged in trades which might be classified as compatible with and suited to female personnel. The plenum was informed of the broad operation of the scheme for a "Family Allowance for Military Mobilisation Fund" currently under examination by the CNT Economic Council. Rules were laid down for the building-up of "Mutual

Funds” for social security and other things, and for speedy implementation of earlier accords, due account being taken of existing legal provisions.

Above all, consideration was given to ways of fully implementing fiscal provisions in the collectivised and socialised industries.’¹

At the start of August, when the fronts had scarcely finished collapsing and when offensive operations like the Ebro attacks had been launched, the political truce imposed by the catastrophic developments in March was deemed to have run its course.

An editorial item in *Solidaridad Obrera* recorded this fact:

‘We regard this wholly political meddling with working and productivity arrangements as an incitement to schism within the family of labour.

The right to intervene in labour issues is vested solely in the Liaison Committee of the two unions, together with the respective agencies of those unions.

That which is properly a function of the union organisations cannot be replaced by the action of parties, whatever those parties may be.

It is an act of treachery to default upon undertakings agreed between the two union organisations in order to engage in a politicking which has all the hallmarks of negativity in every respect and as far as the proper ends for Spain, the war and the workers are concerned.

All such ploys will meet with appropriate steadfast opposition from us...’²

Only the imminence of a common peril had led to an armistice between the parties and the organisations, a sort of truce in their factional warfare, a war that pitted the PCE against each and every one of the rest. The CNT-UGT pact met with ferocious opposition from the communists. Faced with the earlier CNT-UGT pacts (of 26 November 1936 and 29 July 1937), the PCE had responded by adopting a wholly uncompromising advocacy of its Popular Front policy, as against the existing anti-fascist front, which embraced all union and political denominations against Franco, without distinction. Confronted with the fait accompli of revolution, the party had come up with the opportunistic alternative of a democratic parliamentary republic. But the most telling campaign against an effective labour entente, which was construed as indicative of a desire to oust political parties from public life, was conducted (as we have had occasion to see) inside the PSOE and the UGT. The March pact had been dictated by circumstances and once the gravity of those circumstances had begun to recede, the time came to renege upon the unity, which had been embraced in a moment of weakness.

On 6 August the organ of the Catalan CNT repudiated the Stalinist lust for the political tutelage of the unions:

‘At this present point in time, it is indeed contrivance and ill-timing to raise issues likely to lead to divide forces or inhibit the normal dealings between the workers of both union organisations by allowing the political machinations of the PCE and the PSOE...

We have already pointed in these columns to their fundamental inadequacies in respect of the upholding of workers’ unity. But we cannot allow to go unanswered another argument or pretext by *Frente Rojo*. The workers’ parties, this colleague alleges, are invested with the “basic mission” of guiding the unions, in that the problems with which the unions have to grapple are eminently political and, that being so, to get to the point, the obvious suggestion seems to be that a committee representative of both workers’ parties must somehow carry more authority

¹ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 19 August 1938

² *Solidaridad Obrera*, 3 August 1938

than a trade union committee, allegedly because the first-mentioned committee has a political capability.

The conclusion is absurd, but it is not our conclusion. It follows from this view that the unions are politically incompetent and this notion is echoed by *Frente Rojo*; it is a notion broadly aimed at making specifically labour organisations take second place to specifically political ones. And it is likewise absurd and dishonest to drag in the FAI in support of any such approach. At no time has the FAI sought, through its groups inside the unions or in any other way, to usurp functions which specifically appertain to trade union organisms...³

With less fanfare, the state was making the boldest strides forward, one after another, almost imperceptibly. The new CNT-UGT pact provided for interventionist measures with regard to functions proper to the state or which might, under the provisions of the pact, come to be such. Into this last category came the surrender of the management of war industry to the Armaments Under-Secretariat and provisions such as those which called for centralisation of raw materials and transport, nationalisation of the railways, heavy industry, deep sea shipping, banking etc. — all of them traded against a guarantee of establishment of supervisory agencies, in the shape of the so-called National Industrial Councils, National Economic Councils and so forth, with a role for the trade union organisations. In this regard, the pact represented the greatest historic concession, on the part of a revolutionary organisation, in favour of the state and all in return for the crumbs of a highly elastic and ill-defined partnership role. In practice, the trade-union partner was swamped by accompanying generosity of representation. The following is typical of such swamping.

The Labour Council came into existence at the beginning of August 1938. As Jaume Aiguader, the Labour Minister, put it, the Council's task was 'to normalise the smooth performance of work in every regard and in every sector.'

Out of the 31 members who made up the Labour Council, 19 represented the state and the employers. The breakdown was as follows:

State representatives: one chairman, three vice-chairmen and three secretaries, leaving a total of seven state officials.

Employer representatives: four permanent board members and two acting members (freely appointed by the employers concerned) plus four full members and two acting members appointed by the government. This made for a total of 12 employer representatives.

Trade union representatives: for the CNT, four full members and two temporary; for the UGT, four full members and two temporary. In all, 12 workers.

Under these circumstances, the CNT's presence on this Labour Council amounted, on the one hand, to an acknowledgment — and in this in the full flush of revolution — of the employer class and employer interests; and on the other, to the CNT's abjuring of class struggle. Alongside the Labour Council, the old comités paritarios of the dictatorship and the jurados mixtos of the republican era, against which the CNT had fought with tooth and nail, were the very models of revolutionism. In the latter, there had been equal representation for workers and employers, which is to say balanced representation, with one solitary state official holding the casting vote. But this latest partnership or control existed only in the most derisory form and all of the participation advocated or secured was of the same stature.

³ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 6 August 1938

When, at a later date, there emerged a hint of defiance of the state's requisitioning of the war industries (as had been fully anticipated in the CNT-UGT pact), a defiance which welled up from below, from the workforce in the factories, the only response from the higher committees of the Confederation was to reiterate the partnership measures which had been agreed. The politicians, especially the Catalan and Basque nationalists, took the issue more to heart and displayed more extreme reactions.

August 11 saw a crisis of tremendous political significance. At a cabinet meeting, the leader of the government had insisted upon approval of some decrees earlier repudiated by the representatives of Catalonia and the Basque Country, the latter having construed the decrees as trespasses against home rule privileges. This time around, the decrees were approved and fresh objections were overruled. But the press published the following from the Basque minister, Irujo:

"Barcelona, 11 August 1938.

His Excellency Señor Don Juan Negrín.

President of the Council of Ministers.

My dear premier and friend,

The Catalan minister, señor Aiguader has made it known to me that he tendered his resignation over fundamental disagreement with the policy espoused by the government of the Republic in Catalonia, a policy which has culminated in the three decrees approved at the cabinet meeting this afternoon despite his protests and mine.

The normal rapport between Catalans and Basques, which first showed itself in parliamentary terms in our withdrawal from the Cortes over the repeal of the Ley de Cultivos, compels me to follow the lead set by señor Aiguader and tender my resignation from office as a result, not that this prevents me from reiterating as a republican and friend my most loyal feelings towards you. With an embrace — **Manuel Irujo.**'

The press mentioned three decrees: one on requisitioning war industries, another on the militarisation of ports and a third on the reform of the Commissariat. Between the lines there was a hint of a fourth decree bearing on the courts, but it was alleged that the President of the Republic had refused to ratify this one.

The three published decrees seemed to be spin-offs from certain clauses of the CNT-UGT pact. But in the case of war industries, the take-over proceeded without any regard for setting up the National War Industries Commission for which the pact had also made provision. This take-over was what had prompted the resignations of cabinet ministers Aiguader and Irujo.

On 17 August, the UGT Executive hurriedly made the following declaration:

'Having examined the decrees recently approved at a cabinet meeting ... [the Executive] resolved to signify its agreement with the aforementioned decrees, some of which have already been looked at in a meeting held by the CNT-UGT National Liaison Committee.'

The CNT maintained its silence. For its part, the FAI spelled out its stance in a document that was summed up in these two points:

'Looking into the situation, the FAI Peninsular Committee, exponent of an idea and a movement with deep historical roots in Spain, an organisation which, while assuming no government office, has thus far demonstrated that it is capable of sacrificing all that can be sacrificed, to the supreme aim of winning the war, hereby declares that the decrees approved by the cabinet on 11th instant represent an affront to the liberties and rights of the Spanish people.

All those parties and organisations, for which the general interest takes precedence over their own particular ambitions, are hereby exhorted to express their repudiation of the policy implicit in these decrees.'

À propos of the militarisation of the ports, *Solidaridad Obrera* hinted:

'In the workplace there ought to be respect for the role of the union, just as the political commissariat should be honoured in the army. Absolutely no one can, without committing the gravest offence against anti-fascist unity, bring pressure to bear and employ concealed bribery in order to encourage propaganda. We have long resisted this practice, which led to the passing of a decree that we must not forget.'⁴

In the same edition, the paper reported the implications of the decree upon the overhauling of the Commissariat, which, as the reader will readily appreciate, made mince-meat — as it turned the clock back — of all the reforms previously introduced. The Commissariat never managed to function as the guardian angel of the serviceman against the inherent arbitrariness of the military command; instead it added to his burden, squeezing him between summary discipline and the poison of propaganda. This acquires a singular expression thanks to this most recent decree. As was noted in *Solidaridad Obrera*:

'The decree organising the General War Commissariat stipulates that the Commissariat of Land Forces is an agency made up of political and trade-union representatives, the chief task of which is to strengthen and raise the fighting capabilities of the combatants, creating in soldiers and officers a spirit of high military discipline and leading to an atmosphere of selflessness, sacrifice and love of arms, boosting the steadfast determination to fight on until victory is secured over the enemies of Spain.

The Commissariat will operate under the minister's supreme authority. It will be headed by the Commissar-General, the minister's representative, under whose leadership the consultative junta, comprised of the sub-commissars general who are appointed by the minister on the recommendations of the national parties and organisations, will operate. The sub-commissars will also have inspection duties in accordance with the dispositions of the Commissar-General.

The General Commissariat shall comprise of the General Secretariat and of Organisation, Propaganda and Press, Recruitment and Recruit Education and Inspection departments. The general secretary will be chosen by the Defence Minister and act as the executive arm of the Commissar-General. The post shall be filled by a sub-commissar who has been relieved of inspection duties.

The Organisation Branch will have the commissar training and education schools under its purview. The Propaganda Branch will be under the immediate supervision of the Commissar-General and, in all matters relating to propaganda, will operate in accordance with the guidelines of the Central Staff and with the resources which may be made available to it by the Propaganda Sub-Secretariat.

The Recruitment Branch will engage in political work and screening in the recruitment centres. The Inspection Branch, which is to be made up of the sub-commissars general, is to be under the supervision of the Commissar-General.

The Commissar will complement the functions of the Military Command, without interfering with the latter: he shall act as the representative of the government and its war policy, and his authority should be derived from his educational work and his conduct under fire.

⁴ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 20 August 1938

The ranks which the Commissariat will have are: Divisional Commissar, Brigade Commissar, Commissar of Land Forces. The commissars are to operate not only in combat units but also in all centres and establishments where, by virtue of the presence of soldiers, there may be a need to carry out intensive political work in their vicinity.

The Commissar is empowered to establish one or more Commissar Schools. Combatants shall be given preference for acceptance into the Commissariat. Alongside every military commander there will be a commissar with a status equal to that of the former. In the event of a Commissar going missing or being killed on active service, his dependants shall enjoy the entitlements appropriate to the rank which he had been assigned, and, in the event of incapacitation, said entitlements will likewise be due, but subject to the post assigned being compatible with his incapacitation.⁵

The history of the Commissariat is as brief as it is eloquent. Since the very early days of the campaign, the columns of milicianos who had set out for the front had been organised, most of them, by political parties or labour organisations. Professional soldiers were incorporated into them as 'technical officers', alongside whom 'political delegates' were assigned from the unions or parties. The mission of the latter was to supervise or monitor the military officers. With the rise of the Stalinists, this outlook was altered with the establishment of the War Commissariat, a straight copy of the structure of the Soviet Army. However, perhaps deliberately, the prescribed powers of the Commissariat were always vague. Whereas in some units the Commissariat had a finger in everything, in others it meant nothing. Often the conclusion had been reached that the Commissar and the military commander had identical powers and responsibilities, to wit, that there was a single command embodied by two separate individuals. This notion gave rise to violent clashes. The prescribed definition was not a logical definition of anything: the commissar would be the representative of the government's war policy inside the army and would do his duty without interference with the military command.

The serious matter of the duality of command was seemingly resolved: the intrusion by organisations and parties into commands and into the army was abolished by decree. But what remained of the Commissariat? Its task was to disseminate the government's watchwords among its own and the enemy's troops. But this was a task done by the military command through the Second Staff Section (Information) with its appropriate offshoots, including propaganda based on precise figures that the Commissariat did not possess. Furthermore, there was a Propaganda Under-Secretariat (government-controlled) for the purposes of the government zone.

The Commissariat could have staked a claim to an exclusive mission: ensuring the ideological liberty of the combatants, preventing injustices, abuses and party propaganda. But that was precisely what those 'on high' had no intention of prescribing as its functions. The Commissariat was turned into the special organ of propaganda by means of intrigue, coercion and criminal action, for the benefit of the most influential party in the government.

Come the crisis to which we have referred, the problem arose of resolving it on the most advantageous terms possible as far as the prevailing policy went. 'The crisis', wrote Abad de Santillán, 'was resolved by incorporating two communist or quasi-communist ministers into the government.' This assessment comes close to the truth. The two incoming ministers were José Moix of the PSUC, and Tomás Bilbao of Acción Nacionalista Vasca. Moix was a one-time CNT member, one of the leading lights in the Sabadell unions at the time that these broke away from

⁵ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 20 August 1938

and were expelled from the CNT in March 1933. Tomás Bilbao belonged to a liberal party akin to Catalonia's Esquerra or to the Izquierda Republicana party, albeit socially more progressive than either. Bilbao was convinced of Negrín's personal and political superiority over any other republican politician: he believed in the correctness of the policy of resistance to the death, which might make it possible to extend the civil war into the coming world war. He disagreed with and made a stand against the view of his fellow leaders of Acción Nacionalista Vasca to the effect that he had to co-operate in the political endeavour marked out by Negrín; he ensured that his party leaders revised their initial view and committed themselves to ministerial collaboration in the last territorial government of the Republic. In short, Tomás Bilbao was a negrinista.⁶

In spite of everything, the crisis exacerbated the scarcely contained political tension. And given the implications of the resignations, which virtually amounted to the departure from government of the representatives of two autonomous regions, because it was anticipated that the solution might be distasteful and even exasperating for certain sectors in Catalonia, in which territory the government was then based, the government reckoned that a crude gambit was called for.

To get this underway, it turned to the quasi-military police agency, the Servicio de Investigación Militar (Army Investigation Service; SIM), which, it seems, had no nobler actions to perform.

A report from the FAI Peninsular Committee, presented to the Libertarian Movement's Plenum in October stated:

'The SIM lately excelled itself in its miscalculations by taking a hand in contriving situations for purely political gains. More specifically: the SIM has had the entire war-making resources of the nation mobilised in the service of the communist-socialist faction which usurps the functions of government, adopting a blatant stance in favour of a *coup d'état*.'

When political tensions peaked during the days of the recent crisis, the SIM issued to the army, to parties and organisations, a memo wherein the following was stated:

'Into the hands of the SIM, through absolutely reliable sources and agencies, has come the following watchword issued to all and sundry by the fascist command...

"On the night of 14-15 August, in every position, every command post, every rearguard village, every depot, every aerodrome, everywhere in short, you will, shrinking from no method, have moved simultaneously and resoundingly to incapacitate your leaders and their trusted henchmen, capitalising upon your numerical superiority of ten to one. At sunrise, raise a white flag in every place you have brought under control, so that we can be lying in wait and hurry to your aid to liberate you once and for all from the criminal red oppression under which you live:

Patriots, brother Spaniards of the red zone: until tomorrow, until dawn on 15 August!"

This is to be brought to the attention of the lower ranks at your orders.'

In a follow-up to this news, the following day, this communiqué was issued to all units.

'Further to my telegram of last night, regarding an announcement made by the enemy and with a view to aborting the revolt at which it hinted, you should see to it as a matter of urgency that the following suggestions are complied with:

1. Throughout the area under your command, surveillance shall be maintained tonight so as to thwart realisation of the enemy's plans.

⁶ Based on Irujo's testimony to the author.

2. In the event of any incident, perpetrators of the incident are to be peremptorily arrested and should be handed over with all speed to agents of the SIM so that a statement can be taken from them prior to being brought before the army's standing tribunals.

3. A special watch is to be kept on roads, depots, gasoline depots, telephone and telegraph exchanges and lines, etc.

4. All units are to be under orders to take up whatever positions may be necessary.

5. Likewise, this great unit will have a trusted detachment standing by, ready to step in whenever any incident may occur. You are to report any incident which may occur to me with all urgency. Acknowledge receipt.'

That message, issued also to the armed forces in the rearguard, prompted the adoption of precautionary measures, which in reality amounted to a show of force intimidating the parties and organisations that sought to invest the crisis with implications that did not suit a certain sector.

Just in case we might have misinterpreted things, we waited until the time of the self-styled fascist action had passed, before the SIM would begin to make suitable arrests in order to dismantle the enemy's gigantic conspiratorial set-up and before all of the members of the SIM would immediately submit their final resignations. On the basis of having failed to prevent the setting up of a rebel apparatus on such a scale. Conceding the possibility of a venture of that nature amounted to an admission of its own ineptitude. But not a single arrest was made, nor did anybody feel embarrassed, nor have we heard of anyone's having committed hara-kiri. Apparently SIM personnel are immune to blushes.'

Now it is time for us to turn to the progress of military operations. According to General Rojo, in his *¡Alerta a los pueblos!*, the paralysis of the enemy offensive against Catalonia and his choice of a new target in the shape of Levante, enabled the army to be overhauled in the former region. Rebel troops who had occupied Castelló and got within a few kilometres of Sagunt, had set themselves 15 July as their target date for the occupation of Valencia. Into the loyalist lines in Levante were placed the last troops, which had been able to withdraw from the fronts in the Centre, Andalusia and Extremadura. Should the plan of resistance fail, no more reserves were available and the rich Valencia region, the most important farming and industrial area in that zone, plus one of the Republic's finest ports, could be considered lost.

At the end of June, the Staff drew up its plan of manoeuvres for the second half of the year. It was as follows: (a) resistance in Levante; (b) a strike across the Ebro; (c) an offensive through Extremadura. The aim of these manoeuvres, the only feasible ones, was to bring help indirectly to the front under threat.

With its Ebro gambit, the command hoped to get as far as Gandesa, Barea, Valderrobres, etc., and to link up these operations with those of the Army of Levante. The initial onslaught achieved an incursion some 20 kilometres deep, but this proved incapable of being exploited properly. The enemy advance towards Valencia was halted but only at the cost of a horrifying battle of attrition that was to use up the reserves of the armies of Catalonia. This would lay the groundwork for their resounding annihilation six months later.

The Ebro offensive, launched at 0.15 hours on 25 July had virtually ground to a halt by 31 July. A dispatch from the central observation post of the anti-aircraft defences on 31 July was rather eloquent in its explanation of the reasons why the advance had been contained. According to that dispatch, on 31 July, between 7.08 hours and 17.55 hours there were 50 enemy air attacks, deploying a total of 200 bombers and 96 fighter planes. This record would be well beaten later

on, when the battle of the Ebro proper began —the toughest of the whole war; it lasted for three and a half months and on the loyalist side alone the dead, wounded and captured, taken together with the casualties of the operations across the Segre, amounted to something in excess of 50,000 men. During the battle, the enemy mounted eight powerful counter-thrusts, backed by a huge deployment of equipment and manpower. On the republican side, support and cover offensives were launched across the Segre; these turned out, every one, to be catastrophes, for the enemy, who controlled the Pyrenean reservoirs, deliberately flooded the rivers, sweeping away bridges and makeshift footbridges, effectively frustrating all efforts and threatening to turn every withdrawal into a catastrophe. Several units were seconded from the Army of the East, for the battle of the Ebro, the 120th Brigade of the 26th Division among them.

A secondary offensive, coinciding with the main Ebro attack, sought to make headway into Extremadura, far enough to leave the enemy forces from Andalusia and the North isolated. This failed, according to General Rojo, due to the fact that the enemy who had in mind a supremely ambitious attack towards the rich mining area of Almadén, anticipated the republicans' intentions. The truth is that the enemy offensive, which came on 19 July, came up against a front which was perfectly ripe for demolition. The Extremadura front, covering a distance of some 400 kilometres, from Monterrubio to Puente del Arzobispo, amounted to a huge horse-shoe manned by only a few troops, each battalion having to cover 15 or even 20 kilometres. Whereas the enemy had been improving upon his positions thanks to little coups de main, the government commanders, the communists Burillo and Cabezudo, otherwise engaged on furloughs that caused a great scandal, failed to make provision against possible attacks. A short while before disaster struck, Burillo, a colonel commanding the Army of Extremadura, simply dismissed all the reports reaching him about enemy troop concentrations and rejected the suggestion that aerial reconnaissance be made to check them out. The offensive began on 19 July and by 26 July the enemy had gobbled up 1,000 square kilometres of territory complete with 24 villages, some of them as significant as Castuera, Cabeza de Buey, Don Benito, Villanueva de la Serena and Campanario. It was a repetition of the disaster which had struck in Aragón months earlier.

In the second half of August, the Republic mounted an offensive of its own on that same front. This involved the 125th Brigade of the 28th (Ascaso) Division, which broke through the front at a spot opposite Esparragosa de los Lares on the River Zujar, reaching a point within eight kilometres of Castuera, alongside other forces. The 125th Brigade, which together with the remainder of its Division made up the reserves of the 7th Army Corps, was used as a spearhead and had to cover some 55 kilometres, almost barefoot, between their billets and the furthest extent of the incursion. This gives some idea of the weary condition of the troops chosen for battle service. The upshot was that there was a retreat of 15 kilometres towards the rearguard.

The Battle of the Ebro proper began in early August:

‘The Battle of the Ebro was a most pitiless contest, a fight conducted over a period of three and a half months with fleeting interruptions on the ground and none in the air; a battle of equipment, in which all weapons and devices, save gas, were deployed on the narrow fronts with devastating force.’⁷

The attacks made during those months in the Lower Segre sector were designed to speed or ease the withdrawal of troops from the Ebro. The first of them came on 9 August, at a point on the Segre between Lleida and Balaguer, facing Vilanova de la Barca. The operation to cross the

⁷ Vicente Rojo, *España heroica*

river was entrusted to the 30th Division (formerly Macià-Companys Column, which at this point included part of the 153rd Brigade, the erstwhile Tierra y Libertad Column), the 34th Division and the Mixed Carabineers Division.

The enemy, probably well informed, put up no resistance to the river crossing but subsequently opened the floodgates of the Camarasa reservoir, while simultaneously opening up with automatic, artillery and mortar fire. Gripped by panic, the assault force, made up exclusively of carabineers, fell back in disarray, dumping the precious war materials which had been issued to them, and which included tanks (many of which were left behind half way across the rushing waters) on the river bank. The bridges and footbridges were swept away by the rising waters and quite a few of the runaways perished by drowning in their hopeless attempts to reach the opposite bank.

All of this equipment was retrieved by the 153rd Brigade, which was a reserve rather than an operational unit: it was ordered to secure the bridgehead, which it did by crossing the river in broad daylight. Retrieval completed, it made a final withdrawal on 18 August, after bitter engagements with the enemy costing hundreds of dead, wounded and missing. Among the wounded was commandant Feliciano Llach (better known as Leal).

The second offensive in the Segre sector came on 7 November and involved the 26th Division's 121st Brigade.

This fresh offensive was designed to facilitate the republican withdrawal from the threatened bridgehead on the right bank of the Ebro. The eventual withdrawal from the Ebro was made between 8 and 15 November.

A report from the FAI Peninsular Committee (Military Secretariat), dated 30 September 1938 and referring to the battle of the Ebro, had this to say:

‘When the Aragón front collapsed, orders were issued — although authentication of this may not be possible — for the bulk of the troops of Marxist origin to stay behind in the Catalan zone. Come the inevitable severing of communications between Catalonia and Levante, the 5th and 15th Army Corps, Marxists to a man, remained on the Catalan side, in compliance with said orders. The PCE had the ambition of having an army commander and something had to be done to achieve this, and to that end was the Ebro operation launched. To be sure, something had to be done to assist the fighters of the Levante front who were extremely exhausted by an offensive which had been more than two months in progress.

In issues No. 38 and 39 of the *Boletín Decanal de la Sección Información del Ejército de Tierra* (Fortnightly Bulletin of the Army Intelligence Branch) there is a masterly exposition of the factors to be taken into consideration in the crossing of a river: suitable terrain, water levels, meteorological forecasts of weather which may affect the latter, the volume of water, the strength of current, etc., etc. and the imponderables also have to be considered. And in the prosecution of the Central Staff's operations, the Talera reservoirs were not reckoned as imponderables, since they were not considered, and to this fact we can attribute the failure of the operation to score any crucial initial success.

The river crossing operation was made with laudable precision. The pontoon teams did stalwart work in erecting bridges and footbridges with extraordinary speed.

When our forces had their first clashes with the enemy troops in the Sierra de Fatarella and Venta de Campesinos, all of our infantry and part of our heavy gear had already crossed the Ebro, and cavalry forces had been left behind at our old lines to await orders. Then up cropped the imponderable. The enemy, upon seeing that, for all his bombardment, he had failed to destroy

the bridges thrown across the Ebro, opened the Talera dams, causing a two-metre rise in water levels which swept away all the bridges and footbridges.

And for a period of 48 hours, our army was left without any of the supplies it needed to prosecute the operation, and the upshot of this, aggravated by the lack of artillery support and tanks and the absolute absence of air support, was that our forces were unable to reach their immediate objectives and occupy Gandesa as a first step to making an effective incursion into enemy territory. During this time, the enemy, realising the importance of the offensive upon which we had embarked, concentrated on Gandesa and succeeded in making capture of that city impossible.

Four days on from the launching of the operation, the entire mass of artillery, tanks and aircraft, which the enemy had in Levante was moved up to the Ebro, leading to the offensive which is still in progress. Inch by inch terrain is being lost. Enemy losses are incalculable, in terms of both men and material. Considerable time may have to elapse before he is in a position to prepare any offensive. He is shattered. The Levante offensive has ground to a standstill and so has the Extremadura offensive.

But, to be frank, we believe that more practical and beneficial results could have been achieved with the manpower and material resources employed in this operation, had the operation been mounted elsewhere. For it should not be overlooked that, despite the brilliance of our resistance, we have no option left but to go back to the starting point, which is to say, to the left bank of the Ebro and make the crossing again.⁸

But the military outlook in the wake of the battle of the Ebro could be gauged as poor in the light of the bitter and costly battles fought in 1938 and of the Republic's entire war policy, without going any more deeply into the matter. The events of the immediate aftermath do require thorough examination. And the next chapter will be given over to that.

NOTES

⁸ Military report by the FAI, 30 September 1938

Chapter Six: Francoist Policy

It is flying in the face of the most recent information about the war in Spain to attribute Franco's military success exclusively to foreign aid and to that aid being contingent upon a complete abdication of political and economic interests. The years since the end of World War Two have seen the publication of important papers on the basis of which a more assured examination of this question can be effected. It is strikingly obvious from this documentary evidence that Italian and German aid and created a delicate situation as regards the independence of Franco's Spain, and also that Franco was adept at surmounting the most dangerous of these hurdles.

The problem concerned not only foreign volunteers or conscripts, nor only the unlimited loan of combat equipment but also the administration of victory. With slight differences (a lot slighter than may be believed) both sides had equipment and manpower to call upon. Where differences came in related to how each side managed its resources. In view of what has been said in previous chapters, there is no point in labouring the point about the republican governments' ineptitude in the management of victory. To the assertion that Franco's Spain had more determined sponsors outside the borders of Spain, it must always be retorted that in the opposite camp potential advantages were allowed to slip away because of incompetence, pettiness and chicanery. If we are to heed their most candid comments, at no time did Franco's most influential friends have any faith in his military victory, except from the end of 1938 onwards.

As for the question of mortgaging assets, the documents to which we have been referring show the rebel side to have been a lot more wary and adept in the skilful art of having its cake and eating it. In authenticating this claim two works are crucial: the *Political Diary 1937-1938* (cited already) of Count Ciano, and the third volume of *The Secret Archives of the Wilhelmstrasse* published by the Paris-based Librarie Plon in 1952 as *L'Allemagne et la guerre civile espagnole* (Germany and the Spanish Civil War). These books, which reflect the private thoughts of Franco's powerful allies, are awash with whingeing, reproaches and tantrums over the twists and turns of Francoist policy. It is very telling that it is the cautious and Machiavellian German turned out to be the more disappointed, deceived and infuriated. Through this copious confidential and, at times, top secret correspondence Francoist policy appears invested with an intransigent streak in matters military, political and economic. In the first of these spheres, Franco listens dutifully to the smug insinuations of his advisors, but almost always conceals his main tactical and strategic intentions from them. In the second, he reciprocates for the plentiful deliveries of war materials with raw materials, but taking great care not to be drawn into sweeping, monopolistic treaties. Politically, he doggedly resists the plans of his sponsors on the Non-Intervention Committee, who have it in for France and England. No less a figure than General von Faupel, Hitler's envoy, is declared *persona non grata* on account of his intrigues in Spain's domestic political matters and is forced to withdraw to Salamanca.

In so far as space will allow, let us examine some of these areas.

In late December, in the light of the Republic's successful offensive against Teruel, the Duce summoned together his principal military leaders and reached with them the conclusion that

Franco's military inactivity was contrary to Italy's interests and that Franco would have to be cautioned that they were not prepared to go on investing men, equipment and money in the Spanish venture indefinitely. The Germans were no less disgruntled with Franco's 'vacillation' and criticised him for having been inactive for upwards of two months since the capture of Asturias. Thus Germany and Italy were both beginning to have doubts about the military competence of the *Caudillo* and even came to imagine that he was inclining in the direction of a negotiated peace, of a 'pink' solution, neither white nor red.

'An understanding between reds and whites, say, an armistice followed by elections to determine the new form of government, would bring the reds, through the ballot box, the victory that they cannot hope for from the battlefield.'¹

The spectre of possible peace negotiations was a constant nightmare for the Italians and Germans. Such negotiations, almost invariably under the aegis of England, and involving certain republican personalities, were plentiful and consistent throughout the war. Franco's intransigence scuppered any possible solution from that quarter. Nonetheless, what the sponsors of the *Caudillo* found most exasperating was his dismissive attitude to their generous tactical military recommendations. After the battle of the North, the Germans proposed a thoroughgoing attack via Catalonia. Franco, on the other hand, planned an offensive through the Guadalajara sector and the loyalists managed to thwart this by means of a manoeuvre around Teruel. Once the situation of that front had been stabilised again, the Italians recommended that the success be capitalised upon by means of an all-out push against Valencia and the sea. Instead, the Francoist command mounted the 9 March offensive via Aragón.

In mid-January, General Berti, commander of the Italian legions in Spain informed the *Caudillo* on behalf of Mussolini of the latter's dislike of the way in which Franco was conducting operations. The *Duce* reaffirmed the Italian commitment to render assistance for a limited period of four or six months, but on the condition that there was a reshuffle of the command for the sake of greater efficiency and that units be co-ordinated better. It was spelled out clearly to Franco 'that henceforth more heed than hitherto should be paid to Italian military advice.' Both Count Ciano's diary and German diplomatic correspondence of the time testify to the *Duce's* irritation with the fact that the Italian volunteer corps was condemned to kick its heels in idleness. This inactivity was indicative of Franco's disdain for the fighting capabilities of Italian troops. And at a time when England was becoming more insistent as to the withdrawal of volunteers, Franco showed himself to be almost ready to dispense with these troops.

In late February 1938, Germany gave Franco to understand that her military aid depended not merely on her goodwill, but also upon how things went on the Non-Intervention Committee, and she was insistent about the need to strike a definitive blow against the enemy. Franco's response was as follows:

'Regrettably, the regrouping in the wake of the Northern campaign has taken longer than anticipated. The delay has been occasioned solely by the fact, kept secret from the outside world, that guerrilla fighting has persisted, especially in Asturias, until very recently. After the capture of Gijón there were still 18,000 men under arms scattered about the region: only very recently have the last of them been captured, roughly 2,000 men with machine-guns and 1,500 rifles. It is for this reason that the enemy has managed to seize the initiative and, thanks to a miscalculation by our command, scored initial successes in Teruel that have prevented the launching of the

¹ *L'Allemagne et la guerre civile espagnole*, Paris, 1952, p. 458

December offensive against Madrid. This I set out some time ago in a letter to Mussolini. Once again the military situation has swung back in our favour. The reds have taken very heavy losses in Teruel. Their reserves are used up and their morale shattered.’²

In that dispatch, Franco spells out his intentions to launch an offensive south of the Ebro, which, in the event of its success, would be followed up by further operations in the North, with the ultimate objective of bringing the war to a successful conclusion.

Following the 9 March offensive, the awful air raids on Barcelona took place. *A propos* of the 18 March air raids, which made a tremendous impact in London, the German diplomatic correspondence notes that ‘to the great outrage of Franco’ the raids had been ordered by Mussolini personally. On page 150 of Count Ciano’s diary, we find the following entry:

‘Perth (the British ambassador in Rome) this morning handed me a note in which our attention is called to the bombing raids on Barcelona, it being added that this could create a climate unhelpful to the continuation of the Italian-British negotiations. I replied that the operational initiative belongs to Franco and not to us. That we could exercise our moderating influence but without committing ourselves to that effect. As Perth alluded to possible French intervention, I stated roundly that we in our turn would have recourse to more vigorous measures. The truth concerning the Barcelona raids is that Mussolini himself gave the order for them to Valle in the Chamber some minutes prior to delivering his speech on Austria. Franco who was wholly ignorant of this yesterday requested that they be suspended for fear of complications abroad. Mussolini believes that these air raids have a very efficacious impact on the reds’ morale at a time when troops are advancing in Aragón. He is right. When I briefed him about Perth’s approach, it had not the slightest effect on him and indeed he expressed his satisfaction at seeing Italians inspire panic on account of their aggression, Italians who, not long ago, were appreciated only as mandolin-players. In his estimation, this increases our standing in German eyes which prefer total and ruthless war.’³

One of the most obscure aspects of Franco’s 9 March push was the abrupt halt of the advance into Catalonia. There are grounds enough to rule out any allegedly insurmountable republican resistance. Likewise we can dismiss the argument that the invading forces were spent since the offensive lasted and swept all in its path, albeit that it was diverted towards Levante. Bearing in mind Catalonia’s strategic importance, given that it was then the seat of the republican government, that the bulk of the Republic’s war industries were based there, given its border with France and given that it was the principal bulwark of anti-fascism, the paralysis of the Francoist advance along the Noguera Pallaresa, the Segre and the Ebro, when faced by an enemy who was all but a spent force, cannot but be telling. The Francoist army’s experienced commanders could not have made such a mistake of tactics which dispelled chances of immediate victory and doomed them to another year’s war.

So what was it that happened in mid-March?

On 16 March, the German Secretary of State in Berlin received a visit from the accredited ambassador of Spain. The purpose of the visit was to brief him most anxiously about rumours to the effect that the French government would be ready to embark upon direct intervention on behalf of the Spanish republicans. The Francoist ambassador wanted to know where Germany

² *L’Allemagne et la guerre civile espagnole*, pp. 499-500

³ *Count Ciano, Journal politique* (1937-1938), p. 159

stood in the event of any such active intervention's proceeding. The next day no less a figure than Germany's ambassador in Paris addressed its Foreign Affairs minister in these terms:

'According to a variety of reports to the same effect, the Supreme Council of National Defence, at its session of 15 March, dealt with the Czechoslovakian question, but also, and specifically, with the situation in Spain. As a result of that meeting the French fleet was allegedly ordered to maintain a state of battle readiness. According to the press, four vessels supposedly weighed anchor for Barcelona for the purpose of protecting French subjects, while others made for Port Vendres to take up positions there. The army is preparing to take certain security measures in regions 16, 17 and 19. It seems also that reinforcements from the interior have been dispatched towards those military undermanned regions.'

With these grave rumours in mind, the Wehrmacht High Command was invited to give its opinion. It delivered its report on 22 March and this bore the signature of Supreme Commander von Keitel. According to the report, a French military intervention would be the step required to prevent a collapse of the Republic's front lines, but that very act would involve the risk of turning a civil war into a European war: 'For France is aware that south of the Pyrenees she would encounter not only the Spanish nationalist army, but also Italian and German troops.' This would imply the deployment of substantial numbers of French troops and a consequent undermanning of the eastern fronts. That sort of risk could not be incurred unless she could depend upon the active collaboration of England, which was wholly unacceptable and upon the ending of French domestic discord.

In accordance with this analysis, the German ambassador in Spain was instructed on 30 March to urge Franco to press home his military operations until Catalonia had been completely overrun and not to let up in order to mount an offensive elsewhere along the fronts. In spite of everything, after the capture of Mequinenza, Serós, Lleida and Balaguer (the latter on 7 April) the advance into the very heart of Catalonia ground to a halt. But the excellent successes of the advance towards Levante, and the reaching of the sea at Benicarló, lifted the cloud from Franco's behaviour in the eyes of Italy and Germany. Germany's thoughts were focused more upon finalising her political and economic demands in anticipation of what was believed the *fait accompli* of imminent nationalist victory. Around this time, Franco, Italy and Germany were even euphorically discussing movement towards the removal of volunteers. But towards the end of April, Franco's opinion changed abruptly. The nationalist advance in Levante had been halted and this he sought to explain in terms of the need to effect a certain regrouping of his forces, of the bad weather and, more timidly, of the 'startling red resistance, now abundantly provided with war materials.' Consequently, in early May, Franco spelled out his analysis whereby, given the anticipated diehard resistance from the 'Reds', the Condor Legion and Italian mercenaries had better remain at his disposal until such a time as the war might be reduced to a straightforward policing operation.

Also in May, the German ambassador in Salamanca informed his minister of the psychological impact on the Francoist rearguard of the slowness of operations. He spoke of the underground activities of those disaffected from the regime, estimating these to amount to around 40 per cent. Likewise, he referred to the sabotaging of bridges and magazines, to arson and assassination bids and above all to 'a guerrilla war, which is presently devastating southern Spain (Cáceres) and Asturias.' Elsewhere in the same report, he stated that the expectation of an imminent ending of the war had resurrected frictions among those allegedly loyal to the regime. The party of unity, the

Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Jons was as yet a long way short of a positive success.⁴ Spanish individualism, so predisposed to indiscipline and criticism, was leading to numerous incidents. Foremost among these was the Yagüe episode. Yagüe had delivered a speech wherein he had referred to the necessity for far-reaching social reforms, honest, incorruptible courts, anti-foreign patriotism, Christian charity and the spirit of Spanish chivalry. What created the greatest sensation was his tribute to the bravery of their 'Red opponents' and his appeal on behalf of political prisoners, be they red or blue, who were in custody because of excessive zeal, seizing upon this as an opportunity to upbraid the courts for partisanship.

This speech was deemed an act of indiscipline and earned Yagüe dismissal from command of the Moroccan Corps; he was to hold himself at the disposition of the Caudillo. Incidents of this sort came to be a persistent feature of relations between Franco and the viceroy of Seville, General Queipo de Llano.

In mid-June, Berlin briefed its ambassador in Spain:

'Confronted in fact with a choice between reforming the Condor Legion with its usual composition so as to make good the considerable losses inflicted upon it in recent months in terms of material and manpower, or proceeding with its withdrawal, we have decided to restore the Legion to full fighting strength on account of major political and military arguments in favour of its remaining in Spain. This decision compels us to furnish replacements which represent a heavy sacrifice for us. Kindly point this out at the earliest opportunity to the Foreign Affairs minister and to Franco also.'

A few days later there was an escalation of air attacks against British merchant shipping in the Mediterranean. On 22 June two British ships were crippled in Valencia, and on 27 June two more ships of the same nationality were sunk in Alicante and in Valencia itself. The Francoist ambassador in Berlin quickly made overtures to the German Foreign Affairs minister, reporting to him rumours to the effect that the British ships had been bombed by German aircraft. For his part, Franco about this time slapped a ban on any air raids on the ports of the red zone.

On 28 June, the German ambassador in Spain reported the following, among other things:

'The most recent air raid made a profound impact upon the British government leader, for he reckons that British public opinion has been misled and he fears the consequences. Given that London is *au fait* with Mussolini's desire to reach an agreement with Britain, as well as Franco's wish to reach an agreement with her also, the belief seems to be that the latest attacks have been

⁴ Franco, a leader without a party, intended to amalgamate the Falange, a leaderless party, with the monarchists and traditionalists. After José Antonio Primo de Rivera was shot, he was replaced by Manuel Hedilla who took the gospel of his teacher to heart and aimed to turn the Falange into a party modelled on the German Nazi party. Franco did not fail to see the danger of a state of political warfare which, given the presence of monarchists and traditionalists every whit as fanatical in their legitimist claims, was what the Falangists' aspirations to hegemony implied. A decree promulgated on 19 April 1937 set up a single party dubbed the *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS*, the supreme leadership of which was assumed by Franco himself. This decree sparked off dogged opposition bordering on revolt from the Falange and government circles got wind of coded watchwords issued to the Falange's provincial organisations urging them to signify their opposition. Envoys dispatched for the purpose of organising demonstrations were intercepted. And Hedilla had even gone so far as to appoint a political *junta*, which featured, among others, General Yagüe and Pilar Primo de Rivera. The court martial appointed Commandant Doval to handle the trial. Doval set in motion sensational measures that led to mass arrests, including the arrest of Hedilla himself who, along with others, was condemned to death. However, no execution was carried out. The Traditionalist sector's reaction was likewise less than compliant. Fal Conde saw the death sentence passed on him commuted to one of banishment from the country. Thereafter, the single party existed only on paper.

mounted by the Germans – acting on Berlin’s instructions – which represents a source of worry for the future.’

Ribbentrop, then the Reich’s Foreign Affairs minister credited the Italian ambassador in Berlin with admitting that ‘the whole world was well aware that the airmen who had been active in aerial bombardments of ports and especially of Barcelona were Italians.’⁵

In instructions dispatched by Berlin to its ambassador in Spain, one reads:

‘Pay a visit to Franco in person and utilising the aforementioned point out to him very clearly that our aviators who are fighting selflessly for nationalist Spain, must be able to depend upon Franco and upon the responsible Spanish authorities under any circumstances, and be protected from the odious suspicion that they were the direct or indirect authors of the bombing raids. Furthermore, according to information in our possession, the bombing of British shipping in recent days has been the handiwork chiefly of the Italians.’

This dispatch is dated 30 June.

As a result of these incidents, the position of the British premier was seriously jeopardised. Chamberlain had sacrificed Eden who resigned as Foreign Affairs Minister on 20 February, for the sake of the appeasement, which he believed might be achieved by means of a treaty with Italy concerning the Mediterranean, East Africa and the Red Sea. The origins of this agreement date back to September 1937, but negotiations only became effective after Eden’s resignation, which had been, to some extent, prompted by it. The agreement implied *de facto* British recognition of the ‘Italian Empire’: Britain had been the Italians’ *bête noire* in this undertaking. The agreement was signed on 16 April. Contemporary observers looked upon the pact as the most eloquent proof of Britain’s renunciation of any interest in the final outcome of the civil war and as a stab in the back for the Spanish Republic. The Francoist push through Aragón and its immediate results perhaps convinced England that as far as the republicans were concerned the war was lost beyond all remedy. Hence the signing of the pact, the aim of which was to keep the route to the East open to British trade. The fact is that the war did not stop, as the Foreign Office had expected, in the spring of 1938. And from then on, stalling over implementation of the agreement with Italy was Britain’s way of pressurising Italy and forcing her to give in on the lingering problem of withdrawing volunteers. Furthermore, also pending was the old British ambition of arranging an armistice between the warring sides in Spain. But Italy took the very opposite approach to what London had expected. Annoyed by the unexpected resistance from the republicans and by the British government’s delaying tactics, she resorted to acts of piracy in the Mediterranean against British shipping in the aim of bringing about Chamberlain’s downfall at the hands of an indignant people and the criticisms of the parliamentary opposition.

In his diary entry for 19 June Ciano wrote:

‘The meeting with Perth has not been any too fruitful for Italian-British friendship. It is not possible for us to accede to his demand that we recommend armistice now that Franco is on the road to victory. Compromise is not an option in civil war ... But I reckon that this postponement of implementation of the agreement until the Greek *kalendas* is highly dangerous.’

Further on, alluding to the *Duce*, he states:

⁵ In his *Diary 1937-1938* (p. 155), Ciano states: ‘A plane of French manufacture but bearing no registration and camouflaged crashed last night on a mountain in Iglesias. Since the likelihood is that it came from Spain and was *en route* to Rome, a statement from the reds in Spain is to be expected. I have briefed Perth (the British ambassador in Rome) about it, adding that any such action would lead to war.’

‘[He] approves my reply to Perth and shows himself clearly intransigent. We shall not amend our conduct towards Franco by one iota, and the agreement with London will come into force when God wills, if at all.’

On 5 July the Non-Intervention Committee endorsed a British plan for the withdrawal of foreign volunteers. It was immediately communicated to both camps. Before giving his answer, Franco sought the advice of Italy and Germany, who hinted at the need to accept the plan in principle and at the same time to formulate comments on specific details so as to buy time until the republican government’s answer became known. Franco was especially urged to avoid giving the impression, to world opinion and to Britain, of systematic opposition, which might lead to his being blamed for the possible aborting of the plan. The republic’s response was made known on 26 July. It was wholly favourable to the terms of the plan. Not until 16 August did the Burgos government deliver its answer to the British government’s official representative, Sir Robert Hodgson. The spirit of that answer completely jumbled up the order of the British plan’s clauses, for it made recognition of belligerent rights a prelude to the withdrawal of volunteers.

At this point, the political crisis looming over Czechoslovakian democracy was coming to a head and at the same time the imminence of a European war was discerned. In Spain, both camps were following the development of the crisis with a different preoccupation. In the event of war in Europe, the Francoist victory would be in serious jeopardy. Republican Spain would line up with France and her allies, from which would come extensive material aid that would render Franco’s military position untenable and in a counter-coup Franco would be bereft of direct backing from his sponsors. In which circumstances it was to be supposed that, in anticipation of a resounding Francoist defeat, an unfavourable armistice would be concluded. This worry was confirmed when Franco sent 20,000 prisoners of war to work on the fortifications along the Pyrenees and along the Franco-Spanish border in Morocco. What is more, the German-British negotiations to which the Sudetenland issue gave rise worried Franco who feared at the time that the conflict might be resolved peacefully, with himself being sacrificed. The enigmatic line being taken by Berlin did nothing to appease such worries. On 25 September, Stohrer sent this telegram to minister Ribbentrop:

‘The German liaison officer at the Spanish headquarters reports as follows:

Franco is surprised that Berlin has no contact with him. He claims to be ignorant of Germany’s political and military intentions in the event of a European war or of a limited war in Czechoslovakia. If nationalist Spain is not at the moment a great power, it is nonetheless, as a friendly power, in a position to render us help somehow. Franco inquires as to Germany’s intentions *vis à vis* her fleet and whether she wishes to use Spanish ports as supply bases: in which case preparations could be made. What is to become of the Condor Legion? The battleship *Deutschland* entered the port of Vigo with a huge tug, assuredly with intentions to which he is not privy. He had expected to receive requests and suggestions from Berlin. But in vain. Franco seems somewhat hurt. Those around him say that nationalist Spain is being slighted.’

In the Francoist camp, anxiety showed itself through cautious questioning. Long faces began to be seen at the headquarters of the Caudillo and Germany was even quietly taken to task for the lousy idea of having chosen such a bad time for her provocations in central Europe. In a telegram from Stohrer to Ribbentrop, dated San Sebastián 28 September, the following was stated:

‘Before I had had time to put my question, the Foreign Affairs minister stated to me today that France and England had questioned the Generalissimo as to his intentions in the event of a European war: this question had been put to Quiñones de León and the Duke of Alba. Referring

to the talks which had taken place in London that very day with French ministers and with General Gamelin, the Foreign Office particularly told the Duke of Alba that the French general staff was prepared to take no action against nationalist Spain if Franco were to declare himself neutral, otherwise France would attack immediately via the Pyrenees and in Morocco. Spain's situation is a very difficult one. Without doubt, she would not be able to reckon upon substantial aid from Germany and Italy; thus they are not in a position to prosecute their war against the Red Army and simultaneously fend off the French. The Generalissimo regrets that Spain is not yet strong enough to side with us. Unfortunately, for the time being he can see no option other than to declare himself neutral.'

The most telling part of this text is the part where Jordana is credited with saying that 'in return for her neutrality, nationalist Spain would of course insist that the French, etc. cease all support to Red Spain.'

That assurance seems to have been given in full. Franco's political manoeuvre was to be crucial in deciding the outcome of the contest in Spain. Declaration of his neutrality during the uncertain days that led up to the Munich compromise raised his standing in British and French diplomatic circles. In those same quarters, the republican cause was automatically discarded and, to boot, Russia herself, who had doubtless gauged the gravity of the Czechoslovakian crisis, evinced a desire to stay out of artillery range, disentangling herself once and for all from the Spanish problem. Certain winding-up measures gave this away. Increasingly the French border with Catalonia was sealed off. In the book General Rojo devotes to the end of the fighting in Catalonia, he is haunted by the obsessive expectation of a providential influx of armaments, which never arrived until, with Barcelona lost, catastrophe was unavoidable. Every policy, every power, democratic and totalitarian alike, agreed upon the intention to back Franco, and to wind up the nightmare that had kept the world on tenterhooks since 1936. Franco's neutrality declaration was a prize political gambit played with no less extraordinary adroitness. Britain's backing down in Munich diminished its importance not one whit, whereas for the republican camp, which had staked all on some stormy international imbroglio, Munich was tantamount to the *coup de grace*.

Germany feigned indifference towards the *fait accompli* of Francoist neutrality. She confined herself to revising her procedures and also claimed to find such a declaration unnecessarily hasty and premature when no war had actually broken out as yet. She bowed to the *fait accompli* and stated that such a declaration, which she hoped was a verbal undertaking involving no commitment of any sort, was not directed against Germany and Italy. In his entry of 23 September, Ciano opened with these words:

'Franco, preoccupied with his own position, intends to open negotiations with London and Paris towards a declaration of his neutrality. Shame on him! Our people who perished in Spain must be turning in their graves.'

The Germans were sure that, once the Czechoslovakian question was out of the way, England would make a determined effort to resolve the Spanish problem without recourse to arms. They were worried about the possibility of an armistice 'Made in England'. They knew the Francoist government to be fanatical in its opposition to anything that smacked of compromise. Franco, no less, had by means of an intense newspaper onslaught, insisted on the unconditional surrender of the 'Reds', the result of which would not spare any whose hands were stained with blood.⁶

⁶ Franco claimed to have in his possession one million dossiers on 'Reds' with blood on their hands and these would be held accountable for their crimes.

But this was not the general feeling prevailing in the nationalist zone where war weariness was making greater daily inroads at the front and in the rear as the war dragged on and on. In view of this, Germans and Italians concluded that military victory was not to be expected from Franco unless he made up his mind to face up to further sacrifices in men and materials in order to secure it.

Early in August Rome was the scene for an important military gathering for the purpose of dealing with the issue of the Italian contingents in Spain. An official statement was made to the effect that during the first 20 months of the war, Italy had suffered 11,552 losses, either wounded, dead, taken prisoner, or missing. Consequently, the Duce put the following proposals to Franco: that two or three fresh divisions be sent on: that 10,000 men be sent to make good the losses taken by the two divisions which were already in Spain: or the Italians be withdrawn. Franco found the first and second proposals unacceptable, for fear they might draw the retort of French troops entering via the Pyrenean frontier; then again — he said — it could be hard to keep the dispatch of 10,000 more volunteers to Spain secret. While deploring this, he endorsed the last proposal, for a partial withdrawal that would not apply to specialist troops, and providing that the air force was beefed up. Was Franco privy to Mussolini's phoney dilemma? Mussolini's decision was directly bound up with the negotiations in progress between Italy and England (the pact of 16 April).

In his diary entry for 6 October, Ciano hints at the inner workings of this unashamed trade-off:

'Perth delivers the British reply. Basically it amounts to acceptance of the implementation of the agreement once the 10,000 men have been pulled out. But Chamberlain is asking for a breathing space. He does not want to present himself before the Cabinet and then the House, saying: "I have here a take it or leave it offer: Mussolini has set me a time limit." In that case, his position which, despite the vote of confidence, is tenuous, would become untenable. He asks that a delay until 1 November be granted. The Duce who initially had reacted disagreeably to the English reply, ended up by giving in. Of course, he has no intention of giving any assurances about aircraft and their operations.'

The evacuated Italians landed at Naples on 20 October. On 2 October in the republican zone, foreign combatants had begun to muster for departure from Spain. They left on 23 October. The agreement between Italy and Britain came into effect on 16 November. The British parliament had given its approval on 2 November.

Officially, that left on the Francoist side the 12,000-man 'Littorio' Division, aircraft, tanks, artillery, specialist forces and officers and NCOs enough to staff three mixed divisions. So much for Italian personnel. Albeit less than voluntary, this withdrawal of volunteers was seized upon by the Francoist press for a violent campaign against intervention and on behalf of recognition of rights of belligerency. Despite this display of rabid intransigence, the impression in Berlin at the end of the month was that, except in the event of significant military assistance, victory would only be feasible if shipments of war materials were substantially increased.

A note from the German Under-Secretary of State in Berlin, dated 22 October, encapsulated the whole of the problem:

'1. After having pulled out around 12,000 men from Spain, the Italian government negotiates with the British government so as to discover whether this gesture is enough for the Anglo-Italian agreement to become effective. It is discovered that implementation of the agreement was made conditional upon a substantial withdrawal. England will not be able to reach any decision until early November. Chamberlain, indeed, has promised the House of Commons that he will do nothing without consulting them and the House does not sit until early November.

Colonel von Funck has already informed the Reich War Ministry of Franco's wishes. Shipment of rifles and artillery pieces was already agreed. There are still problems with shipment of machine guns.

2. Against this background we have agreed with the Italian government to confine ourselves for the moment to keeping our material in Spain in any event at the old level. This means that at the end of three months' normal rate of use the equipment of the Condor Legion will have to be refurbished. We will do whatever is required.

3. Furthermore, Franco is asking for additional war materials destined, not for the Condor Legion, but for Spanish troops to be more specific, not counting gunpowder shipments already underway, he has asked for delivery of 50,000 rifles, 1,500 light machine guns and 500 heavy machine guns, as well as 100 75mm artillery pieces.

The German military attaché in San Sebastián, Colonel Baron von Funck has just arrived to expedite matters. He has explained what Franco wants to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and to the Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht. According to him, General von Brauchitsch is due to brief the Führer about this on Monday 24 October.

The Wehrmacht Commander-in-Chief reckons that there is no particular problem in the shipment of rifles and artillery pieces. By contrast, the machine gun delivery amounts to nearly one month of Germany's output. Thus it would delay by a month the refurbishment of the German army in machine guns. Such an undertaking may be necessary on political grounds: the Wehrmacht is not qualified to determine.

4. In justification of his demands, Franco has stated to Colonel von Funck that he has no shortage of manpower. It is precisely on account of his inability to arm his men that he has not called up further classes of conscripts. This is why he lacks reserves, which fact has caused him irritation.

5. The political issue, then, is posed in the following terms:

a. Do we want to help Franco up until ultimate victory? If the answer is "yes", he needs considerable military assistance in excess of what he is seeking today.

b. Do we aim merely to maintain a balance of power between Franco and the Reds? If so, here again he requires our help and as far as Germany is concerned the equipment he has requested would be of use to him.

c. Should our aid to Franco be confined to the Condor Legion, Franco cannot aspire to anything beyond some sort of compromise with the Red government.

6. In these circumstances, I cannot but recommend delivery of the material to Franco. But we should not inform him of this until such time as we have discussed it once again with the Italians. It has to be believed that the Wehrmacht chief will do nothing without us.

7. Should we deliver the material, we ought to question once again whether our own provisions should be secondary to loans.

The following points should then be looked into:

a. Renewal of negotiations with a view to a political deal with Franco. Without any doubt we ought to stand by the attitude which we have adopted thus far: this does not seem an opportune time to consider a more comprehensive political treaty than our existing protocol with Franco, given the wait-and-see stance espoused by the latter.

b. Acknowledgement of the significant costs to us of the deliveries already made by us, and of these new shipments.

Our ambassador might be urged to broach this subject once again with Franco, while at the same time reporting that we are ready to grant him assistance. Negotiations on this point might then be pursued through other channels.

c. Lieutenant Colonel von Funck has stated personally that we might also make our assistance conditional upon our being given a more significant role in the running of military operations. He pointed out that Franco's set-up, seen from the viewpoint of an officer of the German staff, leaves much to be desired. I do not think it very advisable to put this demand, which in any case would have to have the consent of the Italians who would stake a claim to the same influence.'

The speculation triggered by Franco's request catapults us fully into the matter of German economic policy in Spain.

The hypothesis that there was an understanding between Hitler and the Spanish rebels, and an understanding that military assistance would be available to them, in advance of the coup attempt of July 1936 seems somewhat dubious. It was around 22 July 1936 that Franco dispatched a German resident in Morocco (Bernhardt), a businessman, and a Nazi regional boss, to seek military assistance from Germany, especially in the shape of aircraft. His application was heeded and for the purpose of effecting operations there was established in Seville the Hisma firm, which, to begin with, was involved in transporting rebel troops from Morocco across to the peninsula. Later it diversified into several aspects of Spanish economic life. Another company, the Rowak company, was set up in Germany to oversee the German co-operation programme.

The normal preoccupation of these companies was dealing in raw materials and they enjoyed a monopoly in purchasing and sales. The Reich's Finance Minister has awarded Rowak a loan of three million reichsmarks.

When Germany recognised Franco, ambassador Faupel was commissioned by the Führer to orchestrate political and commercial dealings with Spain in order to forestall the market's being captured by England which had abundant capital invested in Spain.

The German-Spanish treaty of 9 March 1936 expired on 31 December 1936. There was an option on extending this for a further year if both parties were agreeable. On 23 December, the German ambassador in Spain was instructed to suggest that the treaty be prorogued for a three-month period. Simultaneously he was urged to initiate negotiations the following April with a view to adapting the treaty to the current situation.

In mid January 1937, Franco's commandeering of the Rio Tinto mines (a requisition made in Germany's favour) sparked off protracted debate in the Non-Intervention Sub-Committee and around the same time Franco, who had been receiving sizeable deliveries of war materials from Germany in return for goods, was confronted with this dilemma: since he was settling accounts with other nations on the basis of foreign currency, he was to set this foreign currency aside exclusively for Germany. Which is to say that, given the receipt of the latest substantial deliveries of arms, he had no need to look elsewhere for supplies.

On 21 February, Faupel reported that the *Caudillo* had admitted to him that the French Foreign Affairs minister had attempted, through the good offices of a second party, to open negotiations with the nationalist government with an eye to renewing commercial relations. According to Franco himself, his reply had been that this was not on as long as men and war materials destined for the 'Reds' continued to cross the Franco-Spanish border.

This is how things stood on 20 March when Hitler's and Franco's representatives signed the following secret protocol:

'PROTOCOL.

State Secret.

Salamanca, 20 March 1937.

The German government and the Spanish nationalist government, convinced that the continued growth of the friendly relations obtaining between them will further the prosperity of the German people and the Spanish people and will be a significant factor in the upholding of European peace to which they are solidly committed, have been moved by a common urge to establish right away the foundations of their future relations, achieving agreement in this connection upon the following points:

1. Both governments are to have ongoing consultations regarding steps to be taken to avert the perils of communism which threatens their countries.
2. Both governments will remain in continual contact in order to reach agreement upon international policy issued affecting their common interests.
3. Neither government will join with third powers in treaties or agreements of any sort which may be directed, directly or indirectly, against the other.
4. Should one of the two countries be attacked by a third power, the government of the other will refrain from any measure likely to benefit the aggressor or harm the country under attack.
5. Both governments share a common desire to see the fullest possible development of economic relations between their two countries. They confirm their wish to see both nations, now and in the future, complement one another and co-operate in every facet of economic life.
6. Under further instructions, both governments will keep this present protocol secret: said protocol to become effective immediately. When the time comes they shall establish the forms of their political, economic and cultural relations through specific treaties founded upon the principles set out above.

Signed in two originals, one in German, one in Spanish

For the German government, FAUPEL.

For the Spanish nationalist government, FRANCO.'

At the beginning of February, Britain asked Germany for compensation for 2,120 tonnes of copper precipitate purchased by the Hisma company. The British government insisted upon restitution or delivery of an equal quantity of copper ore, failing that, indemnification in pounds sterling. The German government retorted that the affair, being of a private nature, was none of its concern. In July the British made a fresh sally and stated that the requisition by the Francoist authorities had been unjustified since the Río Tinto Company was a British and not a Spanish firm and its products, under the terms of its concession, were likewise British. In any case requisitions could be made to meet the needs of the war itself, but not for use as currency in dealings with other countries.

In May the German economic department, alarmed by certain rumours, and with economic negotiations with Franco in progress, instructed its ambassador in Salamanca as follows:

'Although we have no wish to make delivery of raw materials a condition upon our loans, Franco must recognise that in view of our limited capabilities these loans are to some extent dependent upon our essential imports from Spain. So I ask you to focus General Franco's attention particularly upon the fact that over the past few months, only astute use of the profits derived from Hisma-Rowak's exports from Spain have made it possible to finance in Germany a sizeable portion of the requests for war materials destined for Spain.'

The aforementioned economic negotiations concluded with the signing of the following protocol:

‘The German government and the Spanish nationalist government are of one mind in considering it appropriate in the present circumstances to postpone until a later, more suitable date a joint arrangement of the economic relations between their two countries.

Whereas in consequence both governments refrain for the time being from concluding detailed agreements in this regard, they nonetheless intend henceforth to ensure that in the future there is economic co-operation between their two countries. From this point of view the Spanish nationalist government declares itself ready to conclude, for the first time ever with Germany, a general trade agreement. Should it be considering international trade negotiations, it will first so inform the German government so as to afford it the opportunity of first concluding such an agreement with it.

Should the Spanish nationalist government for any particular reason find itself obliged to open economic negotiations with a third power rather than Germany, it will keep the German government briefed on these negotiations in so far as Germany may be affected so as to enable it to formulate its wishes in advance. In any event, those negotiations would not be affected.

Without prejudice to the agreements contained in the present protocol, the Spanish nationalist government reserves the right to afford Italy the treatment hereby afforded Germany.’

The same signatories that day endorsed a treaty complementary to the German-Spanish trade agreement of 7 May 1926:

‘PROTOCOL.

Confidential.

Although it is the wish of the German government and Spanish nationalist government for the time being to refrain from concluding fresh agreements to govern the traffic in goods and payments between Germany and Spain, they aim nevertheless to place on general record in a way binding on both parties their joint intention to foster trade between both countries so as to achieve the fullest possible expansion thereof. Both governments state in particular that they feel a real desire to afford one another the utmost possible assistance in the supply of raw materials, food produce and manufactured or semi-manufactured goods of special interest to the importer country. Likewise, both governments will take maximum possible account of the interests of the other in the export field. Consequently, both governments will help insofar as they are able to ease the operation of private supply markets in the traffic of goods between Germany and Spain.

Signed in two originals, one in German, one in Spanish, Burgos, 15 July 1937.

For the German government, FAUPEL, EUCHER.

For the Spanish nationalist government, FRANCO,
GÓMEZ JORDANA, BAU.’

At the end of September, the Germans were on the scent of the initiation of negotiations between Franco and Britain towards a *modus vivendi* in economic affairs, negotiations for which the British representative ‘would follow’. Although the Germans were confident that Franco was not about to meet England’s requirements at Germany’s expense, they did believe that any negotiations between Franco and any other country was, when all was said and done, a threat to Germany’s upper hand in economic affairs in Spain. For on Spanish soil Germany and Britain were in competition for iron, ores, copper, pyrites, etc. It was of vital concern to Germany that she should have the upper hand and Germany was obsessed with maintaining her status as most favoured customer for Spain’s raw materials. Thus the German Foreign Affairs minister asked his ambassador in Spain to keep him briefed on the progress of the Anglo-Spanish negotiations and to intervene to protect Germany’s ‘sacred interests’.

‘The protocol of 15 July states very clearly that “economic negotiations of a general nature” should take place with Germany in preference to all other nations and that should it be necessary to conclude negotiations with a nation other than Germany everything possible would have to be done to signify any such intentions in advance. Given the phrasing, it might be claimed that the consultation agreement is not applicable to the Anglo-Spanish negotiations which are not “of a general nature”. Nevertheless, the consultation agreement can be invoked by reference to its spirit. It was concluded in the formal intention “of ensuring economic co-operation in the future as well”.’

The German ambassador replied on 24 October in the light of the answer which he in turn had received from Nicolás Franco: ‘Mr. Franco has confirmed to me that in the course of those negotiations England, although he has requested them, has not been awarded any sort of economic preferences.’

On 9 October 1937, Franco’s government promulgated a decree cancelling all mining concessions and other agreements. This decree undid Germany’s efforts to secure control of Spanish mining companies. ‘Montana Project’ was the name given to the monopolistic activities of the Hisma Corporation and the objective was to establish a series of new firms in the country alongside it. Hisma officials lodged objections with General Jordana and with Franco about the implications of the decree, which, according to them, greatly reduced the foreign shareholding in the mining corporations. The response was evasive and stressed that the decree was not directed against Germany, although the Germans, on the basis of information received through secret channels, were sure that the opposite was the case. The reaction to the decree is reflected in a memorandum from the ambassador to Stohrer, from which the following extracts have been taken:

‘It is obvious to us that the Montana Project completely alters the meaning and purpose of our aid to Spain in the economic sphere: for our whole provision in raw materials by means of purchases — as trading companies are very well aware — has only a short span: it is day by day supply.

The object of our economic involvement in Spain should be to make deep inroads into the chief sources of Spanish wealth, which is to say, into agriculture and mining exploitation...

More clearly it could be said that the success or failure of our assistance to Spain hinges upon the success or failure of our efforts in the mining sector in Spain. Only in the full knowledge that the Montana Project is the real objective of our economic endeavours should we resolve this problem with all of the resources at our disposal. Let it be stated here that such resources must be marshalled and applied in every sphere, and that, as a result, we must deploy our diplomatic, military and cultural influence on behalf of the ultimate goal: our economic undertaking ...

Achievement of our overall objective, if it cannot be achieved by reasonable means, will have to be attained by means of violence ...’

At the end of November, retired commander von Jagwitz was commissioned by Goering to journey to Salamanca without delay ‘to place a gun at Franco’s breast.’ According to the Reich’s Secretary of State, Mackenson, General Goering reckoned that the exceptional favours done Franco authorised him to make a formal request of him that he safeguard ‘German war booty’. Goering had the impression that ‘General Franco has increasingly been making more and more concessions to the British of late, the upshot of which is likely to seriously jeopardise our economic position in Spain.’

According to the German Secretary of State:

‘Between Franco and England there had in fact been something afoot which might have struck us as suspicious by virtue of the fact that the Generalissimo was not putting his cards on the table with regard to us: but it should not be overlooked that Franco must of course take account of the commercial interests of England in Spain. What we have thus far obtained from Spain, under the current contracts, is, in spite of everything, considerable: one is talking about some 900 millions, made up almost exclusively of vitally important raw materials whereas before the mainstay of our commercial dealings with Spain had been confined to superfluous importation of oranges to the tune of something in excess of 40 million marks. We also have to ask ourselves whether our threat to Franco to reduce or wholly dispense with the military and which we have loaned him hitherto, would have the same impact now that the military situation is in his favour, that it would have had if we had acted upon it three months ago. Should the threat to Franco remain idle and should he brave all the risks, we would lose our commercial dealings with Spain once and for all. On all of these grounds, Jagwitz reckons it better not to adopt such vigorous steps in principle but rather, instead, to invite our ambassador to speak with General Franco as a matter of urgency and to inform him of certain anxieties felt here regarding our access to the Spanish economy and that the ambassador be recalled to Berlin to give account of these matters forthwith. But before setting out on that trip he would need to have received clear-cut explanations from the Franco. If Franco were to answer evasively, or refuse to answer, deliberations might then proceed in Berlin as to the course to adopt in view of the ambassador’s personal report.

There would always be time to dispatch Jagwitz to Salamanca on a special mission bearing appropriate and specific instructions...

Should Franco fight shy of a reassuring explanation, especially with regard to the mines which seem to be exposed to serious threat, we still have time to proceed along the lines prescribed by General Goering.’

On 30 November 1937, the Reich’s Foreign Affairs Minister dispatched the following telegram to his ambassador in Salamanca:

‘1. To judge by reports from reliable sources, Nicolás Franco’s declaration regarding Spain’s agreements with England is either incomplete or has been overtaken by a turn of events being kept from us by the Spaniards. We have grounds for believing that Franco has made firm and substantial concessions to England, the details of which we are not conversant, but which represent a serious threat to our interests. So I ask you personally to ask the Generalissimo for an explanation and let him know without equivocation that, setting aside all the privileges which they have awarded us under contract, we make our stand solely on the basis of the moral, financial and extremely effective military aid we have rendered him at crucial points in his revolt in unreservedly insisting that our special economic interests should not be sacrificed for the sake of a third party, but ought instead to be respected in their entirety. In particular, we must insist that the iron ore output of the Bilbao and Asturian mines be reserved mainly for us, and that, furthermore, we be awarded an unlimited concession in the purchase of scrap iron. We acknowledge, however, as we stated in our instructions of 16 October, the necessity of England’s also being granted a certain place in the Spanish market. But there is no way we will tolerate England’s being favoured at the expense of our economic position, principally as far as the supply of raw materials is concerned. Should General Franco’s response be evasive or should he challenge the accuracy of our information, refusing at the same time to furnish us with a satisfactory explanation of how he intends to respect our legitimate interests, I ask you to tell him bluntly that we

will then find ourselves obliged, albeit reluctantly, to reconsider our attitude vis à vis the Spanish Nationalist government in various matters and in the light of this new situation.

2. To authenticate the extent to which Franco is ready to respect German interests, I ask you to seek an acknowledgment of the mining rights which figure in the list dispatched along with our instructions of 27 November.

3. Given that Franco's negotiations will still be in progress and that a snap decision may be necessary, I ask you to approach the *Generalissimo* as a matter of urgency and report back to me by telegram.'

Goering, on the basis of documents available to him, claimed to be certain that Franco had entered into talks with the British and that the latter had already secured economic concessions that would be followed by others likely to seriously impact on Nazi interests in Spain. And he indicated that — the success of the German four-year plan being at stake — he was not disposed to put up with any such attitude on the part of the *Generalissimo*. As a result, he took steps to dispatch von Jagwitz to Spain immediately to 'put a gun to Franco's head.' However, Goering let himself be won over by a last-gasp suggestion that he deploy the full powers of diplomatic pressure without prejudice to recourse to his original plan in the event of further reverses and ultimately failure.

On 16 November, Sir Robert Hodgson had been appointed Britain's agent in Francoist Spain. On 22 November, the nationalists reciprocated by accrediting the Duke of Alba as their agent in London. This was tantamount to de facto recognition. They had awarded Franco de jure recognition, in addition to Germany and Italy, Albania and some minor American states, and Japan was on the brink of following suit. Austria, Hungary, Switzerland and Holland already maintained formal relations, while Yugoslavia, Poland and social-democratic Belgium also intended to establish relations.

From the German point of view, this haste to award recognition was not prompted only by a concern to protect slight interests but rather, as in the case of England, was designed to conclude advantageous trade agreements in anticipation of what was believed to be the imminent and resounding victory of the Spanish rebels. According to Stohrer, fairly reliable rumours had reached him to the effect that the British were negotiating the award of loans with Spanish agencies. At around this time, a Franco government representative was allegedly immersed in negotiations with north American groups with a view to re-establishing trade links. A trade agreement was believed to have been reached between the nationalist government and Switzerland under which Switzerland had agreed to pay for Spanish goods 30 per cent in foreign currency and the rest in kind. French trading corporations were urgently telegraphing Paris to re-open trade with Franco.

For their part, the Italians harboured the same misgivings as the Germans. According to the Italian ambassador in Salamanca, Franco's war debt to Italy amounted to 3,000 million lire.

While granting substantial economic benefits to German in return for the precious aid she had afforded him right from the outset, Franco wanted to maintain trading relations with England, at all costs. The Germans were left high and dry. But they were wondering if it might not be too late to suddenly cut off aid to Franco, now that the military tide was running in his favour. If the threat proved idle, they could lose all the advantages they had already gained. So they decided against heavy-handed tactics. The German ambassador would quickly invite Franco to a meeting at which he would share their concerns. If Franco's response was evasive or he refused to explain himself, there might still be time to switch to Goering's more direct approach.

Franco's reaction when challenged by the German ambassador on the point was to categorically deny the suggestion that any concession to Britain had been made or was being considered. As for recognition of the mining rights as broached by the Hisma corporation, Franco's declarations and those of his cabinet were not so satisfactory.

According to the Germans, the mining decree of 9 October was not binding on the Francoist government but indeed increased its freedom to act, as a result of which recognition of the much yearned-for rights would have furnished the best proof that the decree had not been directed against Germany. Failing that — as one set of instructions insisted — if Franco clung to his ambiguousness, they would have to insist upon observance of the undertaking implicit in paragraph 3 of a protocol of 16 July which Franco had personally helped draft. This protocol, it seems, committed the Francoist government to facilitating as best it could the creation of Spanish mining companies in partnership with German companies (Montana Project).

The position of the Francoist authorities was that they would gladly look into the matter, that the question was one of great importance to Spain, that the matter could not be resolved lightly since territorial assets of great worth were involved and that it had to be remembered that theirs was only a provisional government and thus unable to countenance precipitate action of any sort in affairs. As for the aforementioned 16 July protocol, it pointed out that the facilities promised therein 'had to be in tune with the broad dispositions of Spanish law', which limited foreign share-holdings to 25 per cent.

To make things worse, Franco's official representative in London made a song and dance about German zeal, incensing England and waxed lyrical about an imminent resumption of economic relations between the two countries. The Duke of Alba, no less, had stated in the press that 6,000 German technicians were operating in Spain. The official representative in Paris, Quiñones de León, was credited with similar anti-German activity.

On 26 December, when Stohrer and Bernhardt had talks with the Caudillo, they failed to get Franco to budge, for he claimed to be bound by Spanish laws limiting foreigners' rights in respect of mining concessions. And he even suggested that Hisma, 'which I have commissioned to govern trade and prices and which seeks secretly to acquire mining rights', was operating in an underhand fashion.

On 21 January 1938, Bernhardt forwarded to the Foreign Affairs Ministry through ambassador Stohrer, a breakdown of mineral exports from Spanish Morocco and Francoist Spain to Germany during the year 1937, thus:

'For your information, let me inform you that mineral exports during the month of December were as follows:

Iron ore:

Shipments ex-Bilbao 90,000 tonnes

Shipments ex-Morocco 100,000 tonnes

Other shipments 15,000 tonnes

Total 205,000 tonnes

Shipments of ores like

wolfram, copper, bronze 152,000 tonnes

Pyrites shipments 55,000 tonnes

Thus in December we arrived at a record figure of roughly 260,000 tonnes.

We also have the figures for the year 1937. We shipped a total of 2,584,000 tonnes of ores, including:

Iron ores 1,620,000 tonnes
Pyrites 956,000 tonnes
Sundry other ores 7,000 tonnes'

There was further friction with Jordana on 25 January. But the situation was still unresolved: scrutiny of the numerous mining concessions acquired by the Germans —73 in all — was a very time-consuming business. There was no suitably clear legal text on which to base a decision on the familiar German claims, nor was it possible to give any commitment as to the date on which any answer might be expected. One of the hitches was the fact that the government was provisional and the *Generalissimo*, the very incarnation of all executive authority: that Spanish legislation had to be strictly observed and that Jordana, on account of his activities during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, had subsequently been sentenced to death and served two years in prison, etc., etc.

Military developments during the first three months of 1938 pushed the economic issue into second place. The Germans believed that the time had come to pin down Franco and, on the basis of the 20 March 1937 protocol, their future political relations. A draft German-Spanish treaty was submitted by the Foreign Affairs minister to Hitler. In a memorandum that was attached, Ribbentrop wrote to his Führer:

'A draft of this sort, without any commitment to military alliance, would bind Franco solidly to the Berlin-Rome Axis and would give us the assurance that Spain would not be a theatre of operations nor transit area for France or England.'

The draft, which was designed more to ensure that Franco would be benevolently neutral towards Germany, failed to win the wholehearted support of the German leader who stated a preference for a commercial treaty and for withdrawing his troops and fighter planes from Spain. Nevertheless, Stohrer did take the initiative during an audience with Franco. In his report to the minister about this audience the ambassador wrote:

'Franco is heartily in agreement: he has authorised me to negotiate with the Foreign Affairs Minister on the basis that we desire and above all to open discussions without delay on a cultural agreement. I immediately briefed the Foreign Affairs Minister of the outcome of the interview. The details will follow in writing...

Top secret: In accordance with your instructions, I happened to have occasion to ask Franco if Spain's adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact might not be desirable. He replied that in fact he was already pursuing a very vigorous Anti-Comintern policy, but that embracing the Pact was impossible during the war, for a lively reaction could be anticipated from England which — as he pointed out appropriately — had used threats to prevent Portugal and Greece from joining the Anti-Comintern Pact. It would have to be considered after the war.

The general impression is very favourable. The atmosphere is heartening.'

This hopeful atmosphere, however, was dashed by Franco's abrupt *volte face*. On 19 May, General Jordana summoned Stohrer to inform him that, after thorough analysis of the draft of the German-Spanish treaty, the Generalissimo himself had, much to his regret, been compelled to voice certain, substantial reservations. Franco reckoned that England was inclining in favour of Nationalist Spain. The British government had hinted to the Duke of Alba that it was striving to get the French to close the frontier to all shipments of war materials to the 'Reds'. The British government itself had suggested to Alba that Mussolini be urged to take a softer line *vis à vis* France and had asked him to use his influence with the Duce to get him in turn to pressurise France into sealing the frontier. Mussolini's recent Genoa speech had signalled this intention.

Again according to Franco, the war in Spain appeared to be entering a crucial phase. With the French border closed, the 'Reds' would not delay long before laying down their arms. Against that scenario, a far-reaching treaty between Spain and Germany might be the rock upon which such rosy expectations would founder. The merest leak (and that was inevitable) that such a deal existed would simply inflate its actual significance. The assurance of secrecy was illusory. Then again, an official treaty had of necessity to be submitted to the Council of Ministers and also to the party officials, according to the new provisions covering the powers of the Falange.

Nevertheless, Jordana took up Stohrer's suggestion of an agreement in the simple format of a secret 'protocol'. But that was precisely what Germany was not interested in: the last thing she wanted was for the proposed treaty to be secret. This can be deduced clearly from Ribbentrop's telegram to Stohrer, putting an end to the debate:

'Given that the Spanish government is for the moment hesitant about signing the draft treaty, we have no wish to give the impression that we have more interest in this treaty than do the Spaniards. The objective we have set ourselves in making the offer of a treaty would not be achieved were that treaty to be signed and kept secret during its term, nor would it by the conclusion of a secret protocol that would be no different from the 20 March 1937 protocol, so much so that the signing of a new document would be called for. Thus I ask you not to bring pressures to bear, but instead to follow up the idea of concluding the treaty at the opportune moment.'

Franco's misgivings had more to do with timing than with principle. In other words, the Francoist government was afraid of alienating England and the democratic powers surrounding her until such time as a favourable outcome to the war should offer the fullest guarantees as to its policies. It so indicated to Germany and later acted upon this basis, displaying tremendous political and diplomatic tact.⁷

⁷ With the war at an end, on 31 March to be exact, Germany and Spain signed the following treaty of friendship: "THE REICH CHANCELLOR and THE HEAD OF THE SPANISH NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT.

We acknowledge the common interests of our governments, the kindred nature of our political views and the bond of likely fellowship which unites our peoples. Our friendly alliance has already borne fruit and convinced that in tightening and strengthening our reciprocal relations we will be contributing towards the well-being of our peoples, to the safe-guarding of our most cherished spiritual assets and to the maintenance of peace, we wish to strengthen our common aims through a pact. To this end, we have appointed as plenipotentiaries, in the case of the Reich Chancellor, his ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to the Spanish nationalist government, Eberhard von Stohrer ... and in that of the head of the Spanish nationalist government, the vice-premier of the nationalist government and Foreign Affairs minister, Lieutenant-General Don Francisco Gómez Jordana y Sousa, who have given their endorsement to the following provisions:

Article 1. The contracting parties are to remain in permanent contact for the purpose of jointly examining international policy issues affecting their common interests. Should their common interests be threatened by international developments of whatever nature, they shall consult without delay in order to determine the steps to be taken in defence of those interests.

Article 2. The contracting parties appreciate the dangers to which the activities of the Communist International expose their countries and they are to liaise on a permanent basis so as to reach agreement upon appropriate steps for the sake of their defence.

Article 3. In the event of the security or some other vital interest of either of the contracting parties' being threatened by an outside danger, the other contracting party shall afford the party under threat its diplomatic assistance so as to render it the greatest possible assistance in fending off the threat.

Article 4. With an eye to the friendship which unites both Germany and Spain to Italy, the two contracting parties are to be mindful in the application of the accords contained in Articles 1 to 3 above, of ensuring the co-operation of the royal Italian government.

Article 5. Neither of the two contracting parties is to conclude with third powers treaties or agreements of any sort which may be directed, directly or indirectly, against the other contracting party. The contracting parties

Finally, at the beginning of June, von Stohrer was informed by Jordana that a new mining law had been passed which would meet Germany's requirements in full. This new legislation provided for, first, the possibility of 40 per cent foreign capital investment; second, the Francoist government reserved the right to raise that ceiling in specific instances. But the legislation had already been ratified. During the drafting of it, the German ambassador had repeatedly and unsuccessfully sought, on behalf of his government, an audience with Franco, over five consecutive days. This cold shouldering and the fait accompli of the ratification of the law was supremely irritating to Berlin's representative. He went so far as to raise the question of trustworthiness, for he had intended to broach two vital issues at the audience for which he had applied: he had wanted to speak with the Generalissimo on a matter crucial as far as Germany was concerned and had wanted no definitive action to be taken before that audience had taken place. As a result, there was later a heated altercation between the German ambassador and minister Jordana:

'I ended by posing the following question to Jordana: What would happen if I were to report the facts to Berlin without comment, that is to say, that I had been denied an audience with the Generalissimo and that binding decisions had been made without the opinion of the German government's having been heard?'

The explanations offered to him were that this alleged slight had been due to the desire of the Caudillo to dispel rumours that Spain was prey to Italo-German domination and pressures. To have received Stohrer as Stohrer had wished would have been represented in enemy propaganda as the Spanish government dancing to the tune of the German ambassador.

Stohrer asked, as the meeting ended, that at least the law should not be made public knowledge until eight days had elapsed. When Franco was sounded on this, he replied that, regretfully, he was obliged to abbreviate that period of delay and that upon expiry of the period of grace prescribed...the text of the law would be issued to the press.

The law, published on 8 June, basically met the requirements of claimants. According to Stohrer himself, 'in the estimation of Hisma director Bernhardt, the law allows every opportunity to participate in the exploitation of Spain's subsoil.' There remained, however, just one reservation as to its practical application, especially with regard to the powers that the law afforded the

undertake to keep each other briefed about treaties or agreements bearing upon their interests which may already have been concluded or may in the future be concluded with third states.

Article 6. In the event of one of the contracting party's going to war with a third power, the other contracting party shall avoid any military, political or economic measures liable to injure the contracting party or to favour its enemies.

Article 7. The contracting parties shall seek agreement through specific arrangements upon appropriate measures to promote good comradely relations between their respective armies and exchange of military experiences.

Article 8. Both contracting parties are to be mindful of extending and intensifying their cultural relations. The practical realisation of this principle shall be subject to specific agreements.

Article 9. The contracting parties are agreed upon the desirability of the economic relations of their two countries being, so far as possible, extended and they reaffirm their intention to see Germany and Spain complementing one another and co-operating economically in every regard. Practical implementation of this principle shall be the subject of specific agreements.

Article 10. This treaty will have to be ratified. Both instruments of ratification shall have to be exchanged as soon as possible in Berlin. The treaty will remain in force for a period of five years from the date on which the instruments of ratification are exchanged. Unless the treaty has been revoked six months before the expiry of this period, it will be prorogued for a further five years and so on thereafter.

In token of which the plenipotentiaries have signed this treaty – Stohrer, Gómez Jordana.'

Francoist government. And this led to frictions and wrangles that lingered right up until the end of the war.

We have already stated that Kremlin policy in Spain during the civil war was complementary to its international policy. The kernel of this policy was the reckoning that an international war was inevitable and the fear that the Kremlin had of the military might of Germany and her allies. Stranded in his isolation, Stalin trembled at the prospect of this. The Franco-Soviet pact of 1935, given its conditional nature and in view of French policy being subordinate to England, was little short of ineffectual. Stalin still feared the possibility of a reconciliation between the Axis powers and the democracies which might unite them against Russia or leave Germany a free hand to expand eastwards. There was every indication — General Krivitsky's views as given in his book and the events which followed — that Stalin's intention in his intervention in Spain was one of these three:

1. Alliance with Germany.
2. Alliance with the democracies.

3. To exploit the Spanish powder-keg in order to accomplish either of these aims, by auctioning his inactivity to the highest bidder, or, failing that, helping to prolong the Spanish Civil War until it became a war between totalitarians and democrats, with the role of comfortable onlooker reserved for himself.

The policy of staggering arms shipments, as applied by Stalin in the Spanish context, confirms this intention merely of dragging out the Spanish conflict with an eye to the main chance. The Russo-German pact of 1939 is confirmation that the first of his objectives had been achieved. And there is no shortage of those — one particular Spanish communist who 'was Stalin's minister' (Jesús Hernández), for one — who argue that that pact was hatched in Spain as the prelude to the last decisive military reverses which, due to shortage of arms and the senseless manoeuvres which Stalin's 'advisors' foisted upon front-line commanders, put paid to the life of the Republic.

NOTES

Chapter Seven: State take-over of the War Industries

The trend towards government take-over of industries has to be viewed as a natural reactionary tendency inherent in the state, which has the final say after the high tide of revolution. In Spain this tendency on the part of the state had survived 19 July. From May 1937 on, it acquired all the characteristics of a thoroughgoing backlash. The take-overs or seizures began with the pretence that industries related to war production were in need of centralisation, or that thoroughgoing and ongoing co-ordination of the war industries was imperative. In reality this offensive was prompted by a determination to nullify or wrest back the workers' gains. And to that end calculated slanders were peddled against the collectives, unions, factory or company committees which were taken to task for every failing from incompetence and sloth to deliberate sabotage, but these shortcomings afflicted only the government auditor agents. Governmental sabotage was a necessary prelude to justifying the subsequent, yearned-for take-over.

To begin with, we saw the seizure of some factories under supervision from Valencia and later, by means of establishing area delegations and, finally, by means of a decree of 11 August 1938, which militarised the war industries and provided for a complete take-over of that sector. The immediate upshot of the take-over was the appointment of experts, selected on political grounds, and the establishment of a wide-ranging bureaucracy made up of auditors and advisors, many of them Russians, and obedient to the watchwords of the political party which brooked no questioning. The consequences just had to be deplorable: progressive demoralisation of the workers on account of the loss of control and of the replacement of real experts by specialists in political propaganda, all of which redounded to the detriment of output.

In a report from Eugenio Vallejo — the CNT metalworking expert with whom our readers will by now be familiar — it is stated that the Defence Ministry's Under-Secretary for Munitions and Armaments had expressed a willingness to have talks with persons closely connected with Catalonia's war industry with a view to working out some formula for integrating that industry with the activities of the Munitions and Armaments Commission. Talks between the Under-Secretary and Vallejo got underway in Valencia on 1 September 1937. Vallejo produced productivity charts, books about phases of manufacture and a series of documents testifying to Catalonia's achievements in the production of war materials, notwithstanding the innumerable difficulties that she had had to overcome. Without the slightest help from central government, Catalonia had dispatched respectable shipments of shells of all sorts, explosives and sanitary equipment to every front. The Under-Secretary conceded that Catalonia's war industry's output was 10 times that of the rest of Spain (republican Spain) and that had the necessary wherewithal been made available in the shape of raw materials of foreign provenance, then, since September 1936 that industry might have been able to quadruple its actual output.

Already operational in Catalonia there was a Delegation of the Armaments Under-Secretariat made up of personnel bereft of any technical background and this delegation was bringing pres-

tures to bear on the workers by promising them that if they were to work for Valencia they should not want for raw materials and other benefits. All this was spelled out by Vallejo to the Under-Secretary.

According to Vallejo, their meeting lasted for more than seven hours and during it, Vallejo, on behalf of the Catalan Commission proposed:

1. That the Army Central Staff which was conversant with the requirements of all the fronts, should devise a rational production plan to be implemented in a co-ordinated way in the various industrial regions, so as to avert overlapping output. For the sake of this plan, Catalonia would evaluate its capacity to meet whatever targets it might be assigned. The co-ordinating agency could not but be the Under-Secretariat itself in close concert with the Central Staff.

2. That the government ensure delivery of the requisite raw materials. To be doubly sure, it was agreed that the Under-Secretariat as such should place contracts with the war material plants of Catalonia. This would enable it to oversee for itself the proper usage of said raw materials. It was likewise granted oversight in respect of inspection of finished articles and storage of them.

3. Catalonia's Industries Commission would not be empowered to manufacture on its own account any sort of equipment not ordered by the Under-Secretariat.

4. That Commission would reserve its right to co-ordinate and manage the plants under its control, but provided that this accorded with the schedule of requirements submitted by the Under-Secretariat. This is because the Under-Secretariat's Delegation in the Catalan region did not have the competent personnel. Catalonia's War Industries Commission could not be replaced by any other agency without detriment to output and to the war effort itself.

All of these arguments were taken on board by the Under-Secretary. And he even went so far as to promise to visit Barcelona within 48 hours in order to speed a solution of the matter. Vallejo's proposals granted the Under-Secretariat oversight of 80 per cent of Catalonia's war industries. In short, the proposition entailed:

1. The drafting of a manufacturing programme;
2. Control of raw materials;
3. Direct contracts with the plants;
4. Direct oversight of the manufacture of finished items, and oversight of stockpiles of war materials.

The Under-Secretary showed up for the Barcelona meeting accompanied by, among others, the mining expert Madariaga, manufacturing director Izquierdo, master-gunsmith Echevarría, his technical secretary Segura, the Russian arms expert Sompters, three Russians who also claimed to be experts and two more Russians who had nothing to do with war materials and who were attached to the Under-Secretariat. They got down to business straight away and the talks lasted two days. The early sessions hinted at a certain optimism. Later, things changed. The Russians used the negotiations as an excuse to tour the factories, inspect output and inquire into the political and trade union affiliation of the workforce, especially that of the committee members whom they invited to work on behalf of Valencia. The Under-Secretary himself came under pressure from the PSUC or from Comorera, no less. The upshot of this was that at the third session Comorera, using adamant and overbearing terms, adopted a completely new tack, letting slip his ambition to effect a wholesale seizure of an industry in which 80 per cent of the workforce was affiliated to the CNT. He wanted to impose two grades of technicians and two management systems upon the one industry, plus one other delegate besides Vallejo (namely the aforementioned Izquierdo who was unmistakably a communist).

When Vallejo, speaking on behalf of his colleagues from the Commission, expressed his readiness to see the Under-Secretariat take charge of Catalonia's industries with all that this implied, this solution was rejected out of hand by the Under-Secretary. And when the latter stated that he was not interested in complete control, he clearly stated that neither he nor his companions had the technical equipment for any such undertaking. The middle-way formula which was being advanced was what they needed if they were to train or equip their swarm of civil servants. Once that had been achieved, the monitors could be thrown overboard.

The ploy, only too obvious, was exposed. And the Under-Secretary left Barcelona hurling threats that he would be back shortly with a government decree in his pocket.¹

The decree of 11 August 1938, under which Catalonia's war industries were taken over, was promulgated by a cabinet in which the CNT had a representative (in the shape of Segundo Blanco). We have said already that the decree triggered the resignations of the Catalan and Basque cabinet ministers, Jaume Aiguader and Manuel Irujo and we have seen too that it had previously been scrutinised by the CNT-UGT Liaison Committee. And although it seems that the higher CNT committees were sanguine about it, this was not the case among the rank-and-file militants and members of the CNT. There is evidence aplenty of the workers' dogged resistance to the surrender of the war industries. And it is even certain that the takeover was never made wholly effective. But let us leave until later on the resistance encountered in Catalonia.

In the immediate wake of the promulgation of the decree, the Armaments Under-Secretariat Delegation in Madrid attempted to seize the CNT workshops there. The workers ignored orders and instructions and publicly stated their repudiation of the hand-over, unless they received prior assurances that a National War Industries Council would be set up.

For what the Libertarian Movement meant by talk of a Higher War Industries Council see volume one.

On 27 August, Madrid was the venue for a gathering of CNT metalworkers along with the appropriate responsible committees. Here is one report on the proceedings:

'The reason for the assembly is the decree on the war industries and the attitude adopted by the Metalworkers' Union with regard to it. According to the union's report, as soon as they became aware of the decree, they dispatched a letter to the CNT National Committee and similar missives to the Steel and Metalworking National Committees, the Regional Committee of the Centre and the Madrid Local Committee, registering their objections and demanding that the Ministry ensure that the decree does not become effective until such time as the War Industries Council comes into existence. Not one reply had been received. One day after the publication of the decree and without instructions having been received concerning its implementation, all of the industries in the sector had received a memorandum from the Armaments Under-Secretariat in Madrid, banning the removal of material or products from the plants and threatening severe sanctions against any breaches of this order.

The union lays especial emphasis upon the socialised status of all of Madrid's war industries and upon the dimensions assumed by that industry thanks to the efforts expended by the organisation.

Thereafter it states that the union has taken steps to defend its interests with regard to the decree and, quite apart from anything else which may be done or may be in the pipeline, it has

¹ Archive of the FAI Peninsular Committee. The inconsistencies regarding the dates contained in these documents are the full responsibility of their authors or the result of the circumstances of the day.

issued a manifesto wherein it accepts the principle of militarisation, but insists upon a role for the unions and upon retention of the gains made during the war. The assembly resolved unanimously to endorse the union's stand and the maintenance of practices obstructing implementation of the decree.'

In mid-November 1938, the government issued instructions from its Barcelona residence that the CNT-controlled workshops in Valencia were to be taken over. On 21 November, envoys from the Under-Secretariat prepared to proceed with seizure of the 'Schmaisser' plant, meeting with opposition from the workforce and other personnel. Some days later, the CNT and UGT metalworkers of Valencia came together to resolve not to surrender any socialised workshop until such time as the government took steps to lay hands on workshops in private hands and, above all, until such time as the National War Industries Council was set up. Then, at a meeting of the Metalworkers' Liaison Sub-Committee, the UGT leader Pascual Tomás expressed the view that implementation of the decree was an affront to the workers and would damage war production, but said that he had orders from the UGT Executive to proceed with the surrender of factories and workshops, without conditions.

On 2 December, there was a meeting of the Metalworkers' Sub-Committee and the CNT National Sub-Committee. It was agreed that 'a commission made up of two comrades from both sub-committees pay a call on the Under-Secretariat's Delegate to get the latter to suspend the seizures until such a time as specific instructions were received from Barcelona.' It was also stressed that numerous letters to this effect had been sent to the CNT National Committee and to the CNT-UGT Liaison Committee, and a reply had been forthcoming to none. In the event of there now being no response to a radio appeal addressed to comrade cabinet minister Segundo Blanco, another comrade from the Sub-Committee would fly to Barcelona.

On 3 December, there was a further meeting between the industry's Local Liaison Committee, the secretaries of both unions (CNT and UGT), and the Metalworker's National Liaison Committee. At this meeting, the CNT personnel insisted upon the following: that the workshops not be handed over unconditionally; that the conditions on which the take-over would proceed be made known; acknowledgement 'by whomsoever may be concerned' that the plants would always be regarded as conquests of the workers. In the event of seizure, it would be understood that the take-over would be effected by the National War Industries Council. Pascual Tomás stuck by his familiar position and regarded the trip of an envoy to Barcelona as ill-advised.

There was another meeting between the CNT-UGT Liaison Sub-Committee and the industry's National Liaison Committee. There, Pascual Tomás opined once again 'that his Federation unconditionally accepted the take-over in accordance with instructions from the Executive.' On the part of the CNT, it retorted 'that the CNT and UGT union organisations had commitments of national import and so did both Federations.' One of these was 'to watch out for the workers' gains of before and after 19 July.' The resolution was: that the CNT-UGT Liaison Sub-Committee visit the Armaments Under-Secretariat Delegate to urge him to suspend the seizures until such time as a categorical answer on the issue was received to a radio message addressed to the CNT-UGT National Liaison Committee based in Barcelona.

On 6 December, the UGT Delegation in the Centre-South zone (César Lombardía, Antonio Pérez and Claudina García) published a note in the newspapers reiterating 'the UGT's wholehearted agreement with the decree centralising the war industries and placing these under the exclusive aegis of the Armaments Under-Secretariat.' The Delegation also reminded all its affiliated organisations of the duty to offer the fullest co-operation to the appropriate governmental

agencies. 'This stance by the UGT,' it was stated, 'is the result of repeated accords of its National Committee and accords with the provisions of the UGT-CNT united action agreement on this issue.'

This pronouncement drew another note from the CNT's National Sub-Committee to the effect that 'it is especially important to remind all workers of the stance adopted by the CNT,' a stance which was encapsulated by the following points:

1. Establishment and operation of a National War Industries Council with equal representation for the CNT and the UGT.

2. Surrender of collectivised war industries to the War Industries Council, once it is in operation, so that this agency may oversee their centralisation, output, wages and other ancillary rules for development and control on behalf of our war effort.

3. Until such time as the National War Industries Council comes into operation, we abide by the established national accords of the organisation and the prescriptions lately laid down by the CNT-UGT Liaison Sub-Committee, thereby honouring our commitments to governmental agencies as well as to the trade union agencies to which the workers have an obligation.

We do so because the workers need to have the greatest assurances, in handing over the industries, for whose growth they alone have been the inspiration, so that the revolution may not stagnate and may furnish the basis for the wider social achievements which are the pole star and guide along the path to our independence.

In all its decisions, the CNT affords the war priority over every other consideration, mindful that for every material or moral surrender assurances are required that may stimulate the workers to go on making their contribution with the same enthusiasm as and when they owned that which they are giving up, and in so doing, we regard this as doing our duty by the war and by ourselves alike.'

That was how the matter stood on the eve of the final and tragic phase of the revolution and the war.

So as to have some sort of idea of the situation of the war industries in the Centre-South zone, we shall summarise an interesting report submitted at the time by the CNT members Carañana and Calvillo on the basis of their first-hand observations. Their report comprises 30 pages and covered the following subjects: output, the trade union affiliations of the workers and technicians, anomalies, political chicanery, criticisms and guidelines for improvement of the industries. The authors visited 28 localities and around 50 production sites (factories and workshops). Here is a summary of what they encountered:

Gandia — Workshop set up by the CNT workforce (officials, women and apprentices). Three 8-hour shifts per day. Thirty-eight affiliates, three UGT members and 26 non-unionised apprentices.

Oliva — CNT workshop. Workforce of 57 (technicians, staff, women and apprentices). Three eight-hour shifts. Eight UGT members.

Denia — CNT workshop. No. 2 Factory under the control of the Armaments Under-Secretariat. Personnel 80 per cent CNT members. Small workshop: the owners, two brothers, worked there and belonged to the CNT. Another small workshop: with 11 (CNT) personnel. Another small workshop: 3 (CNT) personnel. Another had a staff of four (possibly UGT) members. Toy co-operative converted into a war industry: 350 workforce (mostly CNT). Two eight-hour shifts. This co-operative was made up of small scattered workshops.

Novelda — No. 3 and No. 4 Factories commandeered by the Armaments Under-Secretariat. 1,500 workforce, 200 of them CNT members. Mostly female workforce. Communist management.

Discrimination against hiring of CNT workers. Competition between communists and socialists for the upper hand in management.

Villena — CNT socialised industry. Workforce of 28. Two eight-hour shifts. The workforce was very demoralised by the irresponsibility of the comrades in charge of the industry.

Ibi — No. 27 Factory, controlled by the Armaments Under-Secretariat. Socialist management. The report gives no figures for the workforce but says that this village was a UGT fief.

Elda — UGT Metalworking Co-operative. 52 personnel. Two 10-hour shifts. Communists and socialists. CNT socialised metalwork workshop, with 32 workforce. Two eight-hour shifts.

Elda-Petrel — Workshops and dockyard. No. 22 Factory, Armaments Under-Secretariat-controlled. UGT management. 1,250 workforce. Two shifts. CNT and UGT.

Alicante — CNT-UGT socialised industries. Several smelters and workshops. Workforce of 800. Eight hours daily. Parity between CNT and UGT.

Elche — No. 1 Factory under Armaments-Under-Secretariat control. Socialist management. Workforce of 1,050, 850 UGT and 200 CNT. Two 10-hour shifts. No. 2 Factory likewise. Socialist management. 450 personnel. Two 10-hour shifts. 390 UGT members, 60 CNT. Factory No. 4 under the Aviation Under-Secretariat. Communist management. Staff of 122 – 38 CNT and 84 UGT.

Alcoy — CNT socialised metalworking industry. Workforce of 863, all CNT.

Cieza — No. 15 Factory, evacuated from Sagunto. 150 personnel, mostly UGT.

Albaran — No. 8 Factory under Armaments Under-Secretariat control. Workforce of 120, the bulk of them UGT members.

Alcantarilla — No. 20 Factory, Armaments Under-Secretariat controlled. 1,200 personnel, only 10 per cent CNT.

Murcia — UGT 'Pablo Iglesias' workshops. 250 personnel. Two 11-hour shifts, nine CNT members. Peña workshops: 90 workers, 10 hours a day, UGT. Montesinos workshops: workforce of 31, eight hours a day: three CNT members. Rueda workshop: workforce of 76, three of them in the CNT. 10? hours a day. Widow of Anastasio Alemán workshop: 28 workers, four CNT, 10 hours a day. With the exception of the first of these, all the workshops belonged to their old owners who grew rich from the war.

Cartagena — No. 26 Factory, Armaments Under-Secretariat controlled. Socialist management.

Albujon — Subsidiary workshop of the above factory. Both together had a workforce of 1,080 (1,005 and 75 respectively). No figures available for union affiliations, nor for the cartridge plant set up in Cartagena with machinery successfully evacuated from Toledo, machinery in disrepair. Nor are there figures for the naval dockyard and the boat-building yard.

Mazarron — Gállez y Acosta Grenade foundry. Workforce of 31 (23 of them minors) UGT membership.

Aguilas — Andalusian Railways foundry, converted for war production. Workforce of 290. Commandeered by the Armaments Under-Secretariat. CNT management. No further figures.

Almeria — Oliveros Workshops controlled by the UGT Metalworkers' Union. Workforce of 110, five of them CNT members. 10 hours a day. The UGT here was communist-controlled.

Ubeda — UGT Metalworking Collective. Workforce of 71. 10 hours a day. Heredero de Fuentes Workshop (CNT-UGT controlled). Workforce of 150. Two 10 hour shifts. Workshop subsidiary of Factory No. 28 mentioned below.

Linares — No. 28 Factory, Armaments Under-Secretariat controlled. CNT management. Workforce of 540 between Ubeda and Linares. No. 6 Factory under the control of the Armaments

Under-Secretariat. Workforce of 450. Three eight-hour shifts. There was a socialist delegate and Political Commissar for the Ubeda and Linares plants. No further details.

Albacete— No. 18 Factory under Armaments Under-Secretariat control. Workforce of 210. Two eight-hour shifts. The bulk of the workforce was made up of minors and women affiliated to the UGT. The plant belonged to the International Brigades. No. 17 Factory, likewise. Socialist management. Workforce of 93, mostly UGT. The head of the workshops belonged to the CNT. Two 10-hour shifts. Workshops of the 'El Baluarte' Union (affiliated to the UGT).²

In the synopsis which the authors give of their report, the following comments are worthy of note:

'At the outset of this report we stressed that our task is not yet complete and that it will continue until completion. That we promise and will ensure.

In the field of war industry a fair amount has been achieved but not even nearly one half of what could be achieved. There are many workshops and factories where there is an evident discontent due to lack of competence or responsibility on the technical and organisational side of things. At this stage there can be no such disorientation unless there is a malicious concern to ensure that in the factories and workshops there is no matching of output to the characteristics of these.

There are workshops where, however hard the workers may strive, they cannot match the output they would reach in a different sort of work. Is it conceivable that a workshop with lathes of up to three metres tolerance should be given over to the manufacture of 20 mm anti-aircraft shells? Yet this is happening in countless places and in respect of various sorts of manufacture.

In the light of these facts, it might be supposed that the workshop or factory which operates in these conditions must make losses instead of gains. Not a bit of it. The Armaments Under-Secretariat depends upon the workshops to provide its budget. These do just that on the basis, of course, of the assets available to them, and work is contracted out along with the appropriate profit margin.

Furthermore, the Armaments Under-Secretariat has not yet drawn up a technical and organisational plan which bothers to examine and carry into effect the grouping together of small workshops which would undoubtedly double output.³ Instead, it does concern itself with aiming to take over those workshops which do boast good organisation because their workforce runs them, like the Socialised Industries of our union in Madrid and the best works under the supervision of the CNT's Metalworking Board, the Alicante works etc.

The manufacturing norms adopted in the South are not the same as those in Levante, Catalonia and the Centre. A competent, well-meaning agency would have seen to the establishment of some arrangement for communicating norms between one Delegation and another, in an efficient way, so that the Inspectors and workshop and factory directors might put these into effect. But this is not being done, and there is every likelihood that this scheme may exist in some pretty blueprint format.

Nor is there any apparent attempt to capitalise upon all available assets in terms of dependable anti-fascist professionals who might be entrusted with tasks requiring such qualifications. Instead one finds a sea of dubious elements who are acknowledged by those in the highest positions to be dubious indeed, although they claim this is because these are in the training stage.

² FAI Archives.

³ Opposition to this was based upon an absurd respect for small-scale ownership.

Nonetheless, care is taken, as in the case of Commissar Juan Alonso, upon learning of the transfer of Amutio,⁴ to send a telegram to the Under-Secretariat's Delegate requesting the appointment of a Director "who is a socialist".

Consequently, there is not one visible reason for us to be optimistic, but comrades who work exhausting hours in the industries on meagre food rations, are under threat of being dispatched to fortifications, the SIM or the Centros de reclutamiento y instrucción militar (Recruitment and Military Training Centres/CRIM) at the first sign of any shortcoming. Although this fate does not hang over the Directors, Commissars or Delegates who commit offences like lacking competence or *bona fides*.

The documents which follow testify to what militarisation of the war industries meant, and to the ghastly prospects facing the selfless workers in the rearguard. The first document comes from the Onil Steel and Metalworkers' Union and takes the form of a letter sent to the committee of that industry, a committee based in Alicante. It is dated 5 September 1938 and states:

'Esteemed comrades. This present letter is to brief you on irregularities and outrages which have been occurring in these workshops, outrages which we are in no way disposed to put up with for a single moment more, so that should they persist we shall find ourselves obliged to initiate a grievance procedure with all that this implies. Before we do, we turn to you so that you may devise the speediest and most effective means of bringing things to a satisfactory conclusion, either by reporting them to our higher bodies or through talks with the management of these factories.

In the first place, the only views heeded around here are those of the PCE, which just goes to show the favouritism which exists. One quite specific instance is that in the first-aid room there is a nurse who entered these workshops some days ago and has already managed to oust a more senior colleague, resorting to false accusations to do just that. Also, she has been awarded some 200 pesetas by way of a transfer allowance, though she is not entitled to them, in that only those of us who were transferred from Rabasa are so entitled. What is more, this money has been awarded to several communists without the remainder of the staff's having thus far received any such payment.

Another instance, and this is the crux of the matter, is that a regime of discipline through terror, a system contrary to all human principles, which even the most despotic bosses did not enforce in the days of the ill-omened dictatorship, is being introduced.

For instance, should a worker show up 10 minutes late for work, his daily pay is docked by 50 per cent. Punishments are imposed, all of them viciously assailing material well-being, with some workers being docked six, 15 or even 30 days' pay. Is such robbery to be tolerated? Yes, comrades, it is robbery and we are in no way prepared to countenance it. We will have recourse to those means available to us and will even have recourse to violence unless our organisms restrain us. For we say again that, especially where our members are concerned, we are not prepared to put up with the abuses.

We have had talks with management and they tell us that it is a matter for the Commissar. And the latter tells us that such punishments are prescribed by the Under-Secretariat. We say: how can the Under-Secretariat know if a worker shows up late for work? We regard this as collusion

⁴ A *caballerista* socialist transferred from one of the Armaments Under-Secretariat plants due to communist intrigue. Amutio was removed from the managership of the Linares plant for refusing to cover up dishonest conduct on the part of its Commissariat.

between the management and the Commissar, even though the latter says that we should appeal to our organisms.

Since we have not been able to settle this matter amicably, we need you to devise some solution as speedily as possible, for we are receiving complaints of the same nature from other branches.

In anticipation of your taking up this question, we remain yours and for our anarchist revolution.

On behalf of the Committee, **B. López** (General Secretary).'

As for the second document, it requires no comment. It speaks for itself.

'Ministry of National Defence – Aviation Under-Secretariat – General Commissariat – Dispatch No. 988 – Date: 11.8.1938 – The most illustrious Under-Secretary of Aviation, in a memoir dated 29 July last informs me of the following:

Under circular order of 30 May 1937 (D.O. number 131), provision was made for militarisation of civilian male personnel employed in factories under the aegis of the Aviation Service, as well as any plants which may have been commandeered and handed over to that same body, it being stipulated that this militarisation, while not implying the awarding of any military rank, carries a liability to the other duties incumbent upon servicemen.

Along with the efficacy of said measure, realism has commended the need to match this obedience and the punishment for any slight offences which the workers may commit to the importance of the task they perform and keep them quite separate from purely military provisions, which ought to ensure that once the nature of the transgression has been established, the punishment prescribed should be the most appropriate.

To that end, and for the purpose of effecting appropriate amendment of the schedule of minor offences and punishments insofar as militarised workers are concerned, as well as with regard to the female personnel not covered by the order, I have seen fit to dispose:

1. The following are to be deemed minor offences by militarised and female personnel, whether working in plants controlled by the Aviation Service or in others which, having been commandeered, may have been handed over to that body:

Carelessness or negligence in the maintenance of tools and industrial machinery.

Failure to comply fully with the duties imposed by said workers' working arrangements.

Displays of reluctance or lack of enthusiasm in service.

Speaking to their superiors in an insolent or off-hand manner.

Absence for a period of time amounting to a serious misdemeanour or offence.

Infringement of the regulations governing work and proper administration in military plants, and anything which may not be liable to punishment under the above headings, being a serious misdemeanour of offence prejudicial to the proper operation or productivity of the aforementioned factories.

2. The abovementioned offences are to be liable to the following punishments:

a. Private reprimand.

b. Public reprimand.

c. Up to five days' loss of half of the earnings of any sort which may be due to militarised workers.

d. Due process for expulsion from the factory and, in the instance of a worker under 45 years of age, recommendation for deployment on fortifications work.

3. The procedure for imposing the appropriate punishments upon the prescribed misdemeanours shall be delivery of a written report of the matter to the head of the factory concerned.

This is to be verified by the most expeditious means, the period between the briefing of the factory with the report from the Political Commissar and the verification not to exceed 24 hours.

Should the factory chief deem it appropriate to impose the punishments prescribed in section (d) of Rule No. 2, the matter will have to be put to the Plant Director or to the Management's delegate in the Centre South zone who, after seeking the advice of the appropriate Political Commissar, will have to deliver their decision within 24 hours from the receipt of the referral of the matter.

4. Whenever the actions of the militarised workers or female personnel amount to a grave misdemeanour or offence, a prompt report shall be forwarded to the Plant Director or the Management's Delegate in the Centre-South zone, so that he may refer the matter to the appropriate tribunal.

Personnel included in the replacements called up and seconded to the Aviation Service as a soldier, as well as any other military personnel serving in Factories and Workshops, are to be subject to the Code of Justice and complementary legislation.

Any dispositions which may conflict with implementation of the provisions of this present order are hereby rescinded.

Let me stress the significance of the above, because it must contribute to strengthening labour discipline, its being a fundamental prerequisite that the Political Commissars should work for justice and to observe the established norms.

This I communicate to you for your information and action.

Barcelona, 10 August 1938, the Commissar-General, B. Tomás; the Political Commissar, **Franco Quinta Blasco**, Alicante.'

Let us now turn back to Catalonia and turn our attention to the aircraft workshops in Sabadell. In those workshops, beautifully appointed and capable of aircraft assembly, the workforce was kept idle for months and more. The excuse was that they were waiting for plans and materials, which never arrived. What did arrive, when arrive it did, was unusable. The contractor — a foreigner — was never stuck for an excuse, and there was an enigmatic silence from the government. The workforce and their Commissar drafted repeated complaints to the factory bosses and to government agents, but these always fell on deaf ears. There was much passing of the buck. It was firmly suspected that the contractor, Raab, would not make aeroplanes and that the government was scarcely bothered about plane-making, even though 11 million pesetas had been handed over to Raab. Months went by in idleness, even though the government's experts bragged about the plant's being so outfitted and equipped so superbly that it could turn out two planes per week. The workers were raring to go. And they were also drawing 200,000 pesetas a month in wages, for no return.⁵

The Sabadell workshops had belonged to the Naval Air Force Command at Barcelona. A memoir from the erstwhile Control Committee relates the history of the reorganisation of the workshops. An end was put to abuses surviving from the old days when foremen and other privileged persons showed no consideration for anyone. The functions of technicians and auxiliaries were pinned down. Interference by military figures with no technical competence was brought to an end. The administration problem was solved: the cumbersome and time wasting red tape which hampered to procurement of raw materials, delaying the processing of orders to a tremendous

⁵ From a report, dated 27 March 1937, by the erstwhile Political Commissar of the workshops, Constantino Baches.

extent, was done away with. A loan of 50,000 pesetas was applied for, and obtained. And then the productivity question was tackled. The plan was to assemble the Saboya-62. But experts were of the opinion that, this being an antiquated aircraft, with little speed and even less attack capability, the type of plane intended was unsuitable. So the Defence Councillorship then considered the Potez. Whereupon a veritable deluge of foreign technicians teemed down. Materials and plans were taken in hand. Machinery was constructed, and the workshops extended. Then further difficulties arose: bungled blueprints, materials which failed to arrive and, above all, a terrifying contest between these technicians and the central aviation offices attached to the central government. The technicians accused the civil servants of ineptitude and bad faith: and claimed that the machinery of state, especially in those ramifications operating abroad, had been infiltrated by out and out gangsters who were undermining the whole undertaking for their own advantage. As we shall see, this claim was borne out. In the end, oil was poured on troubled waters and a solution was worked out: the Potez would not go into construction. Now the worst thing possible happened. The Saboya, which months before had been dismissed as useful, began to be built again. Further deadlock. The impatient workforce was fobbed off with a thousand excuses, if that. More foreign technicians poured in. Even Russian commissions showed up, and an avalanche of materials. There would shortly be more work than they could imagine. For the time being they would continue to do just repairs.

But another problem cropped up. The plant had to be removed to Sabadell for fear of air raids. The workers made the move in a few days. By the end of November they had set up in Sabadell. This miraculous feat testified to the workers' revolutionary faith. But once they had settled in, and the plan was ready to go into production, and after the promised Soviet commission had paid a visit...another hitch. The delegate, Lieutenant-Colonel Ramírez warned the Commission that according to orders from central government the workshop had to be packed up for transfer to Cartagena. This happened around early December 1936.

This order was greeted by the workforce with a blunt refusal. This stance was backed by their union and the whole chain of responsibility in Catalonia right up to the Generalitat's Defence Ministry. The upshot was that the minister was defeated.⁶

At the Elizalde works (Barcelona) output failed to come anywhere near expectations. Why? The usual reasons. Lack or shortfall of raw materials. Nine months after requisition by the Aviation Under-Secretariat, engine parts were still missing. Some did arrive but these arrived without any directions. In view of this, classification was an onerous task. It was patently obvious that there was no system or effort in the supply of such materials. The upshot was that there was considerable delay in the assembly of engines, for want of parts. Machinery, accessories, tools etc. were in short supply. The break-up of the factory into a series of workshops — a move prompted by air raids — only exacerbated the problem. Petitions and requests made over a four-month period were never heeded. There was a black market and leasing where tools were concerned. And, what with the antiquated machinery, it was a laborious business to arrive at the finished article. In short, there was a decline in the morale of the workforce as they saw their efforts founder. Frequent stoppages due to power cuts. A makeshift solution was tried out, with the generators being replaced temporarily by internal combustion engines. Installation of the latter could not be contrived and the power cuts and their consequences continued. The Aviation Under-Secretariat

⁶ From a report, dated 10 March 1937, from the Workshops' Committee and signed by Pardillos, E. Cervera, Juan Sanz, F. Cuenca and A. Balesteguí.

had 100 horse-power Walter engines, made by Elizalde itself and suitable as a stop-gap or back-up power source. In April 1938, a total of 25 working hours were lost due to power cuts. Multiply that by 500 workers and it amounted to 12,500 man-hours. Reckon on pay at 20 pesetas an hour and one comes up with the figure of 250,000 pesetas.

What workers had been pressing forever since the power cuts had begun was:

One 40 horse-power diesel motor;

Two 25 horse-power diesel motors;

One 11 horse-power alternator;

One 15 horse-power alternator;

One 35 horse-power alternator;

One 45 horse-power alternator;

One 100 horse-power alternating motor set.

Before it could be met, each and every one of these requests had to go through so much red tape and required so many 'go-aheads' that the remedy was never on time. Not even if an urgent request was put in. 'Regulation procedure' took precedence over all. Gentlemen who never went near the plant had to pronounce upon the necessity of this or that material, machine, device, accessory or lubricant. And it took three, four or even six months to secure the 'go-ahead', to which had to be added the time it actually took to procure the item.⁷

This is how the workers of one of the state-run war plants in Catalonia put in a report forwarded to the CNT on 2 March 1938:

'Indeed, as if these were normal times that we are living in, and under the current arrangement, certain channels and procedures have been prescribed and are being observed inside the plant and, quite apart from these being obsolete practices, they are utterly inadmissible in any manufacturing operation. The evidence throughout is that the primary concern is with formality. Content comes second or last.

We were short of labourers and various white-collar workers, etc. There are some very excellent ones available but as they are over 40 years old, the old dispositions of the Aviation Service precludes their being hired. We hold that in these times everything should come second to the achievement of positive results. Don't these workers have the right to earn a living?

We often witness differing treatment meted out to civilian and military employees and interference by the latter founded solely upon their being military personnel. In a factory, even one managed by military personnel, the only differences should be trade differences. No civilian employee should arbitrarily be replaced by a serviceman — though this has happened — especially when the former is fully trained and the latter bereft of all expertise.

We need materials, tools, etc. It is the factory which is needy. The presence of a state representative there ought to be a guarantee of efficiency. Nevertheless, niggling procedures will be adhered to. A request will be forwarded to some junta that it meets on a weekly basis. Should this be fortunate enough to win approval, it will have to be submitted to a series of negotiations, registrations, arrangements, procurement and manufactures before it can be acted upon.

Thus we have put in requests — some as long ago as last November — for raw materials, tools to be procured abroad and as yet have had no word on their having been approved. For example, in early October and after it had been shown to be absolutely vital, a machine for burnishing

⁷ From a report of the Elizalde plant workforce, dated 10 April 1938 and addressed to the Defence Section of the CNT National Committee.

axles and sheet metal was applied for. Modern engines need that sort of finish so as to achieve low friction coefficients and full benefits from their lubricants. We have upwards of 200 repaired engines of varying provenance and that is the sort of finish they require.

Concerned to solve this problem, we reported that there was a good machine available in Paris, and another in the same condition in London. To date, we have not been given the go-ahead. We might say the same of the equipment for finishing springs. We need it to cater for spring-valves. Our application went in last August and we still do not know if it has been approved.

Before we were taken over, we obtained a high-precision, high-efficiency Erause machine for drilling cylinders, connecting rods, pistons, etc. The machine arrived complete with accessories that the manufacturer claimed were the current models. So that it could be put to full use, some additional axles were ordered in mid-November. To date, that application of ours has been greeted only by silence.

As for acquisitions in this country and equipment still in place, the picture is the same...for the procedure is identical.

We need electric motors. They are available. One is for the Kellembertgert drilling machine. We should be using that to drill connecting rods for engines, among lots of other things. The order went in at the beginning of January and we do not as yet know if it has been approved. They could be obtained in a single day by the direct method.

Another fact which we feel is very significant is that more attention is given to the precise compilation of the series of reports and briefs which are requested from time to time than to anything else.

Into what category fall the weekly compilations of staff lists, daily records of shortfalls, late-comings, leave (these were even sent by telegraph), the progress sheets for specific items under manufacture...

We do not wish to labour the point about the time which a fair number of employees have to spend in compiling such data properly, data which is just filed away without even a glance. We refuse to believe that there can be anyone who can spend so much time on that.'

In another report, the following figures for production levels before and after the take-over are given:

'In the SAF-8 – Elizalde I.C. plant, by deliberate choice and after working an 8-hour day and a 56 hour week and quite apart from the regular shift, workers were, before the take-over, putting in additional hours which varied according to the individual's capacity to get to work, and without expecting to be paid for them.

Thus, to take the squad of one section chosen at random: it comprises 58 workers and in the five weeks between 15 August and 18 September 1936, they put in a total of 2,688 hours, equivalent to the sum of 6,050 pesetas if we go by the average rate of pay at that time. Which gives us the following averages:

46.3 hours worked per operative during those weeks, which is to say 9.2 hours' overtime per week per operative.

This is to say that we can state without exaggeration that, if only one half of the company's workforce were to display the same commitment, the Collective would boost its production thus:

300 workers x 9.2 hours = 2,760 hours a week and 13,800 worked during the five weeks in question, with a value of 31,050 pesetas.

After the take-over, the enthusiasm put into output has declined so that — with few exceptions — not one single hour's overtime has been worked. Quite the contrary — and this is painful to note

— but generally work stops a few minutes before knocking-off time. Another factor in the fall of production, due to waning enthusiasm, is that sections that had taken months to get themselves into a position to get on with internal production, have ground to a standstill and their machinery and tools are lying idle, even though the product is of consummate interest to the war effort.

As to productivity figures per article and operative, it has not proved possible to draw up a very complete study in that very few items manufactured before and since the take-over are comparable. However, on the basis of 13 whose manufacture has been repeated since the take-over of the plant, it has been possible to arrive at an average 21.33 per cent increase in the time taken to manufacture the same items. Another figure is that prior to the take-over of the plant, failures to report to work due to illness, accident, leave, etc. for something between 450 and 550 workers, hovered between 7 per cent and 8.5 per cent. Whereas at present the following absenteeism was recorded for a workforce of 850 for the days 18 and 19 February 1938. Here is the breakdown:

Illness 73.0

Accidents 20.5

Deliberate absenteeism 11.0

Air raid injuries 114.0

Leave 2.0

Detention 2.0

Lateness 12.0

Total 234.5

Which gives us a result of 15.6 per cent, to which it has to be added that lack of materials has had a bearing upon the failure to produce up to present requirements.'

The same report goes on to say that at the BIP workshops there had been a 50 per cent drop in production, due partly to staff shortages caused by the conscription of workers eligible for active service, and also to a shortage of raw materials and to workers' seeing that undertakings given to them at the time of the take-over had not been honoured. The workshops, which had a considerable potential for war output busied themselves, so as not to waste their time, in assembling and testing radio equipment.

At the time of the take-over of the Elizalde IC Company a new Company Committee appointed by an assembly of workers had just taken office. It comprised of five members of the CNT, and four from the UGT. Except for two who belonged to the PSUC, the members of the Committee foresaw the tremendous drawbacks implicit in the take-over. A meeting was held with the Committee of the Hispano-Suiza works and the following accords were arrived at: their decision against the take-over would be reported to the trade union organisations; they would seek an audience with President Companys, representing the Catalan government; and would appeal to Defence Minister Indalecio Prieto as he had decreed the take-over.

When the first of these steps had been taken, the UGT recommended that nothing be done to hinder the take-over. The CNT promised to take all steps to prevent it. Companys proved to be pessimistic and deplored his government's powerlessness in the face of what he termed usurpation by the central government. In the light of this, the Hispano-Suiza workforce backed down. Then the Elizalde committee organised a plebiscite among the factory's workers. Encouraged by the outcome, they journeyed to Valencia, and there had talks with Prieto but failed to secure any concessions from him. Only promises (to the effect that political commissars would be appointed to workers who so requested). This proved impossible as the UGT, on political grounds, refused

to take part in the election. The excuse was that there was no unanimity among the workforce of the plant. Which was not quite the whole story, for most of the workers belonged to the CNT and some 25 per cent of the UGT membership sided with them.

Elsewhere when the take-over was announced factories were given solemn promises. Among these were undertakings that they would not lack for raw materials, that conscripts would not be taken off the factory floor, that pay would be improved and food rations increased. It was explained to them that the take-over was an expedient for the duration of the war and that they would be issued with a contract of hire. But promises were what they remained.

At the SAF-7 plant at the time of the take-over, a legal inventory was made of all produce and tools. However, no compensation was forthcoming, even though an archaic law prescribed a 30-day limit for payment of the value of requisitioned materials.

Under the requisition set-up, the role of the unions was diminished and reduced to communicating workers' demands to the Commissar or Director and vice versa. The union had no direct or indirect hand in production, distribution or administration. Such functions were exclusive to the management, in this case as represented by a serviceman. This new climate was a hotbed for all manner of personal ambition, which had hitherto largely been eradicated.

With the outbreak of the revolt, Catalonia's War Industries Commission, anticipating the rapid exhaustion of available stocks of materials, had taken over most of the sales outlets in Barcelona and the Catalan region. This made it feasible to facilitate the factory committees when it came to speedy procurement of the materials they needed. Orders were filed that same day. Anticipating also that the war would be a protracted affair, and future problems with the supply of certain materials such as fine steels largely imported from abroad, consideration had been given to resolving the problem. Among the various steels manufactured in Spain, there was the high-speed steel turned out by the Echevarría plant in Bilbao. Of course there were mistakes, which were being ironed out. But if there had to be mistakes, the system adopted under the worker's control arrangement was preferable to the practice adopted under state control. In the first instance, a spirit of correction, responsibility, foresight and especially of enthusiasm was noticeable. Production was in the hands of persons of proven technical and professional capabilities, motivated by revolutionary ambitions.

Come the take-over, a bureaucratic system, laborious and antiquated was introduced and overseen by absolutely inept laymen.

The co-ordination of production could not have been more whimsical. The SAF-8 plant had a good track record as a producer of chrome-plated steel, yet the production of that was entrusted to another, non-specialist foundry, which implied an endless period of trials, research and analysis. Which is to say that time was squandered on uncertainty as to the adequacy of the product simply because the work force had no skill in the production of material of such delicacy of manufacture.

We have already dealt with the chaos in the distribution of materials. In trying to get hold of some existing product available from the private market, one first had to be conversant with prices so as to make a suitable bid to the appropriate agency. That agency or junta met every eight or 10 days and there were instances where approval was not forthcoming until 25 or 30 days after submission of the request. In the interval, the price of the item might have changed. As a result, the new price had to be established, the Economic Junta approached once more and another period of delay ensued. Often, just as everything was ready for procurement to proceed, the article vanished off the market.

This is the procedure followed: approach to the Economic Junta, approval is given, notification of the person in possession of the article sought, inspection, order placed, technical report, and, should the item be in stock, delivery.

As for materials that had to be secured abroad, a picturesque procedure was followed. Given the existence abroad of a Purchasing Commission, one's application had to be accompanied by a list of possible suppliers, as well as the prices of the items. With all of these formalities, months went by with scarcely any news received of the item applied for.

Although we have (in volume 2) already touched briefly upon the scandal of the Purchasing Commissions abroad, we ought to labour this dismal point. Otherwise some of the extreme instances of what we have related might not be appreciated. Regarding the dismal chapter we are about to broach there are documents aplenty. The most widely circulated document is the (already cited) FAI Peninsular Committee's report to the Plenum of Regional Committees of the Libertarian Movement in October 1938. That same report is included in the June 1939 pamphlet, *Negrín y Prieto culpables de alta traición*.⁸

The report in question is merely a collection of extracts from a number of reports included in the archives of the CNT-FAI and of which there were several copies in existence. These reports are replete with information, enough to fill a substantial volume, although the contents would be anything but edifying.

The dearth of weapons had always been chalked up to the Non-Intervention policy. The fact is that in spite of that policy, direct but plain dealing would have found a lot of doors open, maybe more than were needed. On the other hand, the incompetence and lack of honesty that, with but a few exceptions, characterised the activities of those responsible for purchasing arms abroad, were closing other doors and discrediting the anti-fascist cause. The personnel overseeing or helping to oversee these pernicious activities had close ties to the most influential ministers. Sources exposing the venality of ministers and of their agents emanated from some of those agents who strove to take their mission to heart and who were misled and even persecuted precisely because of their sterling services to the anti-fascist cause. Lieutenant Colonel Juan Ortíz Muñoz's case provides one instance of this.⁹ Another source is the correspondence from Paris-based agent, a certain 'C', reporting to one high-ranking socialist. There are other, pretty much anonymous reports, in which the complainants keep their identities under wraps, for reasons all too easily understood.

One of the letters from the confidential informant 'C' states as follows:

'Paris, 20 September 1937

Dear D J,

Whether the government, aside from comrade Prieto, is aware of comrade O's activities outside Spain, I do not know. As a representative of our party, comrade O served on the original Purchasing Commission. When comrade Prieto, Defence Minister, dissolved that commission, comrade O began operating on his own behalf, squandering money, especially on himself. Not his own money, let me be clear, but the State's money. In all likelihood, comrade O has not made great purchases of materials, maybe, of course, because he was not able to do so, on account of his having to grapple with countless obstacles, etc., etc. But there is no doubt that comrade O

⁸ *Negrín y Prieto culpables de alta traición*, Ediciones del Servicio de Propaganda España, Argentina, June 1939.

⁹ According to the FAI Peninsular Committee's report (September 1938) Colonel Ortíz had to flee Spain to escape the wrath of minister Prieto whom he had accused of high treason for his connivance or indulgence towards the dishonest practices of the armaments' Purchasing Commissions

has frittered money away as if he was making huge purchases. Comrade O's cavalier approach is now notorious throughout Paris. On every visit, he stays in the finest hotels, sleeps with the most expensive women; eats in the most luxurious restaurants, and finally dishes out splendid tips for the most insignificant favours rendered. For instance, he slips a hotel waiter a hundred francs for fetching him a pack of cigarettes that costs eight, and tells him to keep the change, in a great seigniorial gesture.

It may well be all right to live high on the hog when one is dealing with folk who stand on ceremony, but only when such dealings are private rather than conducted as the representative of a state locked in a fight to the death and which needs all it can muster to prosecute that fight. If comrade O's extravagance were ultimately to bring some benefit to this fight, then it might just be excusable.

But the fact is that comrade O simply fritters the money away, procuring very little of service to the fight we are waging, and what little he has procured might equally have been procured with a much reduced expenditure. Comrade Prieto knows from a number of sources the sort of lifestyle that comrade O is leading, the paucity of purchases that he makes, the extraordinary expenditure in which he has engaged, etc. Comrade Prieto, however, persists in sending comrade O on missions to procure this item or that in France and elsewhere. Comrade Prieto has been told to review comrade O's expense accounts and likewise audit what procurements he has made. And, with both of these in front of him, to check the total cost of his procurements. To no avail. Comrade Prieto, overworked, no doubt, has not had time to carry out any such review. But persists in sending comrade O off on purchasing missions or purchasing attempts. Comrade O carries on frittering State funds away, funds sorely needed for other things, for the purchase of, say, the many materials not available to us or vitally necessary products, or simply for feeding Spanish workers who cannot increase output because they are not well fed.

By way of a sample of how comrade O squanders money, let me cite you a recent instance. It was precisely this case that prompted me to offer you a hurried briefing. Through the Mexican Embassy in Paris we recently obtained something that we needed, something very important, of course. In dealings with personnel from that Embassy, comrade O had a hand. After the safe arrival in Spain of what the Mexican Embassy had taken the trouble to send us, comrade O saw fit to hand a sealed envelope to a member of the Embassy staff, without further explanation. When this was opened, it was found that the envelope contained a hundred-thousand francs, which were returned to comrade O with a short note in which he was told that folk there were working disinterestedly on Spain's behalf. A splendid example, which, let me assure you, has neither embarrassed comrade O, even though it would disgrace anybody, nor taught him a lesson. Because comrade O carries on with the same lifestyle as before, as if the Mexican Embassy business were a matter of no consequence.

With, as ever, dear D J., my greatest respect. C.'

And here is yet another of these letters:

'Paris, 2 July 1937

Dear DJ,

In my reports I have referred several times to the persons dispatched to Paris by the government, or, to be more precise, by comrade Prieto to purchase war materials. I have given assurances, and stand ready to prove if need be, that purchases on decent terms have been rejected, sometimes because those terms excluded the possibility of commission for the purchasers, and on other occasions apparently because they did not want to see the government forces, in their fight

against the enemy, equipped with the resources to at least put up a successful resistance. I have proof aplenty of both possibilities, which I shall deliver to you in person when I call upon you. In actual fact, purchases have never been made directly from the companies or persons who have supplied us with equipment, other than through intermediaries who have scandalously boosted the price of what we have received. Those companies and individuals have, in most instances, offered their goods directly, but have never been able to conclude a direct sale. For one reason or another, the offer has been rejected. And later, the very same items offered at a reasonable cost, with an obvious desire to help us out, have been procured through intermediaries in the service of comrade Prieto's envoys, with the latter dividing up the surcharge which sometimes amounts to a 100 per cent mark-up on the prices offered by the seller.

Grave though what I have just described may be, it is not the worst of it. The worst thing is that, in quite a few cases, magnificent chances of procuring ourselves material have gone a-begging, not because there may or may not have been good commission on offer, but because of a deliberate determination that we would not get our hands on it. I mentioned this before. However I must labour the point because there is incontrovertible evidence aplenty that this is the case.

In spite of what I have said, I am not trying to invoke the broader aspects of the matter, although, in view of comrade Prieto's repeated trust in many individuals, I am sure that I am going to have to speak to him frequently on such a disagreeable matter. My intention today is to brief you on facts relating to just one such individual: the seemingly irreplaceable Colonel P. A while ago I heard the true story (as I now know for sure, which is why I kept it from you previously) of what happened, through his fault, to an offer of planes made by Czechoslovakia. Here it is: Czechoslovakia agreed to replace her entire air force: to this end she made ready to sell off what she had in order to defray some of the costs of a new and more modern fleet. Through Colonel P, she offered it for sale to the Spanish government. Naturally, the aircraft were slightly antiquated, but, given that we had none, they were simply excellent for our purposes. Colonel P agreed in principle, but then put the deal on the backburner, explaining to any who moaned about his sluggishness in concluding the sale that we could not waste our money on antiquated planes, missing out on our chance of getting access to the entire Czechoslovak fleet with which, antiquated or not, we might have denied the enemy more than one of his victories. In point of fact (there being no other possible explanation) Colonel P was precisely concerned to ensure that those victories would not be denied. There is no other explanation for it. His being retained in his position defies understanding, because comrade Prieto, from what I have been told, knows every detail of what became of the offer from Czechoslovakia. But as it may well suit comrade Prieto for us to take a few setbacks so that, seeing that all is lost, we might agree to British mediation — something he supports — and it would scarcely be surprising if Colonel P, in not proceeding with the purchase, was acting on his instructions.

We come now to another case, not quite so significant, but along similar lines, in which Colonel P adopted the same policy. A number of French socialist comrades, worried about Spain's predicament, managed, thanks to their connections in Britain, to secure, at an advantageous rate, four British planes of a type used by the British army, for dispatch to Spain. This information was passed to Colonel P. Colonel P seemed interested in the matter, but, as in the Czechoslovak case, let some days go by without making any move, doing nothing at all, before finally countering that the planes were not at all modern. (As I have said, they were of a model in use by the British army). The fact is that, ultimately, the opportunity to acquire the four planes, which were to have

been dispatched directly to Santander, where I need not say, they were needed, was squandered. As in the Czechoslovak case above, does it not look as if Colonel P had an interest in Santander's being left defenceless?

The socialist comrades concerned, who were prompted by a lofty desire to help Spain with the purchase of four planes, forwarded a detailed memorandum to comrade Prieto regarding all that had happened. To date, comrade Prieto has not so much as deigned to reply. But he retains Colonel P in position, meaning that he has no quarrel with his performance of his duties.

No doubt Colonel P, like others in these parts with the same mission, has made the occasional purchase so as to justify his time in Paris, but never, let me reiterate, directly, but rather through intermediaries who have boosted the price, scandalously, if I may repeat it, so that they can share the splendid commission between them. But when it comes to important purchases, which might be of great significance in our war, there have been none. It is not in their interests for us to have access to effective means of defence. This is the conclusion to which one has no option but to reach. It is the conclusion reached by the socialist comrades in the report they have forwarded to comrade Prieto, to which, as I have said, comrade Prieto has made no reply. A report in which those socialist comrades make scarcely any reference to the right predicament in which their desire to be of assistance to Spain left them.

For myself, I do not know what I can add to the foregoing. Except that, with my next letter, I shall enclose a copy of those comrades' report.

Yours, with the greatest respect. C.'

Lieutenant-Colonel Ortíz's report bears the dateline, Valencia, March 1937. Appointed in mid-December 1936 by the Navy and Air Force Minister (Prieto) to purchase aircraft in Paris, he set off on the trip with several trusted auxiliaries. Within a short time he was back in Valencia to report to the minister what he had seen of irregular practice in the performance of the agents who had preceded him, Colonel R and the Purchasing Commission headed by O. On 28 December 1936, the minister decided to wind up that commission and leave the one headed by Ortíz in place in Paris to handle all aircraft-related matters. Ortíz was enjoined to have no contact with the Embassy or with members of the previous commission. His first act was to put before the minister an offer that he had had of 50 Potez 54 bombers that were to have cost some 115 million francs. Gonzalo Zabala, who was empowered by the minister to conclude the contract, refused to sign it on formal, legalistic grounds.

The Loiret-Olivier plane-making company for its part offered 26 Dewoitine 36K fighters at 1,250,000 francs each. The minister's response was to say that he had had this offer from an agent of the company already but at a price that was 100,000 francs lower. The agent in question was not an agent at all but someone with a dire business record, a declared bankrupt, so the deal had fallen through. The company kept on offering planes but Prieto's financial representative was always against the purchase, even during the last few days when the French cabinet approved delivery of the planes to Spain. The firm made a further offer, this time of five ultra-modern planes not yet available to the French army. The deal could not be concluded within the agreed delivery period because of the debate in the French parliament on air force matters. The company applied for an extension of a few days and Zabala made this conditional upon the surrender of two million francs by way of compensation for breach of contract. So the deal failed even though the planes were ready to be flown directly to Spain.

At the start of 1937, Ortíz received a telegram from the minister instructing him to acquire six radio transmitters. A first set was secured and the bill forwarded, as was the billing for an order

for 500 kilos of copper phosphate. No confirmation was ever forthcoming. Then he was ordered to obtain a batch of trucks and light vehicles. By telegram he asked for six million francs to be forwarded by way of payment, only to be told that he should apply for a loan to the Minister of Finance. By 4 February the sum had still not arrived in Paris. The vehicles set off for Spain unpaid for, due to the failure to meet the bill.

On 12 February he received written orders to acquire 20,000 petrol-storage canisters, it being dangerous to store petrol in larger tanks due to the threat of air raids. After the cost was reported with all due urgency and the money requested, he was given the go-ahead and was told that application had been made to the Minister of Finance for the 4,670,000 francs that the deal cost to be sent on. The supplier company asked for a 50% down payment before starting manufacture. But since the money failed to arrive, a down payment of 400,000 francs was agreed. When the delivery date came around, the money had still not been received and the author of the report had to rely on his own devices in order to raise it so that delivery of the first batch of canisters could go ahead. A further application for funds to cover the costs of the materials he had been told to order and which cost a total of 4,120,000 francs, similarly fell on deaf ears. It was the same story with the purchase of a batch of machine-guns as approved by the minister, and with some aircraft bombs. It was unable to proceed due to a failure to deliver the funding. There was a plan for aircraft to be bought from Danzig for 93 million francs. He managed to get Martí Esteve, the acting chairman of the Purchasing Commission, to give an undertaking to set 33 million francs aside for the planes since the minister was not forthcoming with the funding. Just as the contract was about to be signed, he was startled to find that no such money had been ear-marked. That promise turned into a reduced offer of whatever money was left over from purchase agreements that had fallen through. When the minister got wind of this arrangement, he set his face against it. Ortíz made a trip down to Valencia to swap impressions with the minister. During his time in the city, he had only one audience, and that was so that he could hear a suggestion regarding the acquisition of 40 Potez aircraft. Two planes would be sent to France carrying a certain quantity of gold to cover the asking price. The planes arrived all right but delivered the gold straight to the ambassador and the defunct commission. Not one penny could be secured for the procurement of planes. Ortíz came up with further proposals for the acquisition of 19 Dewoitine-365s and 19 Spad-510s, as offered by a French air force officer, an individual with impeccable credentials. No response to this proposal could be got. As for the purchase of ancillary equipment and raw materials for aircraft factories, these ran into the same obstruction. The author of the report cited as witnesses a commission of workers from the Hispano works in Alicante who had seen this for themselves in Paris.

Another of the reports, from Major José Malendreras, was dated 25 July 1937. On 16 September 1936 the major had been seconded to a purchasing commission dispatched to the United States and Mexico. In addition to Malendreras, the commission was made up of Colonel Francisco León Trajo, the head of the mission, and Sergeant Francisco Corral. The commission arrived in New York on 28 September 1936. Neither the consulate nor the embassy had any knowledge of its mission, much less any funding to make available for its use. Because of this 'hitch', the first part of the mission failed: it was to have bought 9 Vultee planes from the American Air Lines company. The arrival of a new Spanish ambassador, Fernando de los Ríos, whom it was assumed had brought the funding with him, failed to resolve the matter. The ambassador had no money. They then tried to procure three very fast Saversky fighter planes, or rather, tried to stop them from being shipped out to Colombia. They were forced to wash their hands of this attempt too

for the same reasons, creating a very poor impression as to the clout of an official commission of the Spanish government.

Before leaving for Mexico, the commission got wind that one company had 18 planes for sale. Closing the sale was a matter of the utmost urgency, for a Dutch commission was negotiating with the firm to the same ends. The utter absence of funding aborted that opportunity too. The asking price had been reasonable.

On 10 October, the mission had a meeting in Mexico City with ambassador Gordón Ordás, only to discover that he had pleased countless times for moneys to be advanced. Through the good offices of Colonel Roberto Fierro, the Director-General of the Mexican Air Force, three privately-owned Lockheed planes plus a cargo of arms, engines, propellers and aircraft radio sets were dispatched on board the Spanish vessel, the *Sil*, anchored in Veracruz, and came ashore in Santander. All of this gear was sent pretty much free of charge, for the aforementioned Colonel Fierro went guarantor for the cost of the planes until such time as the Spanish government might make up its mind to cough up.

Another offer came in from an American gangster. He offered 50 armed planes and whatever war materials might be needed (tanks, cannons, machine-guns and an endless supply of ammunition). The only condition was that payment would be made once the gear was dockside in Veracruz, loaded on board republican shipping and had been inspected by the commission. At that point the embargo on the export of war materials from the United States had not yet been introduced. The funding was not forthcoming, even though the ambassador persistently lobbied for it, and the deal had to be abandoned. The asking price had been 6 million dollars. The seller had asked for that sum to be deposited with a Mexican bank in the ambassador's name and frozen for a certain period, long enough for the gear to be delivered. If the gear did not arrive, the sum would automatically be unfrozen.

Malendreras wrote in his report:

'Not until 6 January 1936 was there any law in the United States of America banning the export of war materials to Spain. There was a ban that applied only to Cuba, Honduras, Bolivia and China. The only requirement to be satisfied before an export order became legal, and which our representatives in the United States seemed deliberately to ignore, was very straightforward. For the shipment of arms, that the material be purchased and the State Department informed. This latter official agency sought the endorsement of Spain's representative by way of reassurance that the goods were bound for the declared destination, after which it was free to leave unimpeded and in accordance with American law.

In the United States, where there is an exaggerated regard for the law, where there is no legal ban on exports, the government is very punctilious about allowing it to proceed. By which I mean to stress that, with funding and such authorisation, we could have shipped a startling quantity of planes and war materials to Spain. I am not exaggerating. Take the case of Mr. Cius with his exportation of eight planes that left from the port of New York on the very day that the embargo law was passed, under escort from a torpedo boat and a plane for halting the ship should the law secure the President of the United States's signature before it could leave jurisdictional waters. But the Senate chairman that day forgot to bring it to him for signing until after the ship had left, from which point onwards all shipments of war materials to Spain were lawfully halted.'

Minister Prieto had set up another independent commission, made up of the familiar O who, as we know, was an expert in war materials and aircraft, alongside the journalist Corpus Varga, as well as Méndez and Prieto's own son. It was headed by a Jew by the name of Scherover who

was the real leader of both commissions. They maintained a range of offices and staff, which merely served to commit a huge sum in dollars to a number of arms dealers who were to have delivered around 50.000 rifles to Spain on board a ghost ship. The value of these rose to several thousand dollars that suffered the same fate as the rifles. Following this calamitous operation, O quit the United States and the commission was disbanded. As for Prieto's son, he was made financial attaché at the Spanish embassy in Mexico City. Before the commission was wound up, it commissioned the Bellanca Company to build twenty Bellanca make planes. This was done after the American prohibition law was passed, so the planes could not be transported to Spain.

The *bona fides* of the Malendreras Commission is proved by the fact that when funding finally reached Mexico, some 28 planes were procured, some by giving the slip to the vigilance of the American authorities. But once the US law came into effect, things became trickier. On which basis the author of the report suggested that a plant for the manufacture of fighter planes might be opened in Spain in a very short time. In terms of speed of construction and the air speed of its planes, the likeliest prospect was the Seversky company. This company offered a metal-bodied fighter aircraft that might be kitted out with four machine-guns on its wings, two of them synchronised. For manufacturing purposes, the company had turned to steel stencils or moulds from which component parts could be made. Such manufacture could take place at different sites so as to avoid the threat of enemy air raids. Within the agreed price range, the plant offered two aircraft broken down completely into kit form, along with all stencils and machinery, if the government had sole patent rights, as well as potential plans and modifications, an arrangement whereby huge numbers of planes could be produced annually. The same company would dispatch engineers and a few technicians to train Spanish operatives. Manufacture was scheduled to start within three months. All the government needed to do was obtain the undercarriage, which could be produced by Pirelli, plus metal airscrews, indicator equipment and engines, which could be obtained from Mexico through the Panamericana aviation company. One drawback was that the company was unable to sell its patent directly to the government on account of the laws mentioned earlier. But there was a very simple way around that: it could be sold to a Mexican-registered company, which would set up a plant in Spain. The sale terms were excellent.

The minister's response to this proposal was that, according to his technical consultants, it was very expensive. However, in the very same message the minister ordered the urgent purchase of two hundred of these planes.

There was a proposal for another model of highly effective fighter plane to be built in Spain. That proposal never even received an answer. Yet the ministry sent out an avalanche of requests for the purchase of planes in the United States as if Valencia was in the dark about the passage of the American embargo laws. In time, the impact of those laws was felt in the form of interference with pressures and bullying brought to bear on neighbouring governments, such as the government of Mexico, which, for all its goodwill, of which there was more than enough practical evidence, found itself compelled not to funnel United States-produced equipment to Spain.

To conclude this dismal chapter of the Purchasing Commissions, albeit setting aside for the scrutiny of future researchers countless data and extremely grave charges levelled against high-ranking individuals and their underlings, who were overseeing the Spanish war effort, let us turn yet again to the text of the report from the [FAI] Peninsular Committee, dated September 1938. On pages 7 and 8 we read the following:

‘To any explanation of the catastrophic performance of the Purchasing Commission we must add the scope the enemy was afforded in discovering shipments of equipment and the resultant bombing of the vessels carrying it.

According to a representative of the Bulouze Company, the operating style of the commission’s office also played into the hands of the rebels when it came to their discovering what they needed to know. According to the gentleman concerned, the office operated like this: the layout and internal division of such offices are not in any way helpful to the maintenance of the discretion, which the delicacy of such matters requires. Instead, they lend themselves to the most basic espionage. Samples, catalogues and correspondence are spread out across staff desks in the same room where everybody waits, and, if that waiting goes on for much time, everyone can see, read and quietly make notes. Moreover, the staff do not take even the most elementary precautions to preserve discretion. All sorts of business is discussed in the presence of all and sundry. In the offices of the commission bosses, there is the embarrassment of having to speak in the presence of three or four persons who have nothing to do with the subject under discussion. On the pretext of making an offer, a secret agent can easily slip into the waiting room of Office No. 57, and monitor those who are waiting and pretty much eavesdrop on what is being said. For an agent well-versed in such activities, succeeding in his mission is child’s play.

The facilities extended to the enemy have been enhanced by the lack of due vigilance regarding the personnel entrusted with delicate matters, as in the case of the secretary of the Mexican delegation in Paris, Escudero, who repeatedly betrayed our cause by acting in the following manner.

War materials to the approximate value of 154 million francs had been procured and these had been stored in the port of Danzig in September 1936. Escuder made a quick visit to the city to issue instructions regarding the loading and shipment of said materials to republican Spain. Moored in the port, there was a Mexican vessel, the *Hidalgo*; its crew was entirely trustworthy and it had the capacity to accommodate the cargo. There were other equally reliable facilities available for its shipment, however, Escudero, along with the owner of the Greek vessel, *Silvia*, a fellow by the name of Katapodis, and her captain, Kouras, both of them notoriously loose-lipped and venal, decided to load the cargo aboard that vessel, in the knowledge that there was a shipment of arms bound for Franco’s army already in her hold. The upshot was that, twelve days after leaving Danzig, the *Silvia* quietly put in at Ceuta where she turned over the entire cargo to the Nationalist authorities.

[...] Escudero personally loaded up the *Rona* with material for our government. Once on the open sea, the political delegate would reveal the course to be set and the delivery port. As he passed El Ferrol, the captain slowed her engines and waited for rebel shipping to appear; the latter drew nearer and, without a word of discussion, as if prearranged, they escorted her into El Ferrol.’

We have comprehensively and, on the basis of available documentation, tackled two sorts of performance: the loyal efforts and sacrifices made by the workers in the rearguard and the government’s own sordid, murky stewardship. The reader has enough evidence to hand to draw the appropriate conclusions.

NOTES

Chapter Eight: Libertarians and Communists in the War

Although the weaponry available to the loyalist combatants on the fronts was very precarious, although the attack capability and technical and strategic potential of the enemy was always on the increase, although the shortcomings of the commanders themselves were obvious, there is no accounting for the uninterrupted succession of reversals suffered in 1938.

For that to be explained away, a factor of great importance must be taken into consideration: the collapse of the fighting morale of the combatants, a morale which had been maintained until a short time before, thanks to back-up from volunteers. But even the veterans on the volunteer side, for reasons of natural wastage and thanks to the political vicissitudes to which they were subjected, found their morale constantly flagging.

On 25 August 1938, the Commissar of the Group of Armies in the Catalan Zone forwarded a report to the Commissar of the Land Army. A copy of this report by Gil Roldán was also forwarded to the National Committee of his organisation — the CNT. The report dealt with the issue of desertions at the front, most of which, according to Roldán, were directed towards the rearguard and not the enemy's lines, and he claimed that the deserters were soldiers of sound political credentials who had been at the front since the start of the campaign, as was shown by the fact that many of them had gone on to rejoin their units. On the basis of our own first-hand experience, we might add that many deserters deserted from communist brigades where, because of their political ideas, they risked death or where life was made psychologically impossible for them. As far as CNT members or militants were concerned, desertion very often consisted of a clandestine re-enlistment with CNT units.

According to Gil Roldán's report, what lay behind most desertions was a breakdown in morale caused by ill treatment and inadequate equipment and rations:

'It is very hard for a man who has not eaten in two days and who has neither clothing nor footwear to see his way to going along to listen to a lecture or political speech...On a visit I made recently to the Northern sector of the X Army Corps, I was able to see half-naked soldiers obliged to wrap their feet in sacks. This in the midst of a torrential downpour and with the prospect of heavy snowfalls that lower the temperature to several degrees below zero. The thoughts of a soldier who is not issued with his pay with the requisite punctuality, and who thus is not able to send money home, dwell insistently upon possible tragedy at home. Nor has a sound postal service been organised, which leaves him in the position of being incommunicado with his loved ones. If to all this we add the fact that disagreeable news about various aspects of the rearguard reaches him, this simply adds to the complex created in him.'

Commanders of quality were undoubtedly in short supply on the fronts. A means had to be found of accelerating their training and preparation: the War School. In the first months of 1938, the Central General Staff was talking about the 'vital necessity for 12,000 officers'. The logical move was to regularise the intakes of the War Schools and Commissars' Schools. But against all

logic, applications for officer training were only invited when there was some disaster happening at the front, or to further party political interests, as we shall see anon. As for the commissars, it so happened that the Commissar-General of the Land Army shut down the schools which had given such sterling service, but which opinion in high places regarded as illicit... which is to say they were not under the control of PCE agents.

Supplies were more than inadequate on most fronts where foodstuffs, clothing and footwear were in short supply. Tending and evacuation of the wounded were also afflicted by shortcomings. And now these inadequacies had become intolerable to the conscripts and above all to the veterans in a way they had not been in the romantic early months of the revolt, ever since 'the 100,000 sons of Negrín' — legions of carabineers made up of young men, spared the dangers of front-line service by certain parties, well-equipped, well-armed and well-paid had begun to strut around in the rearguard in their impeccable uniforms.

In 1930 Spain had the following carabineer forces:

Stations 1,622

Commanding officers 135

Officers 559

Infantry troops 14,566

Cavalry troops 350

As regularisation of the militias proceeded, disciplinary measures increased in severity and the nascent military caste really took its task to heart. Its members had quickly absorbed all of the shortcomings of the old barrack-style officer corps but none of its virtues. Militaristic, disciplinarian hysteria was going from the absurd to the ridiculous. Few could resist parading the uniforms and stripes to which they were entitled by regulations, and whenever no such right existed, one was invented. In the application of discipline, they could not have been more grotesque. For instance, during the battle of Levante, on the occasion of a hurried withdrawal, some artillery pieces were left behind. The military commander in charge, without making further enquiries, ordered that these be blown up. But those entrusted with the order, upon going to execute it, discovered that the enemy was still some distance away, and instead of spiking the guns, they dragged them laboriously back to their own lines. The pieces had been salvaged, but the order to explode them had been disobeyed, and the commander concerned, who had committed the grave offence of being ignorant of the enemy's whereabouts, was within an ace of ordering the shooting of selfless soldiers as blessed in initiative as they were oblivious of the absurdities of discipline. Needless to say, the same rigour was not shown with the commander himself, nor in the chastisement of the countless officers that had taken their praetorian roles so seriously.

Another cause of demoralisation was the proselytising activity conducted in army ranks by the communists through the Commissariat. Alvarez del Vayo had sown the seeds of the preponderance of communists in this corps. Repeated dispositions to counter this evil, peppered with solemn undertakings to amend things, came to nothing. Nor was loss of morale unconnected with the feats of the like of Líster's 11th Division in 1937 in the Aragonese rearguard, just a few kilometres behind the CNT's forward positions.

The incompetence of arrangements for supplying the civilian population preyed on the mind of the fighting man. His continual brooding over the misery afflicting his family in the rearguard was an ironic reward for his sacrifices in the firing line. The families of bureaucrats, Assault Guards and carabineers naturally were spared such penury. And no attempt at all was made to disguise such irksome privilege. The government, out of long-nurtured spite, denied the civilian

population the aid of the farming collectives in the procurement of foodstuffs and swamped the collectives with arbitrary requisitions. There was always the glib excuse that transport was needed for war purposes and the collectives almost always were regaled with the sight of their cars and trucks being confiscated from them. The upshot was that, for want of such means of transportation, farm produce, oranges from Valencia or chickpeas from Albacete, wound up being left to spoil.

In its obsessive centralisation, the government spread its ineptitude into every domains and functions into which it intruded. Black marketeering, hoarding and the most damaging sabotage were the fruits of a chaotic policy in matters of provisions. From time to time the populace was shocked by the unearthing of secret caches of potatoes, vegetables and fruit, already spoiling. What this did was annoy the women who spent days and nights, from dawn to dusk, waiting their turns in the 'queues'. And as if in mockery, the government was increasingly demanding and menacing in its speeches, in which it called for still greater sacrifices, still greater 'resistance'.

There were all too many political operations, dreamed up to afford prestige to the leaders of a certain party, operations that were disastrous in military terms, but which were mounted with cavalier disregard for the human lives squandered.

Some minor PCE bigwigs who figured in the Politburo which, as they themselves admit 'was a clearing house for orders handed down from Moscow', have now, some 14 years on from the end of the Spanish conflict, in books awash with disenchantment and contrition, enlightened us as to the mystery of the disastrous operation against Brunete.¹ According to these sources, Largo Caballero, by then marked by the Kremlin as a candidate for political elimination, planned an operation on a huge scale on the Extremadura front, the object of which was to occupy Mérida and Badajoz, which would have bisected the Francoist zone and involved a push to the Mediterranean in order to seize the enemy's main naval and supply bases there. Stalin's ministers in the Largo Caballero government received direct orders from the Kremlin to spare nothing in opposing a military victory that would consolidate the prestige of the 'Spanish Lenin' (Largo Caballero) who had, as we have noted, been cast as a sacrificial lamb. Caballero's plan was torpedoed at a cabinet session by the communist ministers, acting on the orders of the Soviet command based in Alcalá de Henares, with the threat that that command would not release 'their aircraft for the implementation of the plan against Extremadura.' And on the pretext of doing something to bring ease to combatants in dire straits in the North, the Soviet command devised and pushed through a scheme to have the Brunete plan dropped.

Frequently CNT units were used as cannon fodder and no less often they were stripped of their own officers and assigned others, usually communists. There were instances of this in the operation that culminated in the taking of Belchite in 1937 and in the onslaught on Teruel. The units concerned were the 25th and 26th Divisions and the 153rd Brigade. When the Eastern front collapsed, the three brigades of the 26th Division were split up: the 116th for instance was seconded to the 18th Army Corps, the 117th to the 13th Army Corps and the 118th to the 21st Army Corps. We have already dealt elsewhere with what befell the 26th Division's 121st Brigade.

The following was contained in a report from the CNT National Committee's Defence Section (12 April 1938):

'...a military profile, which is to say a precise and real picture, implies situating foreign intervention on a strictly factual basis. This implies precise assessment of its extent, completely and

¹ The expression is from Jesús Hernández, *Yo fui un ministro de Stalin*, Mexico, 1953.

systematically eschewing the facile, glib and counter-productive “refrain” according to which our military reverses are attributable solely to Italo-German might.

Were the operations in the Sierra, El Cerro Garabitas, Brunete and Teruel, as well as those in the North, Huesca and Belchite perhaps planned, prepared and mounted by the Salamanca-Berlin-Rome headquarters?

Does the enemy bear the, frankly, criminal responsibility for not having anywhere had tactically and strategically positioned trenches of varying depths facing in the direction of the enemy’s possible or likely avenues of attack?

How come the Prieto-Negrín government, having enjoyed 10 months of undisputed and unchallenged power with which to organise and perfect the Popular Army, endow it with expert officers and a youthful, vigorous and competent central command yet failed to capitalise upon that interval, a period without parallel in contemporary history?

Are the vacillations or diplomatic gaffes of our government — which has landed us in our present dire straits for various reasons of an external nature that we cannot go into in this report — also products of Italo-German intervention?

Whose responsibility is it that our war output is virtually in its infancy while the Corps of Carabineers has its very own equipment production workshops — something quite unheard of?

Was it in Rome or in Berlin that the decision was made that the transport service should be in permanent disarray, thereby allowing the rearguard in Barcelona, Valencia, Madrid, etc. to run short of wine, oil and other essential products, whilst “stocks” rot in the centres of manufacture?

Could our enemies have expected that various Army Corps would have disintegrated like makeshift militia battalions in the face of moderately well organised enemy attack?

Is the enemy to blame because Prieto — the entire government in fact — threatened reprisal air raids, only to turn around in the face of repeated, provocative enemy raids, and invite intervention by France and England? How is one to explain that glib threat when we did not have the aircraft to mount the most elementary defence of the fronts, as demonstrated during the worrying period ushered in by the enemy in his 9 March offensive on the South Ebro?

Was it the international enemy who created the duplication of functions which exists, frustrating efficient co-operation between the Air Under-Secretariat and the Armed Forces High Command?’²

One of the main ambitions of the PCE was to gain control of army commands. By mid-1938 it had managed to capture 80 or 90 per cent of such positions, thanks to manoeuvres implemented from the Under-Secretariat of the Land Army and from the Central High command. With the appointment in April 1938 of the communist Antonio Cerdón to the first of these offices, the supremacy to which we refer was accentuated still further. One of his first moves was to attach the Intelligence and Audit Bureau to the Under-Secretary’s office so that it could fill him in on trade union and political affiliation of all officers and military commanders. The Bureau had hitherto always functioned independently.

Cerdón was a ‘failed’ student of the Higher War School, not that that prevented his being appointed chief of the Operations Section of the Central Command, and later Chief-of-Staff of the Army of the East. Let it be said here that the Central Command was off-limits to certain militia commanders, who held commands on the staffs of the Divisions and Army Corps, on account of their not being ‘graduates’.

² CNT-FAI Archives

Front line fighters had priority in the filling of certain specialist positions. To this end they were invited to enrol for certain courses through the columns of the *Diario Oficial*. The established practice was to advertise for applicants, allowing time for this to come to the notice of men in the firing lines, so that combatants might at their ease reply in the usual manner to the appropriate advertisements. Cerdón introduced the practice of allowing a period of grace of only 10 days for receipt of applications. And since the *Diario Oficial* was several days late in reaching the front lines, the upshot was that only those with prior notification of the advertisements could enrol in time. And the PCE — alerted by Cerdón — saw to this through its cells inside the army.

Here is proof of what I have indicated. On 3 May, the CNT's Defence Section for Catalonia forwarded the following letter to its National Section:

'TO THE CNT DEFENCE SECTION:— Dear comrades: We are resolved to bring to the attention of this body the form of chicanery indulged in by the Under-Secretariat of the Land Army, in which one of the PCE's most determined individuals serves, indulges. On earlier occasions we have said something about this, but there are some things that go too far.

In issue 104 of the *Diario Oficial* of 2 May 1938 there appears Circular Order No. 7222, announcing an open competition for tank drivers, an announcement made with all deliberateness, for the period of acceptance for applications close on the 10th of the same month, and applications received are to be considered in order of arrival. In the eight-day period of grace given in the *Diario Oficial*, our division cannot do anything, for the *Diario* reaches us two or three days late. The period expires while selection is underway and the companies are being briefed. We are sure that all these things are done in connivance with those divisions that look to the PCE, which receive advance notification so that they have time to prepare their personnel to swamp the applications.

The same *Diario Oficial* carries another Circular order, No. 7223, inviting applications for places in the People's War School and affording the same period of grace for replies. That, taken together with 49 promotions from lieutenants to captains in the 11th Division will give a rough idea, albeit in only one particular, of what is going on at the Under-Secretariat of the Land Army.

All of which we bring to your notice for further action.

Without further ado, accept our fraternal greetings, on behalf of the Defence Section, the Secretariat, Barcelona, 3 May 1938.'

Cerdón was also in charge of promotions and staffing in the army. With the Eastern Front in a condition of wholesale collapse, a known communist, Francisco Galán, was appointed to command the 11th Army Corps. Since this was a mainly CNT front, there was no shortage of candidates of libertarian persuasion. What came to be known as the Autonomous Ebro Grouping was set aside for Modesto, hitherto the commander of the 5th Army corps — by dint of the capture of Teruel (?). And during the month of May some 1,480 promotions were awarded to the 27th Division (formerly the Karl Marx Division), taking corporals, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, commissars and commanders altogether. These officers were used to staff other units — the 60th Division from corporal and company delegate right up to commander and divisional commissar — where, it seems, promotions were vetoed. In return for its merits, the 27th Division was the only one that failed to advance by a single step in the operations facing the Balaguer bridgehead that very same month of May. 'Without fear of error, we can state that, whilst since May some

7,000 combatants have been promoted through the various ranks, 5,500 of them belong to the PCE.’³

Of the 27th Division, one can read in the aforementioned report:

‘On the occasion of the operations mounted by the Army of the East (May 1938) in the 11th Army Corps’s sector and resulting in the occupation of the towns of San Romá de Abella and Bastús, we wish to point out the following fact:

On 20 May, a dispatch was issued by the command of the 11th Army Corps to the command of the 26th Division, indicating that while operations were in progress the Division would be seconded to the command of the 31st Division.

This was a ploy to rehabilitate, in the event of the success of the operations, the commander of this Division (Trueba), former commander of the 27th Division, at the head of which he had spectacularly failed in Vedado de Zuera operations in September 1937. The position of the 31st Division, which crossed the frontier, entering French soil with its combatants virtually intact, without resisting the enemy as it had a duty and obligation to do, is common knowledge.

This manoeuvre could have been averted...While it was going on, the 31st Division, as well as the 30th, the assigned mission of which was to take other objectives complementary to the operation, achieved absolutely nothing.’

The same policy was followed with regard to dismissals. Whilst Yoldi was dismissed and his Division stood down (it was later to be reorganised under a different commander), other divisions found guilty of and having admitted to rout were reorganised with full honours: this was true of the 30th, the 44th, the 31st and the 32nd.

When the communist Trueba proved a resounding failure in the attack through the Vedado de Zuera (September 1937), he was rewarded with the award of the command of the 31st Division.

One proselytising ploy was to ‘reshuffle’ units of varying persuasions. In a report dated 6 May 1938, the officers and political delegates of the 75th Brigade complained to the CNT National Committee about the treatment meted out to their unit. The Brigade had been made up of different parties and organisations, PSOE, PCE, Izquierda Republicana, CNT and UGT and non-partisan personnel. To give some idea of its make-up, suffice to say that the Brigade’s commander was a socialist, the commanders of the first and second battalions were both communists, the commander of the third was a republican, and the chief of the fourth was a socialist. The Brigade’s origins were in Andalusia and it had a brilliant fighting record. But it was a motley unit, and that sort of unit was what the communist policy fed upon.

After the collapse of the Eastern Front, the Brigade was made the kernel of a reorganised 42nd Division, which says a lot for its performance. However, the Brigade, intended to provide the basis for remodelling, was targeted for remodelling itself: its number was changed — it became the 59th Brigade — and its political and military leadership was replaced by communist officers, even though some of these had to be promoted in order to fit the bill. The report says:

‘The replacement of the Brigade commander was done in a roundabout fashion. He was told at Division that he was being seconded to the Army Corps (the 15th); there he was told that they had not asked for him, and meanwhile the Divisional Commander turned up at Brigade, summoned a meeting of commanders and officers and introduced the Brigade’s new commander.’⁴

³ Report from the FAI Peninsular Committee, September 1938.

⁴ A similar case occurred in the 119th Brigade of the 26th Division in the summer of 1938, when Campoy, the chief of the 2nd Battalion, died in an altercation with his Commissar. This was followed by an attempt to make Domingo Belmonte, the Brigade chief, responsible, in an attempt to remove him from his position.

More evidence of partisanship. Barceló, the commander of the 141st Brigade, was accused of having retreated without due cause and of having carried out murders during the withdrawal from Aragón. The accusation had been made by his own Divisional Commander, Gancedo, who later, under pressure from his party (the PSUC), withdrew it. Be that as it may, the appropriate tribunal proceeded with the case and Barceló was jailed. Intervention by Under-Secretary Cerdón worked a miracle and the case was dropped. Barceló was a prisoner in the keeping of a CNT member by the name of Bosch Mortes, the staff commander of the 32nd Division. Whereas Barceló was released, Bosch Mortes was held on charges that were without foundation. The commander of one of the battalions of the 135th Brigade (31st Division) that had retreated in an orderly fashion into France, as so many units had in the border region, was also placed under arrest. The commander of the Brigade and the commander of the Army Corps to which he belonged, were free to walk the streets of Barcelona, even though they had performed exactly the same operation, albeit in a less orderly fashion.

The Under-Secretariat of the Land Army had also taken over the services of the General Transport Directorate and from there arranged secondments or transfers as suited the communists. In another FAI report (26 June 1938) it is alleged that 'of the 19 battalions currently in existence, 10 or 12 are in the hands of the PCE and only one or two in the hands of the libertarian tendency, even though 80 or 90 per cent of the competent personnel of said battalions belong to the CNT.' Whereas army drivers or chauffeurs earned 15 pesetas a day (infantry in the trenches got 10), Air Force equivalents earned 22, carabineer counterparts 25 and drivers from the Armaments Under-Secretariat, 30. The same sort of meddling, arbitrary treatment and privilege obtained in other corps and services, such as Artillery, Stores, etc. In the latter service one of the most incorrigible nests of corruption was based: it speculated with the people's hunger. It was also from the Under-Secretariat that the functions of the CRIM were exploited as a means of swelling the ranks of the communist units only.

The appointment of Ossorio Tafall, (a compliant pro-communist from Izquierda Republicana) as Commissar-General of the Army was followed by that of Jesús Hernández as Commissar of the Army Group in the non-Catalan territory. The latter was involved up to his neck in the arbitrary policy of dismissals, appointments and transfers.

In June 1938 there were six army corps based in Catalan territory: three from the Autonomous Ebro Grouping and three from the Army of the East. Their commanders were Modesto and Perea, respectively. Perea, a military man of upright conduct, was assisted by Commissar Ignacio Mantecón who, though a member of Izquierda Republicana, was a PCE henchman. With the exception of the Commissariat of the 10th Army Corps, held by the CNT member Molina — Gregorio Jover, formerly in command of the 28th Division, was eventually put in charge of the 10th Army Corps — the remaining commissarships with the Army Corps level were held by the PCE. Out of 18 divisions, the CNT had only two commissarships. And only five out of the 54 Brigades. A similar ratio obtained in small units and services. The position of commissar with the Autonomous Ebro Grouping was held by Delage who did not even have an official appointment.

In the wake of the disaster in the East, both trade union associations set up a recruiting commission in Barcelona for the Construction and Fortifications battalions. It eventually served as an offshoot of the General Engineering Inspectorate. The commission started off working in concert with the respective construction unions of Barcelona and the region. It strove to mobilise construction workers between the ages of 30 and 35. In Barcelona alone, the CNT managed to enlist 2,000 men, the UGT 300. It had been agreed with the Inspectorate that for every 50 men

recruited by a given union, that union would get a sergeant. All in all, the CNT was entitled to 40 such appointments. But by late June only 10 had been awarded. As for other posts, the respective construction unions of Catalonia (CNT-UGT) had signed an agreement in Valencia, on 1 July 1937, which the commissar from the General Engineering Inspectorate, Edmundo Domínguez, had signed and sealed. According to that text, for the anticipated seven battalions, the ranks were to be allocated in the following manner: commandants: CNT 4, UGT 3; captains: CNT 20, UGT 15; lieutenants: CNT 40, UGT 30. But at no time was this agreement honoured. The UGT, in cahoots with the Engineering Command, got nearly all of the officers.

What happened inside the Army was matched and outdone in the Navy and most especially in the Air Force, the latter having always been a fief of communists and Russian agents.

We referred earlier to a report from the FAI Peninsular Committee (Military Secretariat), dated 30 September 1938. In view of the important figures it contains about the matter in hand, we offer the reader the first part of that report:

‘OVERALL POSITION OF THE ARMY:- At present every aspect of the Army is in communist hands.

HIGHER WAR COUNCIL:- Although the various anti-fascist factions may be represented on it, it can be said that its work is entirely ineffective, for it meets only on an occasional basis and no matter of note is put before it, these, apparently, being the preserve of Dr. Negrín.

CENTRAL COMMAND:- This agency, though it may at first glance appear otherwise, is also in the hands of the communists. The commander, General Rojo, is wholly subject to PCE directives.

They also control its two most important sections, the Information section — to which all of the rest are subordinate — headed by Colonel Estrada, and the personnel section, headed by Díaz Tendero. They also have a huge number of junior officers ensconced in the various sections of the Central Command.

UNDER-SECRETARIAT OF THE LAND ARMY:— The personality of the serving Under-Secretary and his performance in the Command on the Aragón front are sufficiently well-known for us not to dwell upon his affiliation and the work he is doing at the head of this under-secretariat.

GENERAL INSPECTORATES:— Although the headships of the General Inspectorates are in the hands of socialist and republican personnel, we have managed to discover that the vast majority of their junior officers are communists; for instance, the General Health Inspectorate. The Inspector General is a republican. The communists have the General Secretariat and the Surgical Teams Sections, Evacuation, Information, Procurement and Personnel, as well as officers in every other section. In like manner we might point to the other General Inspectorates, which, aided by the Personnel Section of the Central Command and by the Under-Secretariat of the Land Army, manage to impose their will in every instance.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (SIM):— We need not allude to the harmful work being done by this agency which is entirely in the pocket of the PCE. At present, the Libertarian Movement holds no position of responsibility in its ranks, despite having sought one on several occasions.

OTHER SERVICES:— We ought to point out that the Air Force, Tanks and other Armoured Units are off limits to anyone outside the “party”. We should say the same of the Fleet, from which anyone not a member of the PCE is eliminated.

ARMIES:— At present there are in loyalist Spain six armies, divided up as follows: the Catalonia Group of Armies, comprising the Ebro Army and the Army of the East; and the Centre-South

Zone Group of Armies, which comprises the armies of Levante, the Centre, Andalusia and Extremadura.

CATALONIA GROUP OF ARMIES:— In command of this group is General Hernández Sarabia. We should place it on record that this general commanded the Army of Levante and thus bears direct responsibility for the collapse of that front. Instead of court-martialling him, as would be normal procedure in any country, he was not even tried; rather, he was promoted, being given the command of this group. During his period heading the Army of Levante, this general was a faithful tool in the hands of the communists.

ARMY OF THE EAST:- Its commander is Lieutenant-Colonel Perea, a professional soldier who is on excellent terms with us. This army is made up of the following: the 10th, 11th and 18th. The first of these is under the command of our comrade Gregorio Jover, while the 11th and 18th are commanded by the communists Francisco Galán and José del Barrio, respectively. The Army of the East is made up as follows:

UNITS TOTAL LIBERTARIANS COMMUNISTS etc.

Army 1 1 (sympathiser) 0

Army Corps 3 1 2

Divisions 9 1 8

Brigades 27 5 22

The libertarian commands are these: the 10th Army Corps, the 26th Division and the 119th, 120th and 121st Brigades of the 26th Division, the 146th Brigade (30th Division) and the 72nd Division's 38th Brigade.

EBRO ARMY:- Commanded by Modesto, recently promoted colonel. It is made up of the following three Army Corps: the 5th, 12th and 15th, commanded by Lister, Etelvino Vega and Tagüena, lieutenant-colonels all three, and, like Modesto, prominent members of the "party".

In this army we are in even more inferior circumstances than in the East. A breakdown of its commands gives this result.

UNITS TOTAL LIBERTARIANS COMMUNISTS etc.

Army 1 0 1

Army Corps 3 0 3

Divisions 9 0 9

Brigades 27 2 25

Up until a few days ago, we had command of the 16th Division, under comrade Mora, but the communists, jealous of our hegemony in this army, managed to have him transferred. At present negotiations designed to have this comrade restored to command of the 10th Division are proceeding well and it is hoped this will be achieved in a few short days. The two brigades we allude to above are the 16th Division's 149th Brigade and the 44th Division's 144th Brigade.

There is also an Army Corps in the process of being formed, the 24th, in which we hold a command of a Division, the 24th and of the 133rd and 143rd Brigades.

If we analyse a comparative table of commands as set out, it provides us with a dismal picture of our representation in the Catalonia Group of Armies, especially if one bears in mind that we may state without the slightest hesitation that 60 per cent of the fighting men belong to our trade union centre. An overall breakdown gives us the following:

UNITS TOTAL LIBERTARIANS COMMUNISTS etc.

Army 2 1 (sympathiser) 1

Army Corps 6 1 5

Divisions 18 1 17

Brigades 54 7 47

Let us bear in mind what we indicated earlier concerning the 24th Army Corps and the case of comrade Mora. But, in spite of everything, we believe that comment is not worth the bother.

CENTRE-SOUTH ZONE GROUP OF ARMIES:— As regards the army commands in the other zone, we find ourselves even worse off. We will attempt to discover the number of units in which the Libertarian Movement has a command. On an army basis we will not be able to give the affiliation of the commanders of units not under our control, for to date it has not been possible for us to secure control.

The Centre Zone Army Group comprises of four armies, as follows: Levante, the Centre, Andalusia and Extremadura. In command of it is General Miaja, a non-aligned individual that the communists have greatly busied themselves attaching one of their confidants to. At present, he is completely committed to them.

LEVANTE'S ARMY:- In charge of this is Colonel Menéndez. This colonel commanded the Army of Manoeuvres, which was disbanded for its poor performance. When Sarabia was transferred from command of the Army of Levante this command was awarded to Menéndez. Of him we may say the same as of General Sarabia. He is a communist and an individual liable to be shot in any country where war is waged without party politicking.

The commands in this army breakdown as follows:

UNITS TOTAL LIBERTARIANS COMMUNISTS etc.

Army 1 0 1

Army Corps 6 2 (sympathisers) 4

Divisions 20 3 17

Brigades 55 13 42

The Army Corps mentioned above are the 16th, commanded by Palacios, and the 13th, commanded by General Romero. The Divisions are the 54th, 25th and 5th, and the Brigades are the 195th, 75th, 214th, 16th, 180th, 220th, 204th, 79th, 39th, 82nd, 116th, 117th and 118th.

ARMY OF THE CENTRE: Commanded by Colonel Segismundo Casado, an individual on good terms with our organisation. Our representation here leaves much to be desired. The figures we presently possess on this army date from some time ago and it is possible that some slight variation may now exist. The breakdown is as follows:

UNITS TOTAL LIBERTARIANS COMMUNISTS etc.

Army 1 1(sympathiser) 0

Army Corps 4 1 3

Divisions 12 1 11

Brigades 45 3 42

The Army Corps referred to above is the 4th, commanded by our comrade Cipriano Mera: the Division is the 14th. We imagine that there will be others. The Brigades are the 77th, 98th and 70th and we are not in a position to tell whether there may be any more.

ARMY OF ANDALUSIA: At the head of which is Colonel Moriones, an impartial figure whom we would describe as anti-communist: however, the Army of Andalusia is an out and out fiefdom of the "party" and always has been. This army comprises two corps in which communist elements hold complete sway. The corps in question are the 9th and 23rd. Prior to the appointment of Colonel Moriones, this army was commanded by Colonel Adolfo Pradas, a pro-communist

socialist who, for campaign achievements unknown to us, has been awarded command of the Army of Extremadura. The breakdown of this army is as follows:

UNITS TOTAL LIBERTARIANS COMMUNISTS et al.

Army 1 1 neutral 0

Army Corps 2 0 2

Divisions 5 1 4

Brigades 11 1 10

The Division in question is the 20th, and the Brigade is the 147th, the erstwhile Maroto Column. We refrain from further comment.

ARMY OF EXTREMADURA: Under the command of Colonel Adolfo Pradas, a pro-communist socialist. He was removed from command of the Army of Andalusia — for incompetence, we suppose — and assigned to the Military Command of Murcia, and, come the Extremadura disaster, he was placed in command of this army, owing, we imagine, to his good relations with the “party” in Andalusia. This army’s breakdown is given below:

UNITS TOTAL LIBERTARIANS COMMUNISTS etc.

Army 1 0 1

Army Corps 3 2 (sympathisers) 1

Divisions 11 3 8

Brigades 31 9 22

The Army Corps concerned are the 6th, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Manuel Gallego, and the 8th, headed by Colonel Joaquín Pérez Salas. The Divisions are the 71st, 28th and 63rd and the Brigades the 81st, 88th, 125th, 126th, 148th, 114th, 91st and 94th.

As may be seen from a comparison and digest of all the command positions we have listed, the findings are none too encouraging for the Libertarian Movement, bearing in mind the huge number of troops it contributes to the fight against fascism.

The comparative findings are as follows:

UNITS TOTAL LIBERTARIANS COMMUNISTS etc.

Army Groups 2 0 2

Armies 6 2 sympathisers/1 neutral 6

Army Corps 2 12 libertarians/4 sympathisers 15

Divisions 70 9 61

Brigades 196 33 163

As we have already indicated, we refrain from comment. The findings that emerge from this table reflect the position with commands of combat units. There is no doubt but that our organisation possesses a huge number of junior commands scattered through nearly every unit, but we must not forget that the communists have a number far exceeding our own. To this diagram for military commands must be added the Divisional one and the one for the two Brigades of the 24th Army Corps to which we have alluded in our discussion of the Army Group of Catalonia.

CRIM: Of the 19 centres in existence, only one, No. 18 (Tarragona), is commanded by a comrade. The rest are under the command of professional soldiers or communists.

TRANSPORT BATTALIONS: Of the 18 or 20 battalions in existence at present, only two are under the command of our comrades, the 7th Road Transport battalion and the 4th Special DEA battalion. The remainder are in the hands of socialists and communists. We ought to stress that 85 per cent of the personnel of these battalions belong to the CNT.

REARGUARD BATTALIONS: Of the 20 or 23 battalions existing, we command none at present. Negotiations are underway to obtain command of some of them.

MILITARY COMMANDS: At present no comrade from our trade union or specific organisation has command of any Military Command of note, such as the ones in the cities and important towns.

COMMISSARIAT: At the moment, this remains — as it has always been — a communist fief, despite the strong backlash discernible in it against said elements.

With the appointment of Jesús Hernández as Commissar-General of the other zone, and of Castro as General Commissariat Secretary, the communists have managed to neutralise this backlash in part. The CNT has been granted the Commissariat of the Catalonia Army Group by way of compensation for the appointments of Jesús Hernández and Castro. With the appointment of the latter as General Commissariat Secretary — and with the Commissariat based in this zone — they have largely managed to neutralise the work which the Commissariat of the Army Group of Catalonia may carry out, simultaneously neutralising many of the complaints constantly reaching the Commissariat concerning the extremely partisan performance of the Commissar-General of the other zone, Jesús Hernández. We should not forget that the serving Commissar-General, Ossorio Tafall, is persona grata to the “party”.

In the Catalan zone we have managed somewhat to improve upon our representation of late, but this does not by any means mean that we have our due allocation — 33 per cent — which, by common consent, was agreed by the Commissariat.

Whereas in the Catalan zone we have achieved something with regard to the Commissariat, the same cannot be said of the central zone, where friend Hernández schemes as he deems fit, engaging in all manner of dismissals of persons not aligned with the PCE, taking the salutary precaution of replacing them with members of that party.

At present, our representation in the Commissariat — of front-line military units — does not differ much from the table of military commands which we set out earlier, which is to say, we have as few commissars as military commands. At the moment, our organisation has one commissar of an Army Group (Catalonia) while the communists have the other (Central Zone); we have one Army Commissar (Andalusia) while the communists have the commissar of the Ebro Army and the socialists the remainder.

Out of the 21 Army Corps, our organisation holds the Commissar’s position in four of them: the 10th Army Corps in the Army of the East, the 16th and 19th in the Army of Levante and 4th in the Army of the Centre. As for Divisions and Brigades, there is little difference from the military commands, as we have already noted. We have also been allocated the Commissariat of the 15th Army Corps, but the comrade who is to fill this position has not yet done so. For what reasons, we do not know. We have plenty of commissars in the Services, and scattered through various corps. Such is our position in the Commissariat..’

On the same point, we now offer the testimony of a member of the ERC, a Brigade commissar who, at the time, held the position of commissar with the 62nd Division. It is a report from Pere Puig Subinyà, forwarded to the Standing Committee of his party in December 1938.

The signatory is not a CNT sympathiser and is much less a liberal in his military views. He opines in the preamble to his report:

‘The best soldier is not the one who obeys because he understands that the order issued is just, but the one who obeys without thought, not knowing whether what he has been ordered to do is just or unjust. However crude, however inhuman, however repugnant it may be, it is high time

that we all realised that we cannot wage war (and above all, cannot win it) if we persist with the absurdity of making soldiers citizens conversant in detail with what they do and why they do it. The soldier we sorely need today is the one that knows nothing, grasps nothing, understands nothing: the automaton soldier, the mechanical soldier.'

Nevertheless, Puig Subinyà did not see his way clear to being the 'automaton' or 'machine' of the Stalinists. He says:

'We think we are making a startling revelation if we say that the army is riddled with the PCE and the PSUC. Let us see to what extent.

The Chief of the Central Command, General Rojo, is not a communist, but acts as if he was. The Commander of the First Section, Lieutenant-Colonel Díaz Tendero, is a communist and the Under-Secretary of the Land Army, Colonel Cerdón, is also a communist militant.

The Commander of the Army of the East, Lieutenant-Colonel Perea, is not a communist, but his Chief of Staff, Carvajal, is, and the latter does as he pleases. In any event, the communists' hegemony in this army is very tenuous for it is confronted by strong opposition trends.

The Ebro Army, descendent of the 5th Regiment of Madrid, is wholly in the hands of the communists.

The Catalan Zone Army Group, commanded by General Sarabia, is wholly free of any Stalinist tutelage.

The Army of Levante is commanded by General Menéndez, a fervent republican, a close and wholly committed friend of President Azaña; nonetheless, due to negligence or a failure to secure the required support from his superiors, he allows a free hand to the communists who are gradually gaining the upper hand.

The Army of the Centre, commanded by Colonel Casado, a fervent republican, has managed to overcome this proselytising zeal and it can be said that it is a military, republican army free of partisan meddling.

The Army of Extremadura was wholly in the hands of the communists. The efficacy of its performance and influence was shown when the rebel army fell upon it: the whole thing collapsed in an instant. General Rojo had no option but to stand down Colonel Burillo, whom the communists had represented to us as a matchless soldier, and place Colonel Pradas, a republican professional, in charge of this Army in defeat. The commanders of the 7th and 8th Army Corps were replaced by Lieutenant-Colonel Gallego and Colonel Joaquín Pérez Salas. Needless to say, the army promptly recovered and a good part of the terrain lost was recaptured. Now, as far as politics goes, it has the same characteristics as the Army of the Centre.

The Army of Andalusia is commanded by engineering Colonel Moriones, another republican. It is in similar circumstances to those of the Army of Levante.

The Centre-South Group of Armies is commanded by General Miaja, a communist convert. Nearly all of the headquarters staff belong to the PCE. From there they bring strong pressures to bear in order to worm their way into units which they have thus far been unable to penetrate.

The PCE and the PSUC currently have 50 per cent of the commanders, officers and commissars who abide by their watchwords.

Inside the army they have two organisations: the Education Clubs of the JSU which operate openly, and the company level cells and battalion level "*troikas*", which operate secretly. Those from the Education Clubs say that their aim is to achieve unity of all anti-fascist youth and to form an instrument in the service of the commander and commissar of each unit. They ensure that some soldiers of republican and anarchist outlook are recruited and even nominate some for

the Steering Committee, but they always set aside a majority holding for themselves. They are clearing and distribution centres for all communist propaganda.

There are many units where they have not been able to set up due to opposition from the commander or commissar.

The other, secret organisation has much broader objectives. It is a lot more dangerous and much more widespread. I would go as far as to say that, in the whole of the Catalan zone, there may only be one Division which presents serious obstacles to them. Each company cell has its secretary, whom they strive to exempt from all duty: every battalion "troika" has a general secretary who concerns himself with nothing else. In some places they even have seals. They circulate daily bulletins and, at least once a week, hold meetings, of which minutes are made. It is these that draw up the lists of who are to take courses in the schools: and also they mark down who is for "suppression".

Later, the report continues:

'Needless to say, an army so riddled with political intrigues, where the authority of its comrades is so undermined, cannot perform very well, especially if we consider that few soldiers are unaware of what we have just stated, and can see the partisanship and injustice which are continual fare, sapping morale, discipline and confidence in military commanders who put up with this state of affairs.

It is also these cells that have adopted the ploy of sending telegrams of support to the government, claiming to speak on behalf of military units, every time that a difficult situation arises for the government.

The soldier, being subject to military discipline, is not free to express opinions. It is obvious then, that to address the government on their behalf is to lay claim to a representativeness which one cannot possess...Getting soldiers to say that they endorse certain policy and certain government decrees, amounts to according them the right in future to withhold such approval ...'

A weighty tome might be put together on the proselytising activities in Army, Navy and Air Force units. We shall confine ourselves to the most striking instances. In 1937, the CNT intercepted a letter from the Commissar and 'Work Supervisor' of the 57th Mixed Brigade operating in the Southern sector of the Teruel front and intended for the PCE's Politico-Military Commission. We give the full text:

'After the Chief of Staff defected to the enemy, we had to go to Valencia to brief you on the delicate situation in which this sector was left. We agreed then to suggest to the Command that some officers be replaced, that a Division be set up, (a scheme long nurtured) and that we ensure that the sector commissar or divisional commissar appointed be one of ours.

So we had already broached the need to devise a speedy solution to these problems, not allowing the plans which anyone else had hatched regarding commands and commissars to come to fruition.

On this front, there is a Sub-Commissar General, Gil Roldán, of the CNT, and a Divisional Commissar, Tomás Sanz, also of the CNT. Enjoying excellent relations with them is another commissar, Peregrín Gurrea, a socialist from the 58th Brigade, which occupies a sector adjacent to ours.

Even before the official establishment of the Commissariat, I was attached to the Command. As the most senior Commissar, I have remained so. Gurrea had no hope of being seconded to Division. The CNT was very keen either to have a commissar of its own or to prevent any appointment going to a communist.

Thus, in the *Frigola* episode, with rare unanimity, Sanz (CNT) and Gurrea (PSOE), agreed that the blame lay with the Colonel and myself, insinuating that it was odd “that he should defect to the enemy when it seems he was active in a certain party” (i.e. the PCE), which is untrue.

Exploiting this, they nominated Gurrea for sector commissar but this was not accepted. And then, to prevent it going to a communist, Sub-Commissar Gil Roldán appointed Tomás Sanz on an interim basis, but already there is talk of the likelihood of his being given a permanent appointment one of these days.

Were that to be the case, all that it would mean would be that the PCE would be left without a post to which it has a greater entitlement than anyone else, but that is all.

However, there is a whole series of problems here. Whereas we have thus far been able, without violence, to prevent lots of atrocities in the villages, this would no longer be possible.

The Ademuz area is much coveted by the CNT. Apart from anything else, because it has fruit and livestock, which they want so that their co-operatives do not collapse.

At present we control the service corps. This implies free transport for our co-operatives hereabouts (cashing in on necessary trips, so that the fuel use can be justified). There are still some thousands of pesetas left which may be of help to our organisations. And there is nothing immoral in this, in that empty trucks on their way to perform some service are used, and we are very careful not to “step out of line”.

This work and the work of comrade Montesinos, in charge of party work in the war zone, has ensured that, despite the tremendous backwardness of this area politically, we are making headway in these little villages. With a FAI member as commissar, they would try to wreck these efforts and the CNT’s and FAI’s Area Committee in Ademuz would gain new life.

So there will be nothing for it but to defend the peasants with arms, and we cannot overlook the fact that there are CNT forces flanking us, and serious clashes with disastrous consequences would ensue. Then again, for all its shortcomings and weaknesses, this is our affair. We had help from no one. The old Defence Councillorship boycotted us and so did the Central Command and the Mobile Convoy, etc.

And now things are up and running and it was the communists who organised it. Chicanery repels us. So we must not allow any to prosper. You can appreciate what the implications may be in FAI hands, the periodical *Ofensiva* and propaganda to the troops being under FAI control, insinuating that this is the government of the counter-revolution and mediation, and organising FAI and CNT groups despite their objections to “communist propaganda” inside the various units.

It may be argued that efforts on our part can frustrate all these manoeuvres, but we take the view that it is possible to pre-empt them now, before any damage is done.

Tomás Sanz can go to the Eastern Front where, I believe, the anarchists predominate, but what we have achieved belongs to us and cannot be destroyed. It is our view that the party, through its representative in the General War Commissariat, can halt the CNT’s manoeuvre in this sector.

Do not forget that our proposals for a change of officers, already before the Central Command, has to be pressed home, unless we want to find ourselves in the same position as we are with the Commissariats. With officers of our own we can quickly transform the sector. Otherwise, our action is confined to the 57th Mixed Brigade in which, naturally, all of the efforts of these people will come to nothing.

This is important in terms of the organisation and battle-readiness of the troops and the time is coming for us to mount a serious offensive, something not feasible with some of the officers in place and several of the units along this front placed as they currently are.

And so we ask you to give these problems your especial attention.

Torre Baja, 8 June 1937.

Commissar to the 57th Brigade, Juan Antonio Toriel.

There is a round stamp in red ink from the "General War Commissariat, 57th Mixed Brigade, Commissar".

In charge of party work, Rafael Montesinos.'

To those conversant with the moral outlook, mentality, practices, reactions and jargon of the communists with the resultant exotic borrowings, doubtless of Muscovite origin, the background to the document below will not come as any surprise. It was forwarded to the Central Command by the then Political Attaché to that Command, the prominent CNT militant Miguel González Inestal who preceded it with the following letter:

'TO THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE CENTRAL COMMAND — I am pleased to remit to you herewith a copy of a report which has come into my hands regarding the incident which a short time ago could have had deadly consequences.

Said report is awash with falsehoods from top to bottom, and the author allows himself to bandy words which he uses with the extreme lavishness and thoughtlessness of a brazen provocateur.

The comrade who has been made the focus of this incident is a militant of longstanding in the CNT, and presently holds a journalistic position with the full approval of all.

Allow me to draw your attention to the tasteless epithets used whenever the CNT and its organs are mentioned in the press. These are indicative of the mentality of a thoughtless provocateur and the author of them does not deserve to hold any position in the Popular Army, or in any self-respecting government agency.

At the same time, given that I find that that reports of this nature are flooding in from everywhere, I ask you to attend to them as symptomatic of a highly suspect campaign whose motives are inadmissible and in which lack of scruple and the most rampant irresponsibility are evident.

I think it proper to ensure that all such reports be guided by a sense of responsibility or that the weight of sanctions their mischievous irresponsibility merits be felt by their authors. Otherwise, we are stampeding towards the most perilous tangle of internal struggles and frictions between the different component groups in the anti-fascist camp, which contribute effectively to the fight against fascism. Madrid, 26 July 1937.'

One Manuel Zanbruno, dubbed an anarcho-fascist in the report concerned, was none other than a CNT militant of long-standing very well known to readers of the anarcho-syndicalist press under his nom de plume of *Nobruzan* (an anagram of his real surname). Since well before the army revolt, Zanbruno had been the Madrid correspondent of *Solidaridad Obrera* and at the time was editor and front-line correspondent of the CNT's daily papers in the Centre region. He availed of his mission as correspondent in order to ferry newspapers up to the fronts, circumventing their confiscation by military commanders loyal to the 'party'. With this in mind, the full implications of the plot squalidly hatched by one of the Comintern's army commanders will be understood perfectly, and likewise there will be a perfect understanding of the colonisers' profound ignorance of the Spanish psyche, the individual involved being the commander of an International Brigade battalion, no less. This is the document:

'45th DIVISION — RESERVE BATTALION — 13 July 1937.

To the Commandant and Political Commissar of the 77th Brigade.

To the Minister of War (Second Section of the Command).

To the Chief of Internal Security (Province of Madrid).

To the Second Section of the Command of the 45th Division.

REPORT FROM THE COMMANDER OF THE RESERVE BATTALION OF THE 45th DIVISION.

Prior to coming to Carabaña there was no fascist or anarcho-Trotskyist agitation and propaganda in our Battalion. In the month of May last, while we were stationed in Carabaña, we found fascist and anarchist propaganda making its way into our barracks. As a result of my inquiries, I discovered that every day a car was coming to Carabaña bearing illegal newspapers for the purpose of smuggling these into barracks and distributing them surreptitiously among the soldiers of my battalion, through the agency of one of these, a Joseph Bosgniak. The latter was discovered conspiring in the house of Manuel Zanbruno Barrera in the dead of night along with three cavalymen.

Our first time in Carabaña we were unable to uncover this conspiracy. While we [i.e. the battalion] marched off and camped in Tortosa, Bosgniak carried on with his work of disorganisation. Growing suspicious of him, we kept him under close surveillance, so much so that he realised this and deserted.

Once back in Carabaña, No. 2 company of my battalion stationed itself in a place called Molino, about two kilometres from the town, where Manuel Zanbruno Barrera turned up again with counter-revolutionary newspapers.

Following the reappearance of these papers, I gave orders that a watch be set up to discover and arrest the persons bringing in these illegal periodicals.

What did the watch discover?

It discovered that Manuel Zanbruno Barrera drove out daily by car to Molino bringing periodicals that he distributed some time later. Some women also distributed the newspapers to the soldiers of the battalion.

He stirred up the soldiers against their officers and said that the fascists would win the war, and that we were outgunned. At the same time we found that soldiers were bellyaching without reason about poor food, and that only in No. 2 company, stationed in Molino.

Manuel Zanbruno Barrera returned at 3pm and again the counter-revolutionary newspapers appeared...The company commander sent for me, and I stayed with his company in order to trap the culprit myself.

After roughly an hour, the same car reappeared, which I halted and examined, finding a hundred anarchist newspapers and several French fascist periodicals. All were of a counter-revolutionary character. I arrested Manuel Zanbruno Barrera, handing him over to the Political Commissar and Second Bureau of the Battalion.

The Political Commissar, our Battalion's Second Bureau, the Second Bureau of the International Brigades from Albacete, the Military Commander of the Carabaña Area and the Secretary of the Carabaña PCE interrogated Zanbruno, during which interrogation I noticed that this man used undisciplined and provocative language.

On the day after the interrogation, the Carabaña militias set him free. He went to his house in Molino and turned up at No. 2 Company, brandishing a handgun. In front of all the troops, he loaded the pistol and shouted in a loud voice: "Where is Christoff, your commander, Christoff? If I see him, I'll kill him!"

All of which I venture to bring to your attention, asking you also to question Zanbruno Barrera closely and take whatever steps against him you believe appropriate.'

Proselytising work was also conducted officially through the propaganda channels of the Commissariat...newspapers, bulletins, etc. This formal work triggered the incident that was to lead to the dismissal and arrest of Ricardo Rionda, Commissar of the 26th Division.

In July 1938 several issues of a bulletin published by the Commissariat of the 11th Army Corps had been received at the headquarters of that unit. The papers contained several partisan-flavoured articles dedicated to combating, under the general rubric of 'Fascism in our ranks', the 'fascist traitors', a label applied to surviving members from the POUM. After it was dissolved by government order, many POUM fighting-men from the 29th Division had enlisted with the one-time Durruti Column, and they fought and died in the van of the struggle. Then again, whereas the 26th's film team was banned from showing films like *Three Bengal Lancers*, approved by the censor for showing in the rearguard, and featuring artistes loyal to the republican cause like Gary Cooper, dissemination of communist and 'anti-Trotskyist' writings, such as Max Rieger's *Espionage in Spain* was forced upon them.

As a result, on 11 July, the Commander and Commissar of the 26th Division dispatched the following letter to the Commander and Commissar of the 11th Army Corps.

'It has always been the practice of this Command and Commissariat to perform its duties in a sincere spirit of anti-fascist unity, ensuring at all times that the work they do cannot be described as partisan. To this end, an effort has always been made to ensure that communications, magazines, bulletins, etc., received by the troops through our offices are always inspired by this approach, regardless of the organisation or political party from which they might have originated.

Which is why, in keeping with this practice, on screening the bulletins issued daily by this Army Corps, we have found that for some days now the tenor of them has not been such as we would consider reasonable. Which is to say, that, foreswearing all partisan endeavour, they should be informed only by a language of genuine unity for the technical guidance of commanders, commissars and soldiers.

For this reason, and with a view to avoiding the possible emergence of differences between the troops of the Division, or that the bulletin should languish, undistributed, in Headquarters, we would ask you to take steps to ensure that no copies are forwarded to us until such time as the tenor used by the bulletin in question today has been amended.

Greetings from the Divisional Command, 11 July 1938, from Divisional Commander, **Ricardo Sanz**

— Commissar of the Division, **Ricardo Rionda**.'

In October 1938, while Ejarque, who had previously been merely Commissar to the 25th CNT Division, was Commissar Inspector of the 16th Army Corps, the communists were engaged in intensive proselytising activity in several units under his command. Ejarque called the divisional, brigade and auxiliary unit commissars together.

According to the minutes of the meeting, dated 1 October, Ejarque, acting as chairman, opened by explaining the reason for the meeting, citing reports he had received, backed up with documentation, to the effect that propaganda meetings were being held in unit headquarters.

At the request of the chairman commissar, the various commissars were briefed on the charges, and listened most shamefacedly to the categorical charges. According to the minutes:

'The Commissar Inspector took the floor again to state that if the matter had been put so bluntly to the meeting, this was because of specific complaints received about the propaganda drives mounted in both the 39th and 48th Divisions.

Reference was made to the meeting held in the 201st Brigade between the Commander and the Commissar and a delegation from the PCE, at which, after discussion of the furlough order issued by the commanding officer, they had agreed that only four days' leave be awarded instead of the seven that had been ordered.

The Corps Inspector went on to state that, the day before the launching of operations in this sector, there had been a meeting of the 129th Brigade to discuss, the operational orders among other things.

He stated also that the 101st Brigade's Commissar for Health had held a meeting with the group and that, at it, 21 individuals were recruited into the JSU, something not permitted in a military unit.

He also complained that he had knowledge that in the 63rd Brigade there was an individual in the Command Post who concerned himself with distributing PCE membership cards, this with the knowledge of the officer in command.

Alluding to Captain Calvo's and trooper Andreu's representing the PCE in the 39th Division, he stated that they met together very frequently on party business and thus engaged in propaganda work. His opinion was that orders and discipline could not be at the mercy of these meetings and that such meetings had to cease forthwith.

In reply to what was said by the 48th Division about desertions to the enemy camp, he agreed that people of every organisation and party had defected, but he took a much more serious view if the deserters belonged to the PCE for these had had the opportunity of discussing officers' orders and so there was greater danger of the enemy's receiving more detailed information on planned operations.

He stated that not only did the commander of the Army Corps see danger in such conduct but that, wounded in his self-esteem also, he wanted to refer the matter immediately to the standing Tribunal, but that, after a plea from him, and out of chivalry, would not do so until such time as this meeting had taken place...

It had to be borne in mind that the army acknowledged neither cells nor parties, only soldiers defending Spain's liberty, in the hope that everything needful would be done to ensure that such partisan activities would be stamped out root and branch, because, otherwise, the Commissars of the Group of Armies and the General Commissar of Land Forces would hear of it...

One of the 'feats' most highlighted by PCE propaganda, so specialised in the art of representing defeats as heroic achievements, was that of the 43rd Division, better known in those days as the 'story-book Division', the sarcastic label which the popular muse had promptly saddled it with. This Division, during the first phase of the Aragonese disaster, lost contact with the bulk of the republican army and thought it better to hole up in an area adjacent to the Vall d'Aran. In so doing, it left its own side's frontier-facing flank exposed. The enemy, without resistance, then poured in and occupied the Pyrenean massif, facilitating capture of Catalonia's hydro-electrical sources — i.e. the generating stations and dams in Pobla de Segur, Tremp, Camarasa, etc., which were of crucial economic and strategic importance. The hydro-electrical power of the area had been reckoned at 300,000 h.p.

We have seen already the part played by these dams and how the enemy was astute enough to use them to raise the river levels during the Ebro and Segre offensives. And also what the loss of these energy sources meant for industry in general and for the war industry in Catalonia.

Though this was enough to put a damper on any lyrical demagoguery, a legend of heroism that the PCE turned to good use was woven around the '43rd' and its commander in spite of it.

Here is an assessment by one of the commanders of the army operating on that front:

‘While this was going on, the 43rd Division, responsible for the collapse of the northern segment of the Eastern front, stationed itself comfortably in the Pyrenees, with its back protected by our neighbouring republic and never lifted a finger against the enemy, since the terrain was such as to allow it quite easily to hold up there quite as long as that great unit might have pleased. From which it may be deduced that this 43rd Division was neither heroic nor any such nonsense, but that a certain political party has sought to justify the record of certain commanders by singing their praises and trying to make heroes of them, when in point of fact there was nothing of the sort. Quite the opposite. Thus is the history of Spain’s war written in this day and age.’

In its short-lived existence, the ‘43rd’ performed no important feat of arms. It confined itself to ceding territory as soon as the enemy applied some pressure, until it crossed into France where it was disarmed and forced under escort to return to Spain through the free zone of Catalonia.

What few counter-attacks the Division had mounted were mounted for political ends and entrusted to non-communist troops and officers and then, as we shall see, in criminal circumstances.

Three Brigades made up the 43rd Division — the 72nd, 130th and the 102nd. In the 102nd, which was cast in the role of sacrificial lamb, there was good comradeship among its motley members who belonged to the PSOE, the CNT, the republican parties and even the PCE. The man who was Divisional Commissar, the socialist Máximo Gracia, testified to this in a report dated Barcelona 25 June 1938:

‘When, in the last days of the month of March, the Division was cut off from the remainder of the Army of the East and when Antonio Beltrán Casaña, the Commander of the 72nd Brigade, was appointed as its new commanding officer by the Commander of the 10th Army Corps, the Division changed tack completely under the all-embracing powers conferred by the Central Command and, there being no countervailing influence from the General War Commissariat, an all-out offensive was launched against the 102nd Mixed Brigade because of the presence within that unit of a perfect comradeship among its officers, commissars and soldiers, who conducted themselves as anti-fascists, heedless of party political loyalties.

Members of the PSOE, the PCE, the CNT and republican parties got on with their work with exemplary fraternity, without political squabbling of which, if any there were, I was unaware, and I must acknowledge that the work of these commissars and officers was satisfactory.

In the 72nd and 130th Brigades, due to negligence, connivance or idleness on the part of the Brigade Commissars, a drive was underway to persecute and discredit persons rejecting the PCE’s discipline and party card, involving such pressure as promising of promotions to those persons who, due to their ideological convictions, clung steadfastly to their beliefs, bravely enduring the harassment visited upon them by people who, unrestrained by the Brigade Commissars, or under their protection, engaged in naked propaganda on behalf of the PCE.’

It is self-evident that for the purposes of making naked political capital out of this stunning ‘odyssey’, the plan was to represent the 43rd Division as a 100 per cent communist unit. As this aim was hampered by the catholic nature of some of its component units, recourse was had to the ‘communisation’ of them. This task was accomplished by *Frente Rojo* and *Mundo Obrero*; it was complemented by divisional officers with their chicanery and criminal actions.

On 28 May *Frente Rojo* made much of the following communiqué:

‘GREETINGS TO OUR CENTRAL COMMITTEE: From the communist combatants of the 43rd Division’s 72nd Brigade, to the PCE Central Committee:

Dear comrades,

From this towering mountain in the Upper Pyrenees, where the 43rd Division defends the territory of Spain, we, the communists of the 72nd Brigade, availing of the visit by the comrade bearers of this present message, wish to send an affectionate revolutionary embrace to our glorious party, so worthily represented by yourselves.

There are but few words we can say. We believe we have lived up to the postulates of our party. We promise to conduct ourselves henceforth as befits militants of the party of Lenin and Stalin, as true anti-fascists ever heedful of the party's voice which at all times correctly maps out the path to follow.

Long live the PCE! Long live the Central Committee!

Moreover, in the cantonment of '*El Esquinazao*' — the nickname given to that made-to-measure 'hero', Beltrán, the commander of the 43rd Division — a purge was launched of officers not committed to what was called the 'party of the greatest and the best'.

Lest we get bogged down in the minutiae, we shall confine ourselves to summarising a report that staff of the 102nd Brigade drew up in their place of confinement in the fortress of Figueras. Among the signatories of the text were Commander Pedro Pinilla Montesinas, Staff Chief José Gómez López and various captains, lieutenants and commissars from the 102nd.

On 7 July, with the propaganda hype at its height, the 102nd Brigade was instructed by Divisional Command to launch an offensive operation against Llosat peak. The counter-attack was, militarily, suicidal, for the enemy had mustered an enormous number of troops along the front. The Brigade's Commander and Chief of Staff expressed these misgivings to the Divisional Commander, but the latter stood by his order to attack.

As anticipated, the operation turned into a catastrophe. One of the attacking battalions suffered losses of 65 per cent, including CNT Captains Serra and Gisbert who lost their lives, while Captain Pablo Ananios and other officers were gravely wounded. For his part, the enemy was not content with fending off the attack, but seized the opportunity to re-draw the lines of the 102nd Brigade and also forced the 130th backwards, the 130th being a communist fief. No mention was made in the daily dispatches of any positions lost by the 130th.

As a result of these developments, several officers from the 130th presented themselves at the 102nd's command post with an order standing-down the Brigade's Commander, Chief of Staff and Commanders of three of its battalions 'for service reasons' (por conveniencias de servicio). The latter were to present themselves at divisional command. The bearers of the order stepped into the positions vacated. The following morning, in the village of Salinas, there was consultation between the Divisional Commander and Chief of Staff, the 130th Brigade's Commander and Commissar, and the Commander, Commissar and Chief of Staff of the 72nd Brigade. It was agreed that the officers stood down from the 102nd would be summarily shot. The latter were informed of this verdict and the Divisional Commander himself advised them against presenting themselves at the command post. This version of events is fully confirmed by the 43rd Division's Commissar, Máximo Gracia, in the report mentioned before, where he makes this statement:

'The officers of the 102nd Brigade were continually being accused of negligence and of being in touch with the fascists and tremendous distrust of its members was displayed. The plan, hatched as early as the beginning of April, to take over the Brigade's commands, was carried out on the night of the 12th-13th of this month, due to the loss on the 10th of El Collado in Sahún and Las Coronas, positions that the enemy assaulted with a strong deployment of aircraft, artillery and a huge mass of infantry and in which fight, four captains, several lieutenants and all of the troops occupying several fox-holes lost their lives.'

That same day and at roughly the same hour, the Peña Montañesa was lost (under a similar onslaught), but there were no disciplinary consequences for the officers commanding the troops there, which just goes to prove the claim that the 102nd was being victimised.

Given this naked injustice, and in order to pre-empt extraordinarily serious consequences, unless the orders sent from the Chief of Staff and the Divisional Commander standing down the officers bore my signature, I am obliged to reinstate them, and I call upon the Brigade's Commissar to inform the Brigade's Commander and battalion commanders that, if the perpetration of an irreparable outrage is to be averted, they must not report at Division until such time as I so instruct them, given the odium and malicious intent against them...'

So the officers concerned resolved to make their way to France and thence on to Barcelona, which they did, presenting themselves immediately at the Ministry of Defence. They were promptly thrown into jail for alleged desertion. Alleged, because no desertion is possible unless one has failed to answer three consecutive roll calls. And there had not been time for that, as the 43rd Division had crossed into France within 24 hours of their 'desertion'.

The same informants report that, for being a CNT member, a second-lieutenant of Munitions with the 72nd Brigade had been shot in the back. Concerning this murder, Lieutenant Pedro Ucar, of the 286th Battalion asserts in a report to his organisation, the CNT, dated 4 July of the same year:

'The leader of the murder gang is Lieutenant Moisés García. This individual does not have command of any section and he personally murdered comrade Puertas, who was a second lieutenant affiliated to our organisation. He was a fine comrade, a native of Campo (Huesca) and had committed no crime unless it was to be a perfect anarchist.

Upon hearing of the incident, I sought an explanation from the Brigade's Commissar, who informed me that it was correct that he had been shot and that it had been for attempted desertion to the enemy. Not satisfied with this, of course, I made my inquiries and managed to establish that execution had been carried out inside a car. One Moisés García, boss of the "cheka", put two pistol shots into his temple, telling him "Take that, you bastard, and you won't bother us any more!" The act was perpetrated on the road from Ainsa to Bielsa and this was on 6 or 7 April. His body was buried in Lafortunada, a little village in the Bielsa valley. A reliable witness to this episode is the Company Commissar (a comrade), Augusto Sánchez, for the killer himself boasted to him of the feat.'

NOTES

Chapter Nine: The Terror on the Fronts

In the FAI Peninsular Committee's report to the Libertarian Movement plenum in October 1938, oft quoted and which we continue to quote, one can read passages like the following:

'...From the unchallengeable ascendancy which we enjoyed in the direction of the war against fascism, we have been reduced to the status of mere cannon fodder.

...We have very often heard from the lips of comrades who credit themselves with a special gift of responsibility: "If comrades only knew the truth of what is going on, prosecution of the war would be impossible." The same point was made by Frederick the Great of Prussia when he said: "If my soldiers could read, there would be no one left in the ranks".

...At this point we could readily cite instances of our comrades, bereft of the organisation's protection and hemmed in on their frontline positions, opting to accept a PCE card, which strikes us as an exceedingly serious symptom.

Our comrades get the impression that they are being ignored, that the noxious policy of the PCE is allowed a free hand. It is not a question of a handful of cases, but of thousands upon thousands of comrades who admit to being more afraid of being murdered by the competitor by their side than of perishing in the fighting with the enemy opposite.'

There is ample documentation in the Libertarian Movement's archives concerning incidents that go beyond mere propaganda, involving the party with the most sordid record in the war against fascism. What makes its designs so indescribable is that they took place on the battle-fronts, in the heart of units whose troops and officers were fighting for the people's freedom and for the independence of Spain. We will deal with kindred developments in the rearguard in the appropriate place.

The CNT and FAI respectively raised such outrages and crimes with the government, but demands for remedial action were never heeded. On 25 March 1938, the CNT National Committee's Defence Section placed before the government a series of documents specifying charges of the utmost gravity. The documents were accompanied by the following letter:

'Minister of National Defence:

In your hands we leave, in addition to what we have stated to you by word of mouth, copies of very important documents, the current and historical moment of which cannot be over-stated,

In them you will find sufficient material evidence for the strongest and severest action to be taken as a matter of urgency by your Ministry or through whatever judicial organs you may deem appropriate.

It is high time, Minister, that errors, some of them accidental and others perhaps deliberate, were ended abruptly, and that atrocities whose utter violence makes them repugnant to every honourable conscience and which furthermore fall under the remit of the Law of Criminal Jurisdiction, were eradicated without further ado.

This is all the more necessary and urgent in that, if it is criminal to place faction or personal ambition before victory, it would be infinitely more so to instil fear, rancour and hatred in those who feel themselves to be constantly under threat and who are more preoccupied with defending

their lot and their lives, placed in jeopardy by friends, than with erecting an impregnable barrier against domestic and foreign fascism.

The catalogue of deeds, for which it is hard to find the appropriate adjective, for all the richness of the Castilian dictionary, categorically demands inflexible conduct and action so that the Popular Army may, in its activities and organisations, operate in conditions of impartiality and brotherhood affording confidence and assurance to the combatant who should be guided by no other objective than attaining victory over the enemy.

For the enforcement of this fairness which we demand as a matter of urgency, the government has the means under the powers with which it presently is endowed. All that is needed is that it be understood once and for all that all citizens are of equal weight in the balance: that valour and heroism must be rewarded in equal measure, just as actions jeopardising unity and thus victory are punishable in equal measure.

Our warning is a grave one and our readiness to see justice done categorical. These incidents are of such a nature that we honestly believe we will be heard and heeded. And that thought prompts us to refrain from inflammatory behaviour which we consider harmful to the war effort.

Will we succeed in making ourselves understood? We hope so. There is still much to be done in the war. Nothing is lost. The people may yet summon up a fund of energy, vitality and the necessary wherewithal for success.

The watchword now must be for us to commit ourselves with intelligence and enthusiasm. And for that it is vital that confidence be restored, and simple justice done: no matter who falls for it or what colours he may be flying. The welfare and most sacred interests of the people demand it.

Barcelona, 25 March 1938. On behalf of the National Committee (Defence Section): **Segundo Blanco.**

The first of the complaints made to the Defence Ministry took the form of a copy of the minutes of a gathering of PCE militants at which was mooted a plan of battle against — no, not Franco's armies — but the fighting men of the Libertarian Movement. It took place in Torralba in Aragón on 15 March 1938 and the sinister confabulation was attended by the following individuals: A. Merino, Chief of Staff of the 142nd Brigade, Alejandro González, Acting Lieutenant; Pablo López Marco, Commissar to the 568th Battalion; Antonio Torregrosa, Lieutenant in command of the 3rd Company of the 565th Battalion; José Peris, Lieutenant-Commander of No. 4 Company of the 565th Battalion; Martín Galdós, Sergeant of No. 4 Company, 56th Battalion; Padilla, the PCE delegate-general in the Division; Commander Menéndez, and others.

Here is the record of the meeting:

'The sitting opened at 10.00 am with some words from the Divisional delegate, in which he set out all manner of guidelines for all sorts of struggle, and spelled out the ineluctable need in which all found themselves to strive intensely, to wage more effective propaganda, and the advisability of this propaganda's being made at all costs in the trenches themselves, etc.

Next, the delegate from Barbastro delivered his submission, saluting all the comrades there present and endorsing the words of the preceding speaker.

The floor is then vacated, being taken up by Sergeant Martín Galdós who states: "My mission is being carried out step by step. New militants join very passively, but I will recruit as many more. The party cards I received have already been distributed. I need considerably more, for the propaganda I am engaged in demands greater speed in the making and issuance of them. Now, my work cannot proceed with due intensity because the Battalion Commissar does not countenance party politicking. I know not what organisation he belongs to, for in his talks and lightning

meetings he always speaks as an anti-fascist and in the name of the republican government. For the proper operation of the 565th Battalion, I believe it to be proper and necessary that he be replaced or eliminated, for with him in place, the party will not be able to make any headway in this Battalion.”

Commander Menéndez speaks up to say: “Comrades: Having joined this Brigade only recently, there is little that I can say to you. Above all, my greetings to all present, and let me assure you that, for my part, I will do the impossible to implement and to see to implementation of our party’s watchwords. At the same time, in the unit under my command, propaganda facilities will be available at all times. As for the 565th Battalion, I can say that there our watchwords are not being implemented at present. There are too many organisations, too many anti-communist elements. The Commissar cannot continue for one day more: he must be eliminated. We cannot tolerate a Commissar of this stripe for he is a hindrance to our work. As for the Commander who has replaced me, this Carrillo, he needs transferring. He is an incompetent, a ninny. He wears gold braid, but does not deserve it. To be blunt — why beat about the bush? — he belongs to the CNT.” He concludes his contribution by urging direct action in these particulars.

The Lieutenant commanding the No. 3 Company of the 565th Battalion reports, saying: “My Company is going fine. Lots of work underway. Politically, nothing can be done. I have a Commissar in the Company with whom I get nothing done. He is an incompetent. Spends his life sleeping. On the other hand it can be said of the Battalion Commissar that he is quite active. Moves about a lot, though he always has two riflemen in his wake. This when rifles are in such short supply at the front! I believe that he will be an obstacle to the pursuit of our aims. For that reason, and in order to inject greater vim into our propaganda, he needs to be replaced.”

Lieutenant José Peris reports: “In the light of what the comrades have said, I have little to report. My Company is hard at work. During his latest visit, the Brigade Commander himself congratulated me and made me a present of a wireless set. As to the Battalion Commissar, there is little I can say. The Battalion’s lines are very stretched. He turns up frequently, gives his talks, always anti-fascist and adhering to government guidelines, so there is no party politicking.”

Chief of Staff, A. Merino, speaks up, recaps what has been said already and adds details which he has received, swearing them all in on the new plan or approach to be adopted, which he summarises thus:

1. The pressing need to step up propaganda.
2. Recruitment or induction of new militants.
3. Immediate creation of “troikas” at company level.
4. Promptest reports on the conduct of officers and commissars not aligned with the party.
5. Immediate examination of ways of transferring, replacing or eliminating those not so aligned.
6. Greater frequency of meetings.
7. Additional effort to encourage mistrust of officers and commissars not aligned with the Party.

Before concluding the meeting, he advocates the elimination formula once again, saying: “Everything you say is all well and good, but I believe I have spelled it out quite clearly. Anyone who makes a nuisance of himself, one stray bullet on a visit to the trenches and he buys it. Failing that, you walk him as far as the barbed wire, four shots and a report of desertion to the enemy and we will see that things go no further.”

Again, before leaving, they pledge themselves to the overall steps to be taken, with the Divisional delegate, adding “that tomorrow or thereafter another meeting will be held at which the Divisional Commander will attend.”

As they left, the Brigade Commissar and the Commissar from the 568th Battalion swapped ideas about the subject matter, although the Brigade Commissar had seen fit not to take part in it.

— , PCE, 17 March 1938.’

Now let us turn to the facts. In a report dated Barcelona 31 October 1938, Lieutenant Benjamín Suárez explains how Joaquín Rubio García, Commissar to No. 2 Company of the 3rd Battalion of the 144th Brigade came to be murdered. Rubio was a long time militant of the CNT. He had long served as president of the Union of the Water, Gas, Electricity and Fuel industries of Catalonia. According to the witness, Rubio’s company had attacked a certain position at 4am on 10 October. In the course of the day the position changed hands several times. The next day, following a strong counter-attack, the enemy recovered the position once and for all. Between 2pm and 3pm that day, when troops of the No. 2 company were digging in to resist near the position in question, a Battalion Commissar from the 226th Brigade and a Commandant arrived, accompanied by a detail of men. They proceeded to strip Rubio and the Company Captain Manuel González of their weapons. Also disarmed were the troops under their command, despite their protests. Within moments the Captain and the Commissar were shot out of hand.

‘They died’, writes Suárez, ‘like two genuine anti-fascists: hugging one another closely and shouting “Long live the Republic!”’

The Catalan FAI’s delegates to the Popular Front, on 24 May 1938, forwarded to the organisation’s Defence Section a complaint from the Popular Front of the Calaf district: according to the complaint, 25 lads from the 1941 call-up (from the aforementioned district) had been delivered to the command of the 124th Brigade. Apparently, they had absented themselves from their base without the required permission. Those who handed them over were assured by army officers that nothing would happen to their charges. However, three days later, one of the lads, a member of the Libertarian Youth, was shot.

Troopers Felipe Mingo Pérez and Antonio García Menéndez, both of them 20 years old and inhabitants of Madrid, had enlisted with the 66th Brigade. They went on a jaunt to the capital to see relations. Such jaunts were frequent on the fronts lying close to major cities. And it was no less commonplace for offenders to receive lenient punishment, serving a few days or weeks in the Divisional fortifications teams.

In the instance above, following the visit mentioned, the parents, receiving absolutely no news as to the whereabouts of their sons, went to the village of Colmenar de Oreja to investigate. There they learned that their sons had been shot and buried in the village of Chinchón. An attempt was made to pass off the murders as punishment ‘for attempted desertion to the enemy camp’. The alleged attempted desertions were more than dubious, if one takes the antecedents of the victims into account. Felipe Mingo Pérez’s record showed that he had joined the Perea Battalion (later the 38th Brigade) as a volunteer and seen action in the battles of Lazoya, Lazoyuela, Paredas de Buitrago, etc. In December 1936, his brother, likewise a volunteer, lost his life at the front. In January 1937 his father had applied for Felipe’s discharge from service on the grounds that he was under-age. This led to his son’s quitting the army only to re-enlist the same year. Mingo was a member to the CNT’s Catering Union and had always been distinguished by his anti-fascist mentality.

On 19 July 1936, Antonio García Menéndez had helped storm the Montaña barracks in Madrid. Up until late 1937 he had served as a volunteer with the 'Pablo Iglesias' Battalion that served in Somosierra. When his class was called up, he wound up in the 66th Brigade. He too, had lost a brother on the front. His union affiliation had been to the UGT's Billposters' Section and he was a UGT militant.

At the beginning of 1937, some soldiers belonging to the 31st Brigade availed of the Brigade's leave in El Vellón (Madrid) to spend some hours on a visit to the capital. It had been some time since they had seen their families. Upon rejoining their unit, a Captain called Trillón ordered their heads shaved and forced them to run through the village with humiliating placards slung on their backs. This humiliation aroused the indignation of the neighbourhood and some soldiers, too. Two of the latter, after protesting, were placed under arrest and sentenced to death. Execution took place in the cemetery. The men shot had belonged to the CNT and UGT respectively.

In July 1938, Miguel Arcas, Commander of the 79th Brigade, sent an important document to the Levante CNT. Arcas was a well-known Andalusian anarchist with a record as a revolutionary.

The 79th Brigade's Commissar was a communist and his party had ordered him to mount a high-pressure recruitment drive. But, given the CNT make-up of the Brigade, this commissar had problems finding a way to act upon this instruction and he made certain counter-proposals to his political bosses. This brought him into disgrace and during certain operations, which went awry for the Brigade, the commissar received news of a sinister party manoeuvre which consisted of sacrificing his life so as to be able to murder Arcas at the same time. The pretext would be the need to make a severe example at the expense of the lives of those held to be responsible for defeat.

And by sacrificing one of their own, the communists believed that this would defuse any suspicions as to the political motives behind Arcas's killing. It was the appalled commissar himself who briefed the Brigade Commander on what was being hatched and together they determined to expose the entire ploy. Arcas took it upon himself to report it to the Regional Committee of Levante.

On 13 April 1938, at the height of the retreat from Aragón, a company the 26th Division — comprising 80 soldiers under four officer — was disarmed through a ruse by Commandant Palacios, commander of the Disciplinary Battalion of the 11th Army Corps. Without the formality of a court martial, the officers were executed.

According to information from the FAI Peninsular Committee, when the 1st Battalion of the 70th Brigade found itself in difficulty, the unit was sent a company of reinforcements under the command of Captain Francisco Montes Manchón, a communist. When these troops reached their position, the Battalion Commissar of the 1st Battalion was haranguing his troops, exhorting them to resist. Captain Manchón shot him once in the back, killing him on the spot. The men of the aforementioned Battalion were, for the most part, CNT members.

One of the appendices to this same FAI Peninsular Committee report dealt with the criminal events of Turón. For some time, complaints had been coming in about the conduct of communists ensconced in the army units in Andalusia, specifically in the 23rd Army Corps. In that particular sector, it was extremely easy for persons not aligned with 'the party' to disappear.

The Intelligence Captain of the 23rd, one Bailón, is a case in point. Before the war, he had been a tax collector and his despotic manner as the executive arm of the Treasury had made him quite a few enemies. Come the war, Bailón took the precaution of enrolling in the party, managing to reach quite an elevated position. As Intelligence Captain with the 23rd Army Corps,

he was primarily engaged in eliminating anyone who might know his background and create any difficulty for him. With that in mind, he did not baulk at crime. One of his many crimes was to have ordered that the ley de fugas be applied to several prisoners from the village of Peters, among them a socialist with a lengthy record as a revolutionary. This matter was brought to the attention of Prieto, the then Defence Minister, and an angry Prieto ordered the arrest of Bailón.

The Turón incidents were graver still. One fine day, Lieutenant-Colonel Galán, Commander of the 23rd Army Corps, issued an order that every Brigade should send to Headquarters a squad or picket of tried and tested anti-fascists. This was done, whereupon these troops were issued with instructions to march on Turón, a tiny village in the Granadan Alpujarra, some 2,500 souls in size. According to their orders, their task was to eliminate a number of fascists among the detachment of political detainees in the village. This was seen to, and it emerged later that CNT soldiers, socialists and republicans had, on orders from their superiors, done to death comrades from their own organisation. At the time, the road from Turón to Murtas was under construction by the prisoners, and the bodies were buried in the bed of the road. This outrage, for which even the personnel who merely carried it out cannot evade their responsibility, could not be kept under wraps. Under pressure of public opinion, the Army of Andalusia's Standing Tribunal opened an inquiry. Initial investigations found that the orders had emanated from the 23rd Army Corps's own Commander and so, fearing a confrontation with Galán, the Tribunal backed off.

The following document is a report from the Standing Tribunal's chairman to the Inspectorate of Tribunals:

'In compliance with the specifications of your instruction No. 667, dated the 12th instant, I have the honour to report the following to the Inspectorate regarding case No. 110-1938 for due consideration by higher authority.

Early in the month of June last, in the wake of the report from the Legal Consultant's Office, his excellency the Commander of the Army passed this Tribunal a brief on the Turón detachment of political prisoners prepared by order of the Commander of the 23rd Army Corps, in view of various dispatches signed by the Military Commander of said Detachment reporting the killing by soldiers of the guard of several prisoners, 54 in all, following their attempts to escape on successive dates.

Given that the brief thus drafted gave no indications as to responsibility in respect of negligence in custody and that it did not record burials as having taken place in accordance with the law, and other procedures which have to be observed in such instances of violent death, in that this could lead to concealment of more serious offences, I agreed on 16 June, having listened to the Army Legal Prosecutor and in accordance with his considered opinion, to institute preliminary inquiries. My view was that there were no grounds for treating the events as having any greater significance until such time as their criminal character and consequent gravity had been clearly established.

From the outset, the Chief of Staff of this Army was formally briefed about the implications the events might have, if it were shown that the personnel making up this Tribunal and Legal Consultancy, within the discretion which must be observed lest the regime's enemies be given opportunity to escalate their campaign defaming our struggle. It was also mentioned by the under-signed and by other comrades that there was a need immediately to relieve the military forces making up the garrison of said detachment and the sergeants belonging to it, so that they might make statements before the Tribunal's investigating Secretary-Reporter; on so doing, they all reaffirmed statements made earlier in the presence of the officer who drew up the

briefing-paper which was the result of earlier enquiries, but they were placed under arrest and held incommunicado until the result of the exhumations and autopsy on the corpses, currently underway, might become known.

At this point in the investigation, a verbal inquiry was made by a field officer, acting on orders from the Command, the findings of which, once known, confirmed the well-grounded fears that the prisoners' deaths had not been the result of an attempted escape. Said officer drew up an affidavit at the earlier hearing and almost simultaneously, the sergeants held incommunicado asked to make new statements, and in these statements they also confirmed the criminal actions in quite a clear fashion. In the light of the outcome of these proceedings, a criminal file was opened and the corpses were exhumed, the autopsies performed and the deaths were registered with the Civil Registry.

These proceedings were handled with admirable zeal, competence and discretion by the Court Secretary-Reporter and the Investigating Delegates, lawyers Eugenio Giménez Alvarez and Eduardo Vera Sales.

Not all of the corpses could be exhumed for they were buried in the very bed of the road from Turón to Murtas, on whose construction the prisoners of the detachment had been employed.

The autopsy procedures performed produced no specific findings since the bodies were in a state of utter decomposition and in many instances it was impossible even to verify the presence of gunshot wounds.

For the purposes of identification as well as of location of the different corpses, no information was used beyond that supplied by the road works foreman, without the detainees' being interrogated.

Such tasks having been accomplished, and in view of the gravity, implications and heavy responsibilities which may follow from them, we, the Army Legal Prosecutor, the Court Secretary-Reporter and the undersigned, resolved to raise the issue with the Army Commander in that we believed that pursuit of the investigations might entail serious and substantial damage, including the major danger of the investigation's being suspended and the facts covered up or the blame shifted elsewhere. It was our view that we did our duty by investigating the facts and, having established these, taking no further action beyond making the facts and the various hypotheses known to our Military Commanders and superiors, so that they might also gauge the scale of the matter and enlighten us as to the suitability or unsuitability of our proceeding further.

It was the opinion of the Military Officer commanding this army that the matter was indeed a grave one, and that to proceed with the investigation might be a double-edged sword, and, given the stage that the indictment procedures were in, insofar as no individual had action taken against him and the acts had yet to be categorised, the government should be informed through the Minister of National Defence and he sent a sealed report to His Excellency the General Commanding the Centre-South Group of Armies.

For our part, what we might term the abnormal nature of the affair was noted in the memorandum of last month, forwarded to this Inspectorate on the 10th instant, in order to keep the Court Inspectorate duly briefed on the facts.

It only remains to note that the Turón detachment was made up of political prisoners whom the Governor of Almería had handed over to the Army for deployment on ventures works necessary and of service to the war effort.

Which is everything that I have the honour of setting before the Inspectorate with regard to Case No. 110, without prejudice to any further proceedings which the Inspectorate or higher authority may deem necessary.

Baza, 13 August 1938.'

Let us turn now to the inquiry set up following the disappearance of José Meca Cazorla, the political delegate of the Signals Company of the 141st Brigade, and of trooper Hervás Soler, of the same company. The disappearances occurred on 13 March 1938.

On 16 March 1938 the 11th Army Corps's Commissariat received a dispatch from the Commissar of the 32nd Division — to which the 141st Brigade belonged — recording the desertion of the aforementioned delegate and trooper. The dispatch from the Signals Company stated:

'that political delegate José Meca Cazorla, having left Station X7 at 14.00 hours for the Company, and trooper Hervás Soler likewise having left that station (for the same destination) and their having failed as of the time of writing to present themselves, they have been declared deserters to the enemy front.'

José Meca had been a CNT member since 18 July 1930. Hervás belonged to the POUM.

Learning of this, the then Commissar of the 11th Army Corps, Juan Molina, commissioned Signals Commissar Miguel Barrachina Querol and political delegate Alejandro Gilabert Gilabert to draw up a report. The pair travelled to Vicién (Huesca) and spoke with the 141st Brigade's Commissar, Pedro Puig. From the conversation that took place they concluded that Luis Judez Calleja, corporal of the Signals Company and trooper Jaume Trepas Solé from the same unit might furnish them with the information needed to clear up the puzzle of Meca's and Hervás's disappearances. From the same commissar they learned that trooper Trepas was in the custody of a disciplinary company of No. 4 Battalion of the 141st.

The investigators then journeyed to Station X7, located in Cuarte, there to begin taking statements. Here are the statements made by Sergeant Francisco Trenzado Abadía and troopers Dámaso Fernández Marcos and Francisco Sertrano Manzanera, telephonists who had been on duty at the Station when Meca and Hervás had been summoned from Brigade on the day of their mysterious disappearance:

'Arriving in Cuarte (Huesca) at 2 p.m. on 18 March 1938, the aforementioned sergeant and troopers appeared before us to state that the political delegate of the Signals, José Meca Cazorla, turned up in Cuarte at midday on 13 March 1938 to make an inspection and visit the site of a shelter under construction for use as a telephone exchange. At 2 p.m., while he was waiting to eat, Cazorla received a telephone call. The first call was taken by telephonist Francisco Serrano who asked who it was that the caller wanted, to which the voice on the telephone replied:

"Is your company commissar there?"

"Yes. Who's calling?"

"The Brigade Commander, and tell him to get down to Vicién by way of El Carrascal, that we're expecting him."

"But do you want to speak to him?"

"Yes. Yes."

The aforementioned telephonist put the call through to Commissar Meca, who was in Sergeant Trenzado's quarters (Signals barracks). Trenzado answered the call, whereupon the same words were repeated to him as had been said to telephonist Serrano, and he passed the telephone to Meca. Afterwards, the latter told the whole detachment:

"I must be off. They've sent for me urgently."

They asked him not to leave before having something to eat, but off he went with a little bread and beef to eat along the way. He asked for directions as to the route to follow to get to where he had been summoned, and Sergeant Trenzado pointed out the road. Meca set off immediately and the men of the detachment watched him leave, munching what they had given him, in the direction they had indicated to him. Nothing more is known of him after that time.

At roughly 3.30 p.m. the same day Sergeant Roig of the Signals Company called the detachment from Vicién. Sergeant Trenzado took the call and was told by Roig:

“Tell Hervás to present himself immediately at Company headquarters by order of the Brigade Commander.”

The sergeant passed the message on to trooper Hervás Soler and the latter set off in the direction of Vicién at 16.00 hours. Before he left, trooper Dámaso Fernández told him it would be about his application for a captaincy, that being the rank he had held in the disbanded 29th Division.

At roughly 8 p.m. on the same day, Sergeant Roig put through another telephone call to Sergeant Trenzado and said to him:

“Do you know what time it was when I told you to get Hervás to come down to the Company HQ? Because he has yet to put in an appearance. Nor has Meca showed up. We haven’t laid eyes on them.”

Sergeant Trenzado replied that the order had been received by telephone at 3.30 p.m. approximately.

These statements, having been read back to the witnesses and their having endorsed them, were signed in Cuarte (Huesca) at 2.30 p.m., 18 March 1938.

Signed and sealed: Francisco Trenzado Abadía, Dámaso Fernández and Francisco Serrano.’

From Cuarte the investigation team made their way to the command post of the 4th Battalion of the 141st Brigade to take a statement from trooper Jaume Trepát, but on finding the Battalion’s Commissar and the Brigade Commander (Eduardo Barceló) there, was informed by the latter that the whereabouts of the above trooper were not known. Nonetheless, Barceló himself would later declare that he had personally ordered Trepát to be placed under arrest ‘for distribution of the underground newspaper *La Batalla*.’ Statements continued to be taken and Pedro Suárez de Mesa, a trooper from the Signals Company said of Meca’s anti-fascist credentials that ‘he has naught but praise for him...never having remarked any political or trade union bias, and is baffled by what has happened.’ The statement made by the Company sergeant, Antoni Roig Figueres, confirms that Roig summoned trooper Hervás by telephone, but not Meca. As for Trepát, he said that Lieutenant Vergès had sent for him and that he was in Vicién at the disposition of the Command.

This is the statement by the Brigade Commander, Eduardo Barceló:

‘In the Command post of the 141st Brigade in Vicién, we took a statement from its Commander, Eduardo Barceló Llacurí, who states that on the 13th of this month he ordered the Commanding Officer of the Brigade’s Signals Company to instruct Hervás and Commissar Meca to present themselves before him. He sent for them because in the Brigade an underground newspaper by the name of *La Batalla* had been distributed and he wanted to know by whom.

He also ordered that troopers Trepát and Sergeant Judez be sent for, but only the latter pair showed up.

He suspects that the abovementioned underground newspaper was received through the agency of a woman. Some days ago, a woman by the name of Pilar Santiago Bilbao, apparently trooper Hervás’s wife, had turned up at Brigade in Vicién bearing a safe-conduct which stated: “Safe conduct to comrade Pilar Santiago Bilbao so that she may journey from Barcelona to Cuarte

(Huesca) and back. The authorities of the Republic are requested to afford her all necessary assistance. Barcelona, 21 January 1938. The General War Committee, Minister of National Defence. Commissar-General. Trooper Hervás, Signals, Cuarte.”

He says that he forbade the woman to journey to Cuarte, summoning Hervás to Vicién so that he might speak with her and this was done. But despite the banning order, Hervás and the woman left for Cuarte.

Within days, copies of *La Batalla* were being distributed. He suspects that Hervás, Trepát, Judez and Meca may have had a hand in the distribution of that newspaper.

He states that he knows nothing of what was said to Meca by telephone about travelling via El Carrascal and that they were expecting him.

He says that he has no copies of *La Batalla* because they were removed from his office.

Says also that Castillo knows something about Pilar Santiago, for he had had dinner with her.

Trooper Trepát is in the custody of a disciplinary company because of allegations that he knows the current whereabouts of political delegate Meca and trooper Hervás.

He says that Hervás must be in Barcelona. Of Commissar Meca, he says he knows nothing. A warrant for their arrest for desertion has been issued against both.

On the strength of some intercepted letters addressed to Hervás and Meca he suspects that the aforementioned individuals had some hand in the distribution of the underground newspaper *La Batalla*. Said letters having been examined, none of them makes any reference to that periodical, but there is a reference in them to “packages”.

These statements having been read back to him and he having endorsed them, they have been signed in the 141st Brigade’s command post in Vicién at 19.00 hours on 18 March 1938 by the Officer Commanding the 141st Mixed Brigade. Signed, Eduardo Barceló.’

The following statement is by Joan Puig, the 141st’s Commissar. After stating that Meca, whom he knew formally, by reason of his post, did good work and was disciplined and obedient to his superiors, he says that ‘he has heard talk’ of distribution of the underground paper *La Batalla* but has not laid eyes on a single copy.

Luis Judez, as he himself states, was called to the Brigade command on 13 March. There he met with Trepát who had likewise been sent for. They were both locked up in the quarantine bay there. Judez says that he was released when he answered in the negative Major Barceló’s question as to whether he knew the whereabouts of Meca and Hervás. He also states that he has neither seen nor heard mention of an underground publication entitled *La Batalla*.

Lieutenant Joaquim Vergès Soler, Commanding Officer of the Signals Company, states:

‘on the 13th of this month he was visited by Lieutenant Hidalgo, adjutant to the Commanding Officer of the 141st Brigade, in the company of two further individuals and was told by them to get word to Hervás, Trepát and Judez to present themselves immediately in Vicién, to report to the Brigade Commander, which order the witness carried out. He says that he did not inform Meca since Lieutenant Hidalgo had said that he had already been informed...’

Lieutenant Vergès also states that he knows nothing about any underground periodical by the name of *La Batalla*.

Lieutenant Hidalgo was adjutant to Major Eduardo Barceló. Hidalgo was adamant that he ordered the Signals Commander to brief by telephone ‘those persons whom the Brigade Commander had ordered him to inform, naming no names and pointing the finger at nobody’, which is to say ‘that the names of the persons to be telephoned had been given orally to the Signals Commander by the Brigade commander.’ He also denied the insinuation that it had been he, along

with other persons, who was waiting for José Meca in El Carrascal. So the identity of the person who telephoned to Meca, the key in the whole episode, remains a mystery.¹

In the report which the CNT National Committee's Defence Section forwarded to the government on 25 March and from which we have lifted the details and statements we have just reproduced, the following summary is enclosed:

"The pronounced sectarianism of the Brigade Commanders is all too plainly at the root of the events with which we are concerned.

Hervás Soler was appointed Commissar of the Generalitat Signals School in February 1937. He was one of those who contributed most to the organisation of that school, enjoying unquestionable prestige.

When Virgilio Llanos, a Stalinist agent, took charge of the Commissariat of the Army of the East, Hervás was ousted from this position and became a teacher of mathematics and science at the school. Later, Virgilio Llanos issued orders to the school's director that Hervás was to be retired as a teacher and called up immediately for military service and that, should he fail to report for duty immediately, he should be severely sanctioned. As a soldier, he joined the Signals and was posted to Lleida, to the so-called "*Seminario*" barracks. There he was detained for punishment, and selected for the most arduous duties.

In December 1937 he was dispatched to the Huesca front, to the Signals Company of the 141st Brigade, 32nd Division. The Commissar of that company is called Meca and is a CNT member and during his time with the unit, neither Hervás nor Trepát engaged in any political activity.

Between Commissar Meca and Brigade Commander Barceló there is a certain tension, just as there are strained relations between Meca and Hidalgo, the Carabineer Commander. One of the reasons is that only the PCE press circulates there, for *Solidaridad Obrera* is burned lest the troops read it. Commissar Meca behaves correctly towards comrades Hervás and Trepát, and likewise with the Brigade Commissar who belongs to the ERC, although the fact is that it is the PCE and the PSUC that rule the roost in the Brigade, through the Brigade's Commanding Officer.

At a meeting of PSUC and PCE personnel it was resolved that all POUM and CNT personnel of any note be eliminated physically. Some days later, on 15 or 16 March 1938, in the evening, Meca and the Signals Company Commissar and troopers Hervás, Jaume Trepát and a corporal from the POUM, were summoned by telephone by the Brigade Commanding Officer. They were told what route to follow (on some pretext, assuredly) in order to present themselves urgently in Vicién, where the 141st Brigade Headquarters is located, before Commander Barceló. Hervás, Trepát and the corporal mentioned were based in the Cuarte sector. The route they were to take was the El Carrascal Road, which passes by the Pebredó castle. Suspecting something untoward, for all the reasons cited, the four comrades agreed not to travel together. Hervás and Commissar Meca set off first, a kilometre behind them came Trepát, alone, because at the time the other individual was not there. As he travelled along the El Carrascal road which runs from Pebredó castle to the Zaragoza Road to Huesca, Trepát who was lagging behind, heard some automatic pistol fire and fearing that his suspicions would be confirmed, instead of carrying on along the road, switched to a route that took him to Vicién, where he reported to Barceló. Barceló, surprised to see him, ordered that he be taken away to a disciplinary battalion.

¹ This account, including the dates and names, was later corroborated by Miguel Barrachina Querol, responsible at the time for court orders, and Alejandro Gilabert Gilabert, who was involved in this particular case, in an interview with the author on 2 October 1969.

What Trepas may have to say is still unknown. All that is known is that Trepas vanished, meeting the same fate as the others.

The day after these events, the Brigade's dispatches said: "Signals Company Commissar Meca and trooper Hervás have gone missing. It is supposed that they have defected to the enemy or deserted the front."

The next day the dispatches said: "Trooper Jaume Trepas has gone missing. It is supposed that he has gone over to the enemy or deserted the front."

It seems that, as a result of the intervention of the Commissar-General, comrade Crescenciano Bilbao, a Commissar, has been arrested and, it seems, was one of the perpetrators of the murder. The Commissar-General, while on the Eastern Front, got wind of what had happened, went to the scene in person and initiated an investigation, the findings of which are not known to us.

Barcelona, 25 March 1938.'

In the preceding chapter we mentioned the shortcomings of the military health services as a factor in demoralisation. With great frequency, those shortcomings turned into criminality. The propaganda campaign did not respect sacred humanitarian precincts such as clinics and field hospitals and led to the exploitation of the situation by disaffected persons who had wormed their way into the Army Health Corps.

In the CNT archives there is a series of reports in which several post-holders affiliated to the CNT denounce criminal aspects of the propaganda campaign as it affected their organisation. The memorandum on "Communist Policy in Health" comprises several documents. One of these, dated 8 July 1938, was signed by the Commissar of the 120th Brigade (26th Division) and in it, the claim is made that in the field hospitals in the rear, the wounded were left without medical attention for three or four days. There were complaints of instances of wounds being improperly closed and of 'patients discharged in worse condition than when they were admitted'. There is also talk of improbable deaths that hint at a criminal political intent:

'But the worst thing does not stop there: the worst thing is the huge number of men who perish from neglect, incompetence or bad faith on the part of the practitioners. We have seen shameful cases, utterly incomprehensible in terms of their attendant circumstances, which raise fears of deliberate and planned sabotage or a concern to undermine the combatants' morale. No matter how much it may be explained to us, we will never succeed in understanding how the man who was Commander of the 121st Brigade, Major Gil Montes, came to die: however much may be said to us, we cannot come up with an explanation of how the man who was a battalion commander with the 119th Brigade, comrade Agustín Solé, came to die. Then there is the puzzle surrounding the deaths of the man who was Commander of the 30th Division, Major Don Nicanor Felipe, or of Corporal Joaquín Ballester Alcarria, who belonged to the 479th Battalion of this Brigade, or of Lieutenant Francisco Pérez Rodríguez, who was attached to the 477th Battalion of this unit, or of so many others whom for want of specific detail may not be named.'²

It goes on to focus upon the case of Joaquín Ballester Alcarria who died in No. 3 Clinic, Barcelona, as a result, it was said, of tetanus. His death occurred after an injection given to him when he was discharged or on the point of leaving the hospital. As for Lieutenant Francisco Pérez

² Gil Montes was wounded in either an air raid or machine gun attack by enemy planes near Balaguer (Lleida) in the spring of 1938. Agustín Solà, Commissar (not Commander) of the 2nd Battalion of the 119th, was wounded during operations in Tremp in the May of the same year. The author, who was involved in both actions, was able to testify that the injuries to Solà in particular were not very serious and that these deaths resulted in a painful stupor when their fates became known.

Rodríguez, he was wounded during the capture of San Romá de Abella on 24 May. He was taken from the battlefield to the Brigade First Aid and Triage Centre where he was given treatment and diagnosed as having ‘a gunshot wound in the forearm and right thigh’. From 26 May to 20 July he remained in Terrasa hospital, Clinic No. 5, and after that died of ‘acute anaemia’.

The document in question continued:

‘Were we studying less technical and more comprehensible therapeutic terminology, we would find that a patient can die of acute anaemia: first when, the wounded man’s having suffered a tremendous loss of blood, it proved impossible to give him a transfusion to make good this loss; second, when the wounded man, even after receiving a transfusion, proves unable to recover from the loss of blood; third, when the wounded man has a sizeable bowel wound and when, due to the seriousness of the injury or the remoteness of the surgical team, it is not possible to afford him the assistance such an injury merits.

In the case of the lieutenant (a reference to Lieutenant Francisco Pérez Rodríguez) the three circumstances outlined can be discounted: first because, whilst it is true that he did lose a lot of blood, it is no less true that the hospital doctors had more than enough time to give him a blood transfusion and avert his death by successfully remedying the patient’s anaemic condition; second, because, needless to say, the hypothesis that the wounded man could not have recovered from the loss of blood, even after a transfusion had been effected, will not wash, since he would not have lasted 24 days - at most, he would have died after two or three days; third, far from his having lacked assistance on account of distance from the surgical team, he received prompt treatment from the battalion doctor, then at the first-aid post and finally from the surgical team by whom he was tended, departing from there for Terrasa Hospital well on the road to recovery.

If to all this we add that suture injuries either cause rapid death or heal it follows that if the injuries in the forearms and thigh, especially if caused by a firearm, rather than by shrapnel, are not likely as to kill anyone we can assert that in Lieutenant Pérez’s case there was neither negligence, bad faith, incompetence or whatever. The fact is that the lieutenant died mysteriously, of “acute anaemia”, according to the doctors from the Hospital. It would be interesting to verify this by, if need be, submitting all this for examination by a “physician of trust” since they would have more expert knowledge than the undersigned, and might adduce further details, unless concerned with protecting his colleagues, the doctors from the Terrasa Hospital.’

In another document from the same memorandum, the CNT’s National Health and Hygiene Federation itemises the political affiliations of the most highly-placed officers of the General Health Inspectorate.

Only in two sections do two members of this Federation figure in a junior capacity.

Here is a breakdown of the Inspectorate and its superiors’ political loyalties:

Inspection ERC

Administration ERC

Auditing ERC

‘Z’ Services (Anti-Gas) ERC

General Secretary ERC

Surgical Teams PSUC

Procurement Section PSUC

Personnel Section PSUC

Information Section PSUC

Pharmacy Section PSUC

Evacuation Section PSUC
Propaganda and Press Section UGT
Hygiene and Prophylaxis Section UGT
Director, Central Depot Not known
Ophthalmology Not known
Third Practitioners' Centre Not known

On 18 July, the Barcelona Health and Hygiene Union made this reply to a note from the FAI's Peninsular Committee:

'In reply to your enquiry *à propos* of the manner in which the Military Hospitals are performing, we now offer you what figures we have in our possession, having already forwarded these to the higher organisms of the CNT.

In the Military Hospitals there is a festering problem. It is this: there is the basest and most despicable politicking and the ill and wounded comrades are victimised by it. Their pain and injuries are assessed in terms of, and their well being as patients conditioned by, their political affiliation.

In the army health units, communist personnel, a source of discord, have ensconced themselves absolutely.

The injured are treated whenever the doctors like and, if they are out of sympathy with the dominant staff faction in the hospital, they go untreated. Our union delegates from the Military Hospital based in Vallcarca have notified us of some truly monstrous cases. Patients who received treatment neither on one day nor the next, and whose wounds turned gangrenous, with the injured limb turning maggoty. In this hospital there is a thriving communist cell, headed by Doctor Linares, one of the 'brave souls' who, at the time of the Aragón offensive, abandoned his staff and patients and hot-footed it to Barcelona.

The Vallcarca case is typical of absolutely every Military Hospital. The doctor, the medic, the nurse and the director, unless they are communists, are subjected to all manner of humiliation and bullying and, what is worse, are also liable to be caught up in a squalid snare that will lay them low in the ditches of Montjuïc. In those establishments where the administration and management are in our hands, as in Sant Gervasi, say, the communist cell mounts a slander and defamation campaign to turn the patients and staff against our comrades.

Comrades of ours occupying positions of responsibility in Military Health are few in number and are to all intents surrounded by spies who monitor their every move and make life impossible for them.

There is a Circular Order from the Supreme Health Headquarters, which appeared on 30 April, under which male personnel are mobilised, union delegates done away with and the coup de grâce delivered to the CNT, that being the sole objective of this Circular Order.

Medical panels are another of the most picturesque instances conceivable...Had we the courage to intrude into the nests of these fascists who pass themselves off as 'Reds', we would see truly wonderful things. Wounded who are sound and cured, yet not discharged because they are "party" members. Poor devils from the CNT or some other trade union of political organisation shipped off to the front, though not cured. All the communist militants are cardiac cases, tuberculosis cases, etc., etc. Comrade Doctor Vallina is one of the doctors serving on the Sant Gervasi Hospital Tribunal. This fine comrade could furnish us with many telling examples of this.

As regards this union, it stands ready to work as the circumstances may require, provided that it receives the backing of the organisation as a whole, which we will bring to your notice for further action.

Barcelona, 18 July 1938.

On behalf of the Branch — **J. Díaz**; Military Delegate

— **G. García**: on behalf of the Central Council, **Antonio Pellicer**.'

This memorandum closes with a report from the Commissar Delegate from the Army of the Centre (Nistral) addressed to the Commissar Delegate of the General Health Inspectorate. We cite it in order to prove that what was going on in Catalonia was also happening across the entire territory loyal to the Republic.

Nistral informs his superior of his differences of opinion with the Army of the Centre's director of Health Services, a Doctor Estelles, and takes issue with the latter's proposed confirmation of junior personnel. Commissar and director are agreed upon undoing the dominance of communist personnel, but whereas the latter is content to insert in the list for confirmation some names of persons affiliated to the various unrepresented parties and organisations (two socialists, two UGT people, two republicans, and one CNT member alongside 10 communists), the Commissar, taking a more radical line, proposes to eliminate the communist personnel completely. The reasoning upon which he bases this proposal is as follows:

'When Doctor Planelles gave up the Directorship of the Health Services of this Army and Doctor Estelles took it over, he found that the offices of the Centre were awash with junior civilian personnel wholly, or for the most part, members of the PCE, to which the aforementioned Doctor Planelles used to belong and still does. Said personnel, organised as a cell, met frequently at the Centre and made decisions which they aimed to put into effect and this they very often succeeded in doing by overriding the determinations and views of the Director of Services himself.

This is shown by the fact that, on taking charge of this Commissariat, the undersigned had to draw up an exposé of the existence and meetings of the aforementioned cell, something fully demonstrated, and in which particular a Military Tribunal is even now acting. Featured in said Organisation and present at these meetings were leading military figures such as Health Commanders Ricardo Fernández Catalina, head of the Hospitals Section, and Adolfo Fernández Gómez, Captains José Manuel Fernández Gómez and Daniel Acija Mestre and others, not counting the junior personnel mentioned.

Lieutenant and doctor's assistant Luis Prieto who for reasons unknown to me has been assigned to this Directorate, serving with the Evacuation Section as a simple auxiliary, and typist Trinidad Azna Mas, who serves as secretary, operate as the leaders of the aforementioned cell.'

For those who have not experienced at first hand the intimacies of the Spanish conflict, the charges emanating from the bulk of these documents will seem exaggerated. There is no exaggeration if one remembers that the largest contingent of 'moles' (*emboscados*) was found precisely among technical and health personnel. To some extent, the revolution conjured up military strategists through application and intuition: but it could not improvise physicians and surgeons, much less dispense with those who had practised the profession in the days when the bourgeoisie was in the ascendant. And with honourable exceptions, the medical profession in Spain had always been distinguished by a superficial conservatism. Very many of these people were of a disaffected outlook that was proverbial on the fronts and in the rearguard. And, regrettably, this opinion on the people's part was not the product of excessive zeal. Party propaganda, the hunt for a 'distinguished' adherent offered the best protection for all sorts of dubious individuals. And it is

understandable that such disaffected persons or enemy agents should gladly have abided by the letter of communism's sinister watchwords against its political adversaries, maybe because this was the best way of serving Franco and simultaneously disposing of their enemies. However, we cannot disregard evidence that in Army Health, in those centres well away from the front lines especially, there lurked all the sheltered and potential deserter types always eager to spare themselves any discomfort. And the latter, no less than the former, went along with all the chicanery and criminal activity in order to hold on to their privileged positions.

Let us now turn to the case of the 153rd Brigade. This was the CNT unit upon which the enemies of the Libertarian Movement expended their greatest expansionist endeavours. Part of its record we already know about. Suffice it to recall that, formed in Catalonia, in the early days of the military uprising, it participated, under the name of the 'Tierra y Libertad Column', in the most intense stages of the battle of Madrid. It became the 153rd Brigade at the time of the militarisation of the militias, and among its most outstanding battle honours was the capture of Belchite in 1937 and the famed Segre operation in August 1938.

Following the 12th Army Corps's failure on the South-Ebro Front in March 1938, the 153rd came to be subordinated successively to various Communist Divisional Commanders, received brutal treatment and was targeted for disintegrating manoeuvres designed to eradicate the long-standing anarchist influence in it.

After a series of secondments, the Brigade was assigned to the 30th Division, whose Commander, a communist, had been a stalwart of the 11th Army Corps (Francisco Galán). The Command of the Brigade and various officer positions were successively 'captured' through a series of manoeuvres. The natural reaction against this 'take-over' policy campaign gave rise to a series of incidents, as we shall relate.

With understandable indignation, the anarchist combatants railed against the siege laid to their beloved unit: especially when some of their comrades mysteriously went missing, a sure sign that they had been murdered. The last Commander (José María Teresa) was stood down so that a communist, Felix Arano, whose only recommendation was his uncontrollable fondness for alcohol, might be 'installed' in his place. The 153rd Brigade's best commissars were posted elsewhere 'on orders from above', or else were deposed and charges preferred against them on the most trivial counts. Leal and Teresa were removed for different reasons. Leal was the hero of the aforementioned Segre operation in which he had been seriously wounded. Teresa, the acting Commander, was replaced on 31 May on the orders of the 11th Army Corps.

On 4 June, the Committee of Liaison with the Eastern Front reported to the CNT National Committee's Defence Section that:

'All the comrades are in high dudgeon with the organisation: they reproach us for the trick which they imagine us to have played on them and accuse us of lack of enthusiasm, since the Brigade commander — Teresa — has been stood down in the most arbitrary fashion.'

The 11th Army Corps constantly allocated communist personnel of all ranks to the Brigade and even troops of a certain category. The latter arrived bearing certain instructions and were excused all military service.

In October, the staff of the 153rd was placed under arrest. That very day, Commander Leal had assumed acting command of the Brigade: but he was displaced within 24 hours on the orders of Captain Felipe Frechilla who arrived accompanied with an entire staff assigned to him by General Sarabia. That same day, Division asked for a list of 12 officers due to be posted to the Ebro front. At Division four names belonging to the PCE were stricken from the list, with the result that,

save for one UGT member, all of the names put forward were CNT affiliates. Something similar happened to the 146th Brigade, another unit of the 30th Division. Then again, disbandment of the Depot Company (Auxiliary Services) was also ordered, the object being to move soldiers from the CNT up into the firing lines. The Paymaster and Battalion office staff were likewise sent to the trenches and the adjutant lieutenants were dismissed. Needless to say, these had to be replaced by newcomers, PCE newcomers.

All of these abuses were disclosed to the Defence Section by a group of libertarian militants from the Brigade and they demanded a speedy solution from the Section. The report urged at the end:

‘It goes without saying that this solution has to be reached in a time so short that two days may be deemed too long, for only those who live it can know the situation and in this instance we shall employ the means at our own disposal in our self-defence.’

The author can bear out this state of over-excitement, the prelude to inevitable tragedy. As lieutenant-adjutant with the 119th Brigade at the end of summer 1938 in our headquarters in Alós de Balaguer, I received several officers from the 153rd, some of them already named in this account. In accordance with the 119th’s commander, Domingo Belmonte Clarés, I listened to the envoys who set out the ghastly position of their unit and the harassment visited upon them.

We offered them all our moral support and also, if the need arose, our material assistance and we agreed to offer a haven within our Brigade’s jurisdiction to those comrades from the 153rd whose freedom or personal safety was in jeopardy. This protection we extended despite pressures and threats from the military commanders of the 11th Army Corps. And through our clandestine divisional liaison and defence organisation, the ‘Durruti Cultural Group’, we made approaches to the higher committees of the CNT and the FAI, conveying to them our firm resolve to harbour our maltreated comrades and in so doing to resort to force of arms should no other remedy be available.

Testimony to this attitude is the document below, taken from the memorandum and serving as the basis for our narrative:

“THE “DURRUTI CULTURAL GROUP” AND THE ANARCHIST GROUP OF THE 26th DIVISION TO THE CNT.

Dear comrades,

This present communication has been prompted by the grave irregularities occurring in some units of our army where, to quite an extent, there are comrades who are subject to officers inimical to anarchism and to the CNT.

Comrades’ natural reluctance to conform to military discipline is not the issue here. That sort of adaptation has been implemented on the front more effectively than the political adaptation in the rearguard.

The case of the 153rd Mixed Brigade is the closest to us in that the Brigade belongs to the same Army Corps. The despotism of its officers (drawn from the worst elements), the shameless activity of the communists, has in this instance gone to an intolerable extreme. It is a matter of life or death for many comrades, active militants of our movement. The comrades from that great unit have put their complaints to the organisation...

The latest reports in our possession, the result of direct liaison maintained between those comrades and these groups, could not be more serious. So extreme has the tension become that everything augurs a conflict of which the consequences would fall upon the organisation as a whole.

In view of this, the signs point to the existence of a conspiracy against the Confederation and against anarchism to exterminate both of these. The comrades of the 153rd are ready to sell their lives dearly as befits the manly spirit of our militants.

The cause of the comrades from the 153rd Brigade is our cause: the cause of libertarians from the 26th Division. We must warn you that the blood brotherhood of anarchists cannot bear the crimes which Lenin's bastard offspring try to perpetrate, and so we serve notice of the possibility that our patience will be exhausted should that which needs to be prevented in the interests of everyone in fact befall our comrades from the 153rd.

The object of this document is to notify you of the probable and very serious outcomes and the logical consequences of these, which we all, at the front and in the rear, have a sacred duty to prevent at all costs, before it is too late.

We remain yours, in the service of the libertarian cause,
26th Division. In the field, 17 October 1938.'

Two reports signed by an officer of the Executive Committee of the Libertarian Movement of Catalonia (22 and 24 November) can serve as tailpiece to our narrative. In them there is notification, firstly, of the dismissal and jailing of the Commander and Commissar of the 153rd Brigade on charges of blatant corruption. But the cure was worse than the disease. To replace them, two new individuals from the 'party' were sent in, two Captains, to take over as Brigade Commander and Chief of Staff respectively. They also sent in, as Commissar, a socialist (Rigabert) 'who, it seems', the report notes, 'was not held in very high regard at Division and of whom "party" personnel took a dim view.'

The first pair appointed immediately spared no effort to remove from office what few adversaries still remained in such posts, and to assign loyal elements to fill the vacancies thus created. They ousted the unconfirmed officers who did not enjoy their political trust. These were dispatched to the battalions.

Against this backdrop came the death of that socialist Commissar, who turned up in a canal, riddled with bullets. Was this murder part of a premeditated plan of provocation? Or was it an error in execution by possible vengeance-seekers? Both hypotheses can be argued. The truth is that this incident triggered a ferocious crackdown on the Brigade's libertarians, in which even the inquisitorial machinery of the SIM participated. There were countless arrests of commanders, officers and troops and those arrested included Commander Leal.

The 24 November report states:

'Following the death of the commissar and the arrests of comrades who held the posts of commanders and officers, the task that we set ourselves was to curtail the impact of the crackdown in the Brigade, trying to fill the minds of those left behind with the required tranquillity so as to prevent things continuing along the course embarked upon, with the manifest damage that was being done to the Brigade, the comrades and the anti-fascist cause.'

The officer of the Executive Committee of Catalonia, and the vice-secretary of the Defence Section of the CNT National Committee used their powers of persuasion on the acting commanders of the 153rd and with its commanders, officers and troops:

'in an effort to calm the tempers (of the latter) given that this Battalion (No. 2) was the one most directly affected, since the conduct of Commandant Leal, whether as commander or as comrade, was admirable...'

Once favourable undertakings had been obtained, negotiations were entered into to secure the appointment of a CNT commissar to the Brigade, one who would have the moral stature needed

to tackle such a delicate situation with success. This solution was put to the Headquarters of the Army Group and there the name of Josep Mateu Cusidó came up. The Commissar-General issued an order that the appointment would be made the next day. The informant went on to say:

‘I returned to Barcelona confident that I had achieved something of benefit to the Brigade, its members and the organisation. I delivered a report to that effect to the latest meeting of the Executive Committee.’

But then an improbable situation came about. Mateu, expected to arrive at the Brigade at any moment, failed to show up. An explanation was sought from the Commissar-General (Gil Roldán) and the latter turned to Mantecón, Commissar with the 11th Army Corps, to give him ‘a categorical order that, the next day, without fail, Mateu Cusidó was to take charge of the Brigade.’ It was later formally reported that this order had been carried out, which was untrue. And so, over several days thereafter, reality gave the lie to all of the promises. The contest between the Commissar-General and his subordinate, Mantecón, was finally resolved in the latter’s favour: Mateu was not to take over at the 153rd. The author of the report eventually concedes that the 30th Division’s Commissar Mantecón and army commander Galán bear the responsibility for the collapse of the deal. The report concludes:

‘The current position of the Brigade is as abnormal as can be. Of all the officers it had, only two remain: all the rest have been posted to other brigades and divisions and “party” commanders, officers and commissars have been brought in to take their place.

I must register the despair prevailing among the soldiers, for they do not see that either their liberty or their lives are guaranteed. This evil must be remedied as a matter of urgency. Further delaying before tackling this problem would carry grave dangers.’

Serious military developments which were proceeding apace at the time drew a pious veil over the tragic lot of the 153rd Brigade. The communists were scarcely to have time to enjoy their latest conquest. vengeance-seekers? Both hypotheses can be argued. The truth is that this incident triggered a ferocious crackdown on the Brigade’s libertarians, in which even the inquisitorial machinery of the SIM participated. There were countless arrests of commanders, officers and troops and those arrested included Commander Leal.

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NOTES

Chapter Ten: The Terror in the Rearguard

On 15 August 1937, at the height of the pro-communist Negrín-Prieto government crackdown on the POUM, the Libertarian Movement, the Council of Aragón and its collectives, a decree was issued establishing the Military Investigation Service, better known by its chilling acronym, the SIM. The implications of the decree went unnoticed by many, possibly even by the person who promulgated it. In wartime there is nothing more natural than activation of a counter-espionage military agency especially when there had been such instances of treachery as the handing-over of the plans for the defence of Bilbao. But no one dreamed that a counter-espionage agency could so promptly degenerate into a mighty political tool of one party for use against the rest.

Nonetheless, this was the case with the SIM, which turned from a government agency into the Spanish subsidiary of the Soviet GPU. For it is beyond question that the initiative originated with the 'Russian advisors.'

By a curious paradox, the SIM was established under a decree by the Defence Minister, Prieto, who, for all his tortuous political opportunism, was not a devotee of the communists' watch-words.

In time of war or revolution, all states suffer from counter-revolutionary insomnia and this has always impelled them to establish police systems endowed with exceptional powers. The powers awarded to the SIM, and the ones that it arrogated to itself, are no exceptions to this rule. Its agents came to enjoy power to arrest any serviceman or civilian, however elevated his rank, with scarcely a formality. Services of this sort were strictly secret.

The same thing happened with the SIM as with the Commissariat, which, created to raise troops' morale and offer psychological comfort to the soldier, automatically degenerated into a weapon for bullying and political terror. Like the Commissariat, the SIM too was of Soviet manufacture. The PCE managed to derive immense profit from it. This is inexplicable, unless one remembers that this party was privy to the secret mission assigned to such a mysterious agency.

Once the agency was in existence, communist militants were instructed to capture control of it. This plan was carried out; hence the pernicious evolution of the SIM from the earliest stages of its operation. It was visibly jettisoning its external function in favour of concentration on its internal one.

By the end of 1938, a dense police network embraced the totality of the battalions right up to the Army Corps. It batted on also to the parties and trade union organisations and their best-known militants. The SIM monitored their slightest movements. Its agents enjoyed tremendous autonomy of action and operated on a plane higher than current policy. It had immense funding and its cruel methods grew as time went by.

Ostensibly, the SIM was answerable to the Defence Ministry: in practice, it served the PCE, for it was the 'party' that supplied its cadres. To this end it relied upon newcomers, most of them ambitious, who were devoid of even the most elementary training. A party that expanded under the star of the war, a party without tradition and without militants of stature had nothing else to offer. One curious thing about which we may be certain is that the SIM boss in the 119th

Brigade (26th Division) was scarcely 19 years old. A short time before his official appointment, he had joined the unit as a simple recruit from the reinforcements mobilised in 1938. From a mere rifleman with one of the companies of the 3rd Battalion, he was abruptly hoisted into such an elevated position, equivalent and to all intents superior to the position of Brigade Commander.

The mentality that such fortune hunters brought with them inevitably left a mark of unmistakable incompetence and sadism on an institution that many of them believed was destined for much greater things. In most instances, the SIM concentrated on the political enemy in preference to the fascist enemy.

From the military viewpoint, it had established jurisdictions, which corresponded to the demarcations of the armies. There was a visible agent in the headquarters. This agent personally appointed his secret collaborators and these operated in the smaller units and services. These agents secretly reported back to the visible boss and reported on the commanders, officers and men whose activities they had been instructed to monitor. Surveillance was close and included investigation of the military and political background of the person under surveillance. In the event of his being suspect, his conversations were spied upon and his correspondence gone over with a fine-tooth comb. Likewise a check was kept on his acquaintances and if need be he was arrested without formality or warrant. In units commanded by communist officers physical elimination was arranged with equal alacrity.

Similar methods were employed in the rearguard. In government offices and in certain ministries, secret agents, supervised by a visible agent, performed their duties as civil servants, the best cover to accomplish their mission. And such agents were not always recruited from among persons sympathetic to anti-fascism, but rather, on many occasions, individuals of dubious antecedents were used and, in the final analysis, it was they who showed greatest diligence in their work. The object of this was productivity: a dangerous game, despite all the precautions, for it was demonstrable later on, when the war was over, that the internal workings of the SIM were better known to the Francoists than to the anti-Francoists themselves, many of whom suffered its cruelty. The Francoists have been able to demonstrate that, especially in the latter half of 1938, the SIM was largely 'packed' with their people. This was a perfectly understandable phenomenon, for, from the spring of that year onwards, after the loss of Teruel and in the wake of the Aragón disaster, the outcome of the war was no longer a secret for many people, especially those who had never harboured any readiness to make sacrifices. Bureaucratic and police circles in the rearguard, where they were able to shirk the thankless task of military service, were teeming with such people. And those who could not hope to save their miserable lives by escaping abroad — at the cost of their gold — had looked ahead and anticipated possible defeat by affording the enemy some much-coveted services.

In preceding chapters, we have already alluded to the communist *chekas*. These *chekas* and the SIM came to be one and the same. Faithful to our task of historical narration, we now face the sad task of expanding upon this dismal chapter.

Undoubtedly, the SIM was set up to provide a veneer of juridical legality, albeit beyond the margins of the machinery of justice, for the criminal intentions of the PCE. The secret nature of counter-espionage activities supplied the SIM's inventors and high-ranking officials with the coveted *carte blanche* that enabled them to act without a thought for the consequences. The rules laid down for the SIM by the decree of 5 August were too broad. There was, anyway, an internal regulation, top secret and unknown even to many of the agents themselves.

The SIM was governed by a Supreme Headquarters to which the following Sections were answerable: first, Foreign Affairs; second, Air Force; third, Land Forces; fourth, Navy; fifth, Public Works; sixth, Armaments; seventh, Economic Affairs; eighth, Justice; ninth, Transport and Communications; tenth, Public Instruction and Entertainment; eleventh, Political Parties and Trade Union Organisations; twelfth, Civilian Population; and thirteenth, Special Brigade.

The SIM divided up the loyalist zone into several precincts overseen by Supreme Headquarters. Each precinct was subdivided into the following three sectors. The Supreme Commander was surrounded by numerous special secretaries such as:

The general secretary, with his own bureaucratic staff, charged with overseeing general registration, records, correspondence, etc.

A chief of technical services in charge of the 13 branches.

Thirteen section chiefs. Each one handling his respective section in his precinct.

A head of internal services: funds, provisions, personnel, material and transportation.

A head of legal services: prisons, tribunals, detainees, etc.

Each section was sub-divided in turn into various offices: ciphers, ordnance survey, photography, radio etc. The title 'ordnance survey' disguised the business of falsifying passports from every country in order to equip agents operating abroad and also within the national borders, inside parties and organisations.

Although the Defence Minister was empowered to appoint and dismiss agents, the internal regulations introduced in September 1938 transferred this power to the Supreme Commander of the SIM.

One of the most ominous sections was Section 13! It had charge of the arrest, interrogation and maltreatment of detainees. For accuracy's sake, it needs to be placed on record that the SIM rendered some remarkable services to the anti-fascist cause, and that on occasions it dismantled Fifth Column organisations. For instance, at the start of 1938 it uncovered the lists of the members and leaders of the Falange Española operating in Catalonia. The arrests numbered 3,500. But it needs to be pointed out that the success of the operation was made possible by the use of torture. And the same methods were also employed on anti-fascists who incurred the wrath of the SIM's putative fathers. In every instance, the terror and the tortures inflicted upon defenceless men are a repugnant and damnable monstrosity.

On other occasions, double agents planted in the agency aborted important operations. Such fascist agents abetted the escape from a labour camp of Rafael Sánchez Mazas who was the teacher of José Antonio Primo de Rivera and spiritual father of the Falange Española.¹ When Mazas had been arrested, the SIM sought to rebuild its damaged prestige by making a public announcement of its *coup*. Such publicity saved the prisoner's life for he had to be brought for trial in the regular way. And since the government had, for diplomatic purposes, ordered an end to shootings, Sánchez Mazas was sentenced to a period of internment in a labour camp. But as we shall see, the baneful conduct of the agency had triggered a wave of protests abroad.

By mid-1938, the SIM had ceased to be an adjunct of the Defence Ministry for all practical purposes and became the grand inquisitor in the service of the PCE. Its spying activity inside the ranks of anti-fascist organisations and parties was all-pervasive. It had immediate notifica-

¹ This was written prior to the publication of Javier Cercas's outstanding novel *Soldados de Salamina* (Barcelona, 2001; in English as *Soldiers of Salamis*, London, 2003), which places the escape by Sánchez Mazas in a rather different context.

tion of the accords and proposals of these bodies and, through it, so did the PCE's Politburo. And although on occasions the anarchists, socialists and republicans made protests, these were promptly dismissed on the pretext of not stirring up internal clashes, which might have grave international repercussions. Be that as it may, there was no way of preventing such shameful actions coming to the notice of democratic governments through their diplomatic representatives and leading to the resultant furore.

So the government resolved to disband the sinister Special Brigade whose fame had carried beyond Spain's borders. And a brand new 'Sixth Section' was set up. This, again under cover of counter-espionage, took over — and how! — from the disbanded Special Brigade whose members retained their posts.

To get some idea of the PCE's influence in the SIM, we need only remember that a high percentage of its officers and agents were 'party' members. The Supreme Commander, together with his secretaries and service chiefs and staff, were under the control of Stalin's party. Communist agents dominated the most important demarcations. Many army officers, who had distinguished themselves on the fronts or in the officer training schools paid with their lives for the crime of having declined the party card. Most of these killings were explained as the victims' having attempted to defect to the enemy. The whole affair was laid to rest in the clandestine burial grounds.

The SIM was also employed as a tool in political frame-ups. Agents would probe the private lives of persons slated for recruitment or neutralisation. If the investigation turned up any peccadillo that reflected upon the morals of the target, he was threatened with public exposure unless he could see his way clear to serving certain interests. The SIM also took care to probe state secrets in the realms of diplomacy, industry and armaments. The sole beneficiary of this sort of activity was the Soviet state.

To begin with, the *chekas* of the SIM were makeshift cells, filthy, damp and cold, with poor ventilation. Torture was routine for all that. It consisted of freezing or scalding showers, beatings with rubber whips, mock firing squads or the insertion of wood splinters under the fingernails of prisoners.

These methods were introduced scientifically by Soviet advisors. Purpose-built cells were very cramped, painted inside in very bright colours and paved with sharp cobblestones. Detainees remained standing up in these cells, which were permanently lit by powerful red or green lights. Other cells were more tomb-like, and built on asymmetrical lines. In order to remain upright, the prisoners had to strain every nerve and muscle. Here the most utter darkness prevailed and a loud metallic noise produced by a sort of bell constantly droned through the prisoner's brain.

Interrogations took place in artistically decorated rooms and the questions asked deliberately or snappily, in tones of authority or sarcasm. Such studied contrasts led to the moral and physical crushing of the victim. For hard cases there was always the 'freezer room', the 'noise box' or the 'electric chair'. The first of these was a cell some two metres high and spherical. It was flooded with very icy water. A person submerged there for hour after hour had within reach an electric bell for when he was ready to talk to the satisfaction of his tormentors. His statement was then taken from him while he remained immersed.

The 'noise box' was a sort of low, and extremely cramped wardrobe. Prisoners hermetically sealed inside were subjected to an infernal racket of alarms and bells, which attacked the nervous system. As for the 'electric chair' the only difference between this and the one used against condemned men in the United States was that it did not actually kill.

And the SIM boasted its own concentration camps. The regime in these punishment camps was brutal: the food was meagre and inadequate, and the work not only hard labour but exhausting. Internees were banned from receiving visitors from the outside world. And in anticipation of possible escapes, or because of those that had already occurred, the prisoners were split up into five man squads. If any of the five escaped, the remainder of the squad suffered the consequences. Punishment took the form of shooting the remaining four members of the squad. In these conditions, every prisoner was his colleagues' closest guard.

Let us reiterate that these punishments were utilised against fascist prisoners and anti-fascist prisoners without distinction, against Falangists from the Fifth Column and militants of the POUM and the Libertarian Movement. And let us repeat that, no matter whom the victim, we condemn them in every single instance.

We could illustrate the foregoing with a series of impressive accounts drawn from our archives and from eyewitnesses who suffered ghastly torments in the clutches of the new Spanish Inquisition set up by communism. Restrictions on space preclude our transcribing these chilling documents. So we shall confine ourselves to reprinting a report on the sinister dungeon that operated in Valencia in the former Convent of the Sisters of Santa Ursula. The nunnery was commandeered on 19 July by the PCE and later placed at the disposal of the notorious Special Brigade of the SIM, as one of its many *chekas*.

Without further ado, let us move on to the aforementioned report dated October 1937:

'The police methods used in Santa Ursula by the Special Brigade are identical to those currently in use in Italy, Germany and Russia. They are a synthesis of the tortures of the Inquisition to which every modern refinement has been added,

Many of those detained were detained for the simple offence of being foreigners, especially Germans and Italians who could not call upon any consular assistance. Not that this means that all Santa Ursula prisoners were innocent victims. No. There were real fascists, self-confessed fascists who never made any secret of their ideology. But, perhaps because of their honesty, these were never of any interest to the police from the Special Brigade.

These were obsessed with espionage and sought to see a spy in every foreigner, especially the Germans and Italians, even if these had unblemished and brilliant records of revolutionary activity behind them. The interrogations were never prompted by hard and fast evidence or suspicions.

The intention in using these methods was to extract information about the political work of some revolutionaries who were outside of the Stalinist Third International, especially those from oppositionist circles, or industrial secrets and formulae from peaceable engineers or petit bourgeois industrialists.

Foreign pilots who had been fighting in Spain from day one on the side of republican and revolutionary Spain, who could have boasted more than anyone of heroics and sacrifices, but who had made so bold as to question the efficiency of Russian aviators, were transformed overnight into spies and were shamefully imprisoned in Santa Ursula. Suppliers of aircraft, weaponry and other war materials, sent by reputable firms abroad to the lawful government, and possible competitors of the USSR, were metamorphosed into spies and immured in the same den.

Engineers and technicians from war industries, as well as military experts put to the test in the 1914-18 war and in other campaigns, followed the same path as the above. The Stalinists wanted no rivals of any sort. They sought an absolute monopoly in every field, to influence the overall

policy of the country. They even went so far as to do away with their competitors physically. The Special Brigade had that repugnant and, at the same time, counter-revolutionary brief.

Generally the defence of the accused was determined by his character and temperament. Some refused to answer; others replied with insults and impudence. A highly concentrated hatred percolated through every answer, even the most cordial ones. The commissar in charge of interrogation set about his task with a cynical and criminal expertise. If the nerves of the accused so let him down and he was going where the policeman wanted him to go, that is to say, was accusing himself, everything went fine. But if the detainee offered resistance, the friendly manner gave way to refined inquisition, comparable only to the methods employed in the concentration camps in Germany and Italy.

Whenever the accused dug in his heels against the monstrosity of the charges and even made so bold as to leap to his own defence, the commissar would press a red button on his desk, setting off an electric bell outside the office and in would come his "assistants". Blows were delivered from sharp-edged wooden clubs. The edges bit into the skin, sometimes leaving numerous splinters stuck in the flesh. Iron bars lagged with cloth were also in common use. The exercise continued until the victim collapsed, having lost consciousness. If he did not quickly regain consciousness, his body was doused with pails of iced water. If he refused to admit guilt, the clubbing resumed. And if the accused refused to bend, the tortures turned bestial. He would be kicked, shoved against the wall and the most refined methods deployed against him...

Many were eventually broken down and signed all sorts of documents, acknowledging themselves to be fascists and highly dangerous spies. Once guilt had been confessed, they were left in the dungeons of Santa Ursula. These were the convalescent wards. Later, once bloody wounds had healed over, they were returned to the collective dormitories and to the society of other prisoners.

The wounds left deep scars that would hardly ever fade. Some "convalescents" were unable to sit or lie down for several days because of the pain. Others displayed beneath their torn clothing enormous weals, body parts from which skin had been torn and even areas where the absence of flesh meant that the whitish pallor of the bones was visible. In short, men who prior to arrest had been strong men in the best of health, ended up assailed by frequent haemorrhaging of the lungs.

Many accused lacked the physical and moral strength to stand up to interrogation sessions, which were repeated five or six times, as often as necessary. They put their signatures to whatever was put before them, without even reading it. Later, when presented with the papers they had signed, the tragic reality became plain to them. They were doomed. By then it was too late. The Ministers of War and of the Interior had the evidence and hand-written confessions before them.

A congratulatory communiqué expressed the authorities' gratitude to the active, tireless commissars. And a handful of wretches, cast as spies by the GPU, paid with their lives for their having belonged to a communist opposition or having possessed technical and industrial know-how capable of leaving the prestige of Stalinist production in the shade.

But the police activity of agents acting on GPU orders did not stop there. They had even more refined methods. In addition to tortures inflicted in the building which we have just outlined, in addition to the clubbings and maltreatment doled out in the commissariat at the Interior Ministry located in the Plaza de Bailén, which handled petty offences and prisoners of Spanish nationality, in addition to the mock executions which were commonplace and which generally held on the outskirts of the city, with prisoners being stood up against a wall and threatened at gun-point in

order to force compromising statements from them, there were methods the very recollection of which started a thrill of terror.

Santa Ursula, the complement to police stations where interrogations took place, was a Machiavellian compendium of every conceivable torture. Entire volumes might be filled with details of the torment and torture. In the cellars of the one time convent there was a vault formerly utilised as a burial place for the nuns. The walls were honeycombed with the dark recesses of burial niches. There must have been around 40 corpses there, thoroughly desiccated.

When the PCE requisitioned the premises after July 1936, some peasants performed the hygienic task of removing the corpses by night to take them away for interment. These cadavers, in an advanced state of decomposition, gave off an unbearable stench. The peasants' task could not have been more thankless and was left only half done.

There were bones left in every cranny and half-rotted corpses strewn here and there. It was in this vault that detainees were locked up, semi-naked and stripped of underpants. There was no light. The damp, foetid air smelled of death, of rotting flesh. In the midst of the gloom, the decomposing flesh gave off a phosphorescent glow. And monstrous rats, the uncontested "lords" of this "paradise" scurried about, ignoring the corpses and the prisoners.

The average stay in the vault lasted 24 hours. The half-naked prisoners had time to muse upon the commissar's suggestions. Some went to pieces upon entering the vault. Such was the initial impression: but nobody bothered to fetch them out. They remained there stretched out among the decomposing corpses. Other, more spirited prisoners managed after a few moments to defend themselves from the armies of rats. They cleaned out the niches and, crawling inside them, patiently waited for life to return.

When legs went numb from the damp and the lack of movement, there was no way to take a stroll and get the circulation going again. And no feeling of repugnance compares to that caused by treading on the hand or leg of a dead body. Other prisoners were shut up in punishment cells used in the good old convent days to chastise nuns who infringed the convent regulations for hours at a time. Whole months were spent in these cells. They were stone tombs averaging 1.2 metres across by 1.2 long and 2 metres in height. With nobody to talk to, no daylight, no artificial light, no mattress, no blankets, scarcely any air, the wretched inmates of the cells were obliged to sit and lie down on the damp, hard and cold stone flooring. They were allowed to step outside for a few moments only to answer the call of nature. After a fortnight spent in this tomb, the prisoners resembled living corpses. Their comrades thought they were seeing wraiths on their way to perform their necessary functions. When they were returned to the collective dormitories, these creatures were mere shadows of their old selves. They bore within them the seed of incurable illnesses and their joints were hideously gnarled as a result of rheumatism.

In one room specially set aside for torture there was a quite large press, the upper plate of which was in the shape of a swastika. The intention behind this was to lampoon fascism. What irony! The wretched prisoner was placed between the two plates and the screw was given a turn. Slowly the Hitlerian swastika closed on his chest. As the pressure increased, his ribs, lungs and heart were wholly immobilised. The future outcome we already know. The lungs are much too delicate organs.

Other playthings of which much use was made were the "cupboards". These came in two sorts. Some were 1.8 or 2 metres high, others 1.25 metres. In the former one could stand up: in the latter type, one was forced to squat. Some prisoners spent whole weeks shut up inside "cupboards" of the latter variety. Upon emerging, they stayed as stiff as corpses. Only several days later did they

recover the use of their legs which were left completely swollen from top to bottom for weeks and weeks.

Prisoners were shut up in the tall or low cupboards according to the whim of the commissar. There was one cynical and cruel captain who was wont to invite them to step inside the cupboard in the politest fashion, amid guffaws from the other agents. One poor French woman, about 40 years old, a touch overweight, was put into one such cupboard and held in position by several loops of rope, since the door could not otherwise be closed, thereby squashing her flesh. A Belgian serving with the International Brigade, incapacitated at the front and sent for hospital treatment, was unfortunate enough to have had somewhat too much to drink. He was arrested, and agents who had never seen front-line service thrust him inside the cupboard. Outraged, in a wholly justified protest, he smashed the instrument of torture. As punishment, he was shut up in the little cupboard for a period of four days. There are dozens of similar cases.

Another, no less criminal torment involved the crates, large boxes measuring over one metre square and in the top of which a hole had been made for the head to stick through. Into these crates prisoners were thrust for weeks on end. They could neither stand nor yet sit down. One would be hard pressed to devise a more uncomfortable position. Unable to get their hands outside the crate, they needed the help of the police if they were to eat. Many a time these policemen amused themselves with these human heads by denying them food, holding the spoon out then snatching it away and leaving them stupidly open-mouthed.

Others were bound by the wrists to a ring fixed to a wall some two metres from the ground level. But the prisoner had a sort of ditch a little over a metre across between him and the wall. In the early hours this punishment was unbearable, but as weariness overtook one, and as the body grew exhausted one tended to collapse into the ditch. How many wretches, utterly spent and losing their foothold, were left for whole hours dangling from the ring, fainting from the agony of it all! We could detail dozens, hundreds of such cases...'

In the much-quoted report from the FAI Peninsular Committee to the National Plenum of the Regional Committees of the Libertarian Movement in October 1938, an outline is given of the evolution of the public order agency. According to this report, to begin with, a National Security Council, with direct representation of all anti-fascist forces, had been set up. Once this monitoring body had been established, the PCE promptly launched into a propaganda drive and as soon as a sufficient number of party cards had been handed out in the General Directorate, it really went to town. The first step was to install Colonel Ortega as the Director-General of Security and immediately it turned upon the Council until its disbandment was achieved, whereupon the General Directorate became a party fief. Portraits of Lenin, Stalin and other notables from the communist pantheon were hung in prominent positions on corridors and offices. An office was even set aside for recruitment and for Red Aid (*Socorro Rojo*) collections and the latter agency was re-christened with the exotic name of 'Sonia'. Next came a 'swap' between the official police set-up and the *chekas*. Former agents whose conduct prior to 19 July still awaited screening and approval were placed in the staff complement and as a result it was rare, when Fifth Column agencies were accidentally turned up, for these not-yet-purged elements not to feature among those implicated.

A reverse selection procedure had been adopted, and to make the selection all agents included in the draft were mobilised, excepting, of course those whom their officers regarded as indispensable. 'So began the battle', the report comments, 'against those new agents finished by the

organisations and parties, above all, the ones placed by the Libertarian Movement.' The officers mentioned earlier were the likes of Ortega, Burillo, Sala, José Cazorla, etc.

The staff at the *chekas* interfered in the resolution of political disputes: in the murder of POUM leader Andreu Nin, the storming of the press offices of the *caballeristas*, *Adelante* and *La Correspondencia* and also, as we have seen, in the cabinet crisis of 15 August 1938.

In the CNT-UGT pact, there had been provision for the establishment of a Public Order Commissariat, but this was never put into effect, even though the National Committee of the Popular Front espoused the scheme as its own. Nor did the government deign to pay any heed to the plan put to it by the Libertarian Movement for the establishment of a foreign intelligence service, another one in the Francoist rearguard, one to deal with guerrilla operations and finally a scheme for subversion to be undertaken in Morocco and designed to dry up one of the enemy's chief sources of mercenary cannon fodder.

À propos of the SIM, the report noted:

'Its performance at home is so notorious that we shall refrain from a detailed report of its excesses. The unjustified arrests, house raids in search for booty, the murders of fascist individuals, perpetrated for squalid motives and those of anti-fascist personnel, would occupy too much space for us to submit them for your consideration at this point. Instead, when it comes to harassing groups unacceptable to a certain party, there has been no hesitation in the perpetration of abuses that have brought us dishonour in the watchful eyes of fraternal groups abroad. Foreign subjects who have come here on fraternal business have been arrested and molested and the outside world has been presented with such an impression of runaway terror that very considerable sympathy and support have been alienated from us.'

In the Libertarian Movement's archives, alongside the documents we have been summarising, there could not but have appeared a dense dossier on the feats of the SIM and its *chekas*. We shall refer to some of the papers, bearing different dates and included in this dossier. They are confidential reports to the FAI Peninsular Committee. The first of them, dated 26 April 1938, speaks of the Justice Minister (González Peña) being unable to disguise his resentment 'at a certain agency's or institution's ignoring of the courts of justice', and of 'the SIM being his greatest worry', in that it detains persons found not guilty and even pardoned individuals, and of special courts being set up 'like the one apparently operating in Montjuïc outside of the law'. This same malaise was manifested in the Judiciary and in the Army Legal Corps, some of whose members were subjected to harassment and persecution.

Another report, dated 24 May, comments that 'three weeks ago, the SIM Commander, Uribarri (a former Civil Guard) left on a foreign trip along with three or four of his agents.' The apparent purpose of the trip was to conduct a certain operation 'personally'. Uribarri left Spain, taking with him several million pesetas' worth of jewels stolen during searches and with a homemade passport. The Spanish Consul in Marseilles was careful to issue the runaways with a current passport. Later on, the Prosecutor of the Republic tabled charges against the commander for theft and murder, and his extradition would be a possibility. The same report then went on to note that 'the Service has a budget of 22 million pesetas a year, which are used whimsically and in Madrid alone the SIM has some 6,000 agents in its service.' The name of Díaz Tintero was bandied around as a possible replacement for the runaway commander, 'but party interests intervened, and now the names of Giménez Sembrador, Castillo, Prat, Burillo and others were being mooted.' The acting Sub-Commander was Ordóñez.

Another report, dated 30 May, stated that the SIM 'is still in complete disarray', and that each ministry retained a police squad at the personal disposal of the minister concerned, 'for his own political intelligence. That Díaz Baza, who had been the SIM's first ever chief along with Sallagués, his lieutenant, had invested the Service with 'an approach different from the aims expected and which our movement needed.' The same course was later followed by Uribarri, who stepped up the cases of looting and murder, which had already been occurring. The report goes on to point out that the government had ordered the arrest of Uribarri, but that upon his lieutenant, Ruiz's getting to hear of this, he had tipped off his boss, 'and they had absconded together'. The government had sought and given the go-ahead for Uribarri's extradition and although he had been tracked down, the extradition application failed. At that time, the position of the chief of the SIM was held by Garcés on an interim basis.

Another report of 13 June, said that 'SIM agents brag of having executed Uribarri in France and this is true as far as the result is concerned, but not with regard to method.'

In the 22 June report it is noted, among other things, that SIM agents had been guaranteed a bonus of 30 per cent of the sale value of jewels that they seized, 'which ensures that this sort of operation commands their attention above all others.'

There follows a memo from the CNT's National Co-ordination Section (25 July) which stated, word for word:

'As we indicated in a preceding memo, the SIM chief (Garcés) has asked us to supply a comrade to assist in the Service's technical consultancy work. Yesterday he was presented with comrade Pedro Campón who had been so designated. On the occasion of this introductory visit, Garcés detailed the object of his request for somebody from our organisation for technical consultancy purposes. From what was actually said by him, and from what may logically be deduced from that, we can infer the following.

On the grounds of his alleged experience and exceptional qualifications, the SIM is having a Russian (name unknown to us) foisted upon it to oversee its specific tasks. With an eye to thwarting the expansionist policy pursued by these people on every side, Garcés, perhaps acting on orders from the Under-Secretary of the Interior, Méndez, to whom he is answerable on every count, wants to hem him in with a couple of colleagues who can keep his totalitarianism in check and limit his exclusivist and egocentric approach to the work in hand, thereby undermining his influence.

Our comrade is not to figure in the SIM as an official or formal delegate from the CNT, but simply and solely as a technical collaborator. In addition to him, and on the same basis, there will be a socialist. Garcés indicated to us that in order to avoid arousing the Russian's suspicions, in that he apparently rejects CNT collaboration, it might be as well if comrade Campón were to join the SIM on the recommendation of some republican party. He clearly indicated to us that Moscow's sway is so strong that the likes of Garcés have to resort to this sort of deception in order to get around it.

If his position in the office of the chief of the SIM were firmer, he would enforce his own rules: otherwise it shows that he is overwhelmed by outside influences. In essence: our comrade will be known only to Garcés as a delegate from the CNT and for official purposes will be merely an official, who as a technician, will work in a section charged with issuing directives for the services to act upon, the section being headed by the Russian.'

The FAI Peninsular Committee report to the October plenum of the Libertarian Movement is clear as to the outcome of this CNT co-operation within the SIM when it states:

‘But these good omens were neither continued nor confirmed. The agents they sought from us were to be in humiliating circumstances, for they were not admitted as permanent staff and their work was confined to investigation of factories and workshops: they represented mere collaborators of the SIM and, in any case, were being admitted only in a trickle. We sought leadership positions in those matters for which our conspiratorial capabilities, the qualifications of some comrades and the importance of our movement equipped us. But the SIM Directorate sought to cut down our contribution to secondary posts with a role that might be described as that of “narks”, and this prompted a break-down in our relations with the SIM.’

In the dossier under examination, there is another memo from the National Coordination Section. And there it says that on 26 July Spain’s consul in Bayonne together with SIM agent Ramiro Puch had crossed the frontier at 3.30pm, in a car with Spanish licence plates, ‘placing themselves, through the rebel border controller, Juan Rájula, at Franco’s disposal’.

And, to finish with the document we are summarising, here is another memo from that same Coordination Section, dated 16 December, alleging that:

‘the statement released by SIM to the press has prompted pointed comment in political circles, all of them remarking on the clumsiness with which it has been drafted. Under the pompous headline of “A vast espionage network uncovered”, a series of operations unconnected in substance or timing, in that some of the instances quoted are long since history, is presented as something of contemporary relevance.’

Some saw the object as being to prove the value of the SIM, so as to prevent the call-up of certain of its agents for active service: others argued that it was a desperate attempt to fend off the constant and persistent criticism which, based upon the SIM’s own aberrations, had made it the focus of public attention.

SIM misdeeds, and the crimes of the *chekas*, provoked lively indignation in political, liberal and foreign intellectual circles not suffering from the contagion of Stalinism, and especially on account of the repression directed against the POUM, commissions began to arrive in Spain for the purpose of establishing the truth of the allegations made against the SIM or against the POUM. One such commission, made up of persons of some prestige, arrived in Spain in August 1937. It reported to a certain committee that had been formed in Paris. The commission had talks with the government and with representatives from the labour organisations and political parties.

Let us see how it was received by the official and formal newspapers of the PCE:

‘The likes of Brockway, Maxton and Sam Baron are all traitors to the proletariat’s cause. They are, in a word, agents of fascism.’²

‘Foreign Trotskyists who, like the ones in Spain, take their orders from the Gestapo, have formed a so-called Committee for Defence of Anti-Fascists and Revolutionaries in Spain, which operates from Paris and which has had the effrontery to apply to the newspapers and antifascist organisations of Spain, requesting their support for its dark intentions to hamper the operation of Spanish popular justice.’³

It is now time for us to concern ourselves with the Nin case, working on the basis of information made public recently (in 1953).

Andreu Nin had belonged to the CNT and held important posts in it during the phase of its activity, which the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera brought to a violent close. When the revolution

² *Mundo Obrero*, 21 August 1937.

³ *Mundo Obrero*, 27 August 1937.

occurred in Russia and Profintern was set up by the Bolshevik Party, Nin, along with a fair number of labour militants of the day, was seduced by the revolutionary promises of the new Moscow dictatorship which had donned the 'proletarian' disguise.

In Chapter One of this book, we saw Nin and Maurín having themselves appointed CNT delegates and leaving for Russia with these credentials. The CNT disowned the delegation. Nin did not return to Spain until after the emergence of the Trotskyist phenomenon inside the ranks of the Russian Communist Party. With Lenin dead, and Trotsky expelled from the USSR, Nin made no secret of his sympathies with Trotsky's teachings and he in turn was expelled from the 'Soviet Paradise'. He came back to Spain when the Republic was proclaimed, and promptly organised an anti-Stalinist faction, before joining with Maurín, against the wishes of Trotsky, to form the POUM, whose press organ was *La Batalla*.

At the time of the outbreak of the revolt of 19 July, Maurín was stranded in enemy territory, where he remained imprisoned until after the war. He later left Spain and emigrated to the United States. So, during the civil war, Nin was politically and intellectually the most representative figure of the Spanish communist opposition movement against Stalin's policies.

The existence of opposition nuclei always rankled with Moscow. In Stalinist invective, all such nuclei were lumped together under the common heading of 'Trotskyists in the hire of fascism'. And we have seen that the PCE availed of the collapse of the Largo Caballero government, a collapse that it contrived, to rid itself of a despised rival, the POUM. But the suppression pure and simple of this party was not enough. It had to be demonstrated by fair means or foul that the main leaders of the POUM were enemies of the people and of the world's proletariat: that they were fascist agents and these charges, as serious as they were unfounded, had to be proved. Orlov, the GPU's chief in Spain, took this repugnant task upon himself. The trap, according to Jesús Hernández, was quickly prepared.⁴

Forgive us for not introducing Jesús Hernández to the reader. He introduces himself in the course of our narrative. The disclosures made in his book, and his new political stance, albeit belated, are no less important for all that. In the words of Hernández:

'For some time now, they [a reference to Orlov and his cronies] had been on the trail of a Falangist spy network...POUM personnel were mixed up with it. Hundreds of arrests had been made...the most important detainee being an engineer, one Golfín...had confessed everything...Nin was seriously compromised...Gorkín, Andrade, Gironella, Arquer...the whole Trotskyist crew. A certain Roca acted as liaison between the POUM and the Falangists in Perpignan. A suitcase full of documents had been captured from a certain Riera in Girona...A hotel boss by the name of Dalmau had also been caught and confessed...Everything had been prepared for the mounting of a coup.'

According to Hernández, the Central Committee of the PCE, Togliatti (who went by the name of Alfredo), Codovila (an Italian-Argentine), Orlov, La Pasionaria and Checa, ordered Ortega (the Director-General of Security) to send by teletype to Burillo (the Public Order Delegate in Catalonia) the order to arrest Nin, Gorkín, Andrade, Gironella, Arquer and as many POUM personnel as 'may be suggested by Antonov-Ovseenko (the USSR consul-general) or Stashevsky (the Soviet Trade chargé)'. Some of those arrested were taken to Valencia, but Nin vanished. Even the government was ignorant of his whereabouts: only the 'comrades of the special service', as the agents of the GPU were known in communist jargon were in on the secret of this mysterious

⁴ *Yo fui un ministro de Stalin*, Editorial America, Mexico, 1954.

disappearance. In El Vedat, a tiny village near Valencia, in a villa ringed with orange groves, the 'tovarischi' from the Soviet delegation had set up a powerful radio transmitter, by which means they communicated with 'home' (Moscow) and received all manner of sinister instructions from there.

The furore over Nin's arrest and the arrests of other POUM militants assumed international proportions. Telegrams from foreign entities and individuals anxiously seeking information as to the whereabouts of Nin began to flood into the residence of the Council of Ministers. The non-communist press of Spain was gagged by the censor, but on the walls of city and village 'the unseen paintbrush' had daubed an accusing 'Where is Nin?' Beneath the question, communists offered the depraved answer 'In Burgos or in Berlin'.

Alluding to an uncomfortable interview that he had with the leader of the government, Hernández in his book writes:

'I do not know what arguments Negrín would avail of in order to convince Irujo, the Justice Minister, a Basque Catholic with very little love for the communists and a man openly opposed to playing along with the GPU. But the day after this conversation, the press carried an official communiqué from the Ministry of Justice announcing that the POUM leaders were to be brought to trial along with some Falangists headed by the engineer Golfín, author of a scaled plan destined for Franco, a plan on which were marked certain military installations in the capital, constituting an espionage and high treason offence.

Even as the newspaper presses were printing the official communiqué from the Justice Ministry, Orlov's treacherous hand was completing one of the most sordid crimes recorded in the annals of political crime in this country: Nin had been done to death by the thugs of Stalin's GPU.'

According to Hernández, 'Orlov and his gang kidnapped Nin in the intention of extracting from him a "voluntary" confession in which he was to admit his role as a spy in the service of Franco.' They were experts in the art of breaking wills and obtaining 'spontaneous' confessions. With Nin, they opened with the 'dry' method, a 'scientific method which tends to drain away all mental energy and wear the prisoner down' with the implacable passage of time and repetition of 'make a statement', 'acknowledge', 'you'd be better to', 'you can save yourself', until all the will was sapped and fortitude broken down. Hernández continues:

'the prisoner is kept standing for hours on end, not allowed to sit down, until he collapses exhausted by the unbearable pain in his kidneys...the body becomes awfully heavy and the cervical vertebrae refuse to support the head...the spine aches as if it were coming to pieces...the prisoner is overcome by a deadly weariness...

Nin did not capitulate. He held out against unconsciousness. His tormentors lost patience. They determined to abandon the "dry" method. Now it would be flowing blood, torn skin, torn muscles that would put man's fortitude and ability to resist to the test. Nin withstood the cruelty of the torture and the agony of the refined torment. After some days his human visage had turned into a shapeless lump of swollen flesh. A frantic Orlov, driven crazy by his fear of failure, which might spell liquidation for himself, foamed with fury at this sickly individual who suffered agonies without "confessing", without compromising either himself or his party comrades, who, at a word from him, would have been lined up at the execution wall, to the delight and satisfaction of the lord of all the Russias.

Nin's life petered out. On the streets of loyalist Spain and throughout the world there was a swelling campaign demanding news of his whereabouts and insisting upon his release. This

situation could not go on for long. To hand him over alive meant a double scandal. Everyone would have been able to see the frightful physical torments to which he had been subjected and, what was more dangerous, Nin might have exposed the whole sordid frame-up mounted by Stalin's goons in Spain. So the thugs resolved to do away with him.

The professional criminals thought along the lines: finish him off and dump his shot body in some ditch? Murder him and bury the body? Burn him and scatter the ashes to the wind? Any of these methods would have meant an end of Nin, but the GPU would not be spared the responsibility for the crime, as it was public knowledge that it had been behind the kidnapping. So a way had to be found which, while relieving the GPU of the burden of responsibility for the "disappearance", would cast the blame on Nin by demonstrating his collusion with the enemy.

The solution, it seemed, was devised by the rabid mind of one of Orlov's most soulless cohorts, the so-called "Commandant Carlos" (Vittorio Vidali, as he was known in Italy, or Arturo Sormenti or Carlos Contreras, the names under which he had gone in Mexico and Spain). The latter's plan was as follows: to fake an abduction by Gestapo agents "disguised" as International Brigaders, a storming of the villa in Alcalá de Henares, and a fresh "disappearance" by Nin. It would be put about that the Nazis had "liberated" him, thereby demonstrating the connections that Nin had with domestic and international fascism. Meanwhile Nin would disappear once and for all and, lest any traces be left behind, would be dumped at sea. This squalid sham lacked refinement, but it did offer a way out.

One day the two guards standing watch over the prisoner in Alcalá de Henares (two communists with PSOE cards) were found tied up: they stated that a gang of something like ten soldiers from the International Brigades, who spoke German, had stormed the villa, disarmed them and bound them, opened the prisoner's cell and borne the prisoner off in a car. To lend the sinister ploy more credibility, a briefcase containing a series of documents showing his connections with the German spy service was found tossed upon the ground in Nin's quarters. As a final touch, German banknotes were even found.

Through the version of someone in direct contact with Orlov, I was able to reconstruct these events later. But I was absolutely certain that Nin had been murdered the day after the crime had been carried out. Compañera X vouchsafed to me that she had transmitted to Moscow a message which stated: "A. N. affair resolved by method A." The initials coincide with those of Nin. What might "method A" be? The absurd story of the "abduction" by Gestapo agents was a give away that the crime was the GPU's handiwork. Anyway, in the code of the Soviet delegation, "A" stood for death. Codovila, Gerö, etc. would have transmitted anything except the bit about "affair resolved".

In his book, *Los vascos y la República Española*, A. de Lizarra, who may be taken as the biographer of Irujo, the Justice Minister of the Republic at the time of the events just outlined, says, *à propos* of Nin's disappearance, that Nin and his colleagues were rounded up in an arbitrary police raid and removed to Valencia and Madrid. Nin 'was kidnapped from this latter villa by Stalinists and nothing more was ever heard of him again.' The Minister of Justice appointed a magistrate as special judge and ordered 'the detention of a considerable number of police upon whom suspicion had fallen.' Some of these managed to give the courts the slip and sought refuge in the Russian Embassy and a police squad attempted to place the special judge under arrest in Valencia. He also says that Irujo bluntly raised the matter at two cabinet sessions, which 'provoked the sudden dismissal of the Director-General of Security, Colonel Ortega, a communist

who had been acting without instructions from the minister in charge of the department, señor Zugazagoitia.⁵

What de Lizarra has to say does very little in the way of exonerating Irujo and his cabinet colleagues. Very little, if we remember the application with which the Minister of Justice had flung himself, with a pronounced enthusiasm for the past, into repressing the excesses which had been committed in the republican zone and especially in Catalonia during the early months of the popular upheaval.

In a speech which Irujo made upon taking charge of the portfolio of Justice in May 1937, he had declared:

‘...But the people’s accomplishment has been besmirched by criminal bloodshed. The republican rearguard has borne witness to countless killings. Roadside ditches, cemetery walls, prison yards and elsewhere have been filled with corpses. Men representative of oppression and knights of the ideal alike have succumbed and are mixed together in a ghastly heap. Women, priests, workmen, shopkeepers, intellectuals, professional people and society’s outcasts have fallen victim to the *paseo*, the name given in popular parlance to cover up the more apt and appropriate term, murder. Neither the worker’s humble abode nor the ancient mansion of the aristocrat, nor the mystic abbey of the religious, nor the brothel upon which illicit assignations thrive, have been spared the criminal, cruel, barbaric and uncivilised repression orchestrated by men devoid of honour or mercy, who have capitalised upon the runaway passions of the people in order to stain with all too often innocent blood the noble soil of republican democracy.

I have not come here to defend the fallen. Innocent and guilty, valuable human beings and the scum of society lie side by side in the common grave. I am speaking out to oppose the system and to affirm that the *paseos* are over. The protection and judging of citizens is in the state’s keeping, and the latter would not be doing its duty if it did not strike out with all the power at its disposal against anyone trying to take the law into his own hands, whatever his name of persuasion may be. There was a time when the government was not in control of the means of power. It was powerless to resist social excesses. Those times are gone.’

As a result, the justice minister carried out an intense campaign of repression, more sensational than effective, against the real or alleged perpetrators of crimes not under the supervision of the Justice Ministry and which had been committed in those early months of popular emotion when ‘the government was not in control of the means of power’. This campaign consisted of disinterring corpses from the so-called ‘clandestine cemeteries’ and of mounting trials. The PCE, which had distinguished itself as the mainstay of this ‘unrestrained repression’, made its contribution to the ministry’s work by organising processions of ladies in mourning, many of them the widows of executed fascists. However, despite Irujo’s claim that ‘those times are gone’, crime never attained such refinement and sadism as it did from the month of May 1937 on, when the government began to be ‘master of the means of power’ and when the Basque minister assumed responsibility for the administration of justice. From then on the most horrendous crimes in our political history were committed, as we have just seen.

And let us now conclude this chapter with a look at the most sensational development of that month of October 1938: the trial of the POUM.

This trial, mounted in accordance with GPU practices, opened on 11 October. It concluded on 22 October. Press censorship precluded any reporting before 25 October. The court comprised Ed-

⁵ *Los vascos y la República Española*, Buenos Aires: Editorial Vasca Ekin, 1944.

uardo Iglesias Portal as president, and judges Ernesto Beltrán Díez, Julián Calvo Blanco, Manuel Mediano Flores and Manuel Hernando Solana. The prosecutor was a certain Gomis and the counsel for the defence was the lawyer Rodríguez Revilla. The principal accused were: Juan Andrade, José Escuder, Julián Gómez (Gorkín), Enrique Adroher (Gironella), Pedro Bonet, Daniel Rebull and Jordi Arquer. Gorkín had made room on the bench for a photograph of Nin whom the prosecutor persisted in indicting 'in his absence'.

The main prosecution exhibit was, as we have mentioned, the notorious scale plan of the fascist engineer Golfín, on the back of which there was an inscription to Franco and which it was claimed had been written in invisible ink by no less than Nin himself. Golfín was bold enough to state that the plan belonged to him, but up to the moment he was shot he denied that there had been any sort of inscription on the back of it.

In his summing up, the prosecutor had specified the charges of military espionage and quoted Article 223 of the Military Code of Justice that prescribed the death penalty for this offence. But in his closing remarks, although he deplored the fact that the accused had not been made to face a court martial, he sought, for the crime of "high treason", a 30-year prison sentence against Gorkín, Arquer, Gironella and Bonet (as members of the POUM Executive Committee) and five years against Rebull, plus acquittal for Escuder.

From *Solidaridad Obrera* we reprint the main testimony given before the court:

'ANTONIO CORDÓN GARCÍA (Under-Secretary of Land Forces): Replying to the prosecution, he said that he is aware that the 29th Division belonged entirely to the POUM and that in that Division underground and fascist newspapers, as evidenced by the contents of the periodicals and other documents, were continually being distributed. He stated that all this, along with other documentary evidence, had been forwarded to the Defence Minister, Prieto. He said that there was no connection between the POUM and the Staff and alleged that the 29th Division quit the front at the time of the May events in Barcelona and acted off its own bat, thereby jeopardising the front that it occupied. He gave assurances that death threats against some military commanders were constantly being received at the Staff headquarters.

JOSÉ LUIS COELHO DE PORTUGAL: Attached to the cipher department of the Defence Ministry. Claimed not to have seen the plan uncovered during a raid on the fascist organisation in Madrid. That the plan in question had been deciphered by the Defence Ministry's cipher department and that the same code had been used for it as for despatches from the Balearics.

VIRGILIO LLANOS ARTERA: Said that the POUM, through the 29th Division, had attracted FAI forces and had absolute sway over that Division. That on 5 May the 28th Division had mutinied and joined with the 29th Division in the absence of the commander of the 28th Division and together gone to Binéfar...Claimed that the 29th Division had left its front unmanned: from the outside their fortifications looked adequate but they were flimsy and incapable of withstanding the slightest enemy onslaught. He denounced a "non-aggression" pact with the fascists and complained that fascist fraternisation with the 29th Division even went as far as to include movements from one set of trenches to another. He claimed that on one occasion, a commissar was sent to the 29th Division who exposed all the above anomalies and above all the fact that the 29th Division would be issued with an order to "let the enemy pass". The following day the commissar in question fell dead, doubtless attacked by 29th Division personnel, because around that time not one shot was fired in pursuance of the war. He said that the whole performance of the 29th Division has been favourable to Franco and Mussolini. That on account of its being so well equipped, it was referred to as "the queen's cadets".

JOAQUIM ROCA MIR (tried for espionage in a separate case): Stated that he had joined the Perpignan-based Dalmau-Riera spy network. He passed all military intelligence on to Riera. One particular day they brought him a letter for Riera and left him with a suitcase that was to have been picked up the next day. That four hours after this happened, the police showed up and seized the letter and the suitcase. That the prisoner was held for 48 hours without food and, under police bullying, signed whatever they wanted. But in front of the judge and later by letter he had retracted what he said about being in touch with the POUM, whose personnel were not known to him. Inside the suitcase had been found some documents with the plans of a bomb on which had been written "POUM Central Committee" and other coded documents from which it transpired that the POUM's undercover squads were going to make an attempt on Prieto's life. He said he was not acquainted with the person who had delivered the letter and suitcase.

IGNACIO MANTECÓN (Commissar of the 11th Army Corps): Said that he had not been on the Aragón front at the time of the May events. That he had no first-hand knowledge of the business of the 29th Division, but was aware of the existence of the "non-aggression pact" and of the rebels' communicating with the Division. He said that in Binéfar, upon quitting the front, the 29th Division committed a series of outrages and crimes, even against leftists. That the Division's activities had amounted to disobedience. It had always refused help to other divisions. Its propaganda was provocative.

FRANCISCO LARGO CABALLERO: In reply to questions from the defence lawyer, he stated that the May events had been prompted by the dispute existing between the political parties. Stated that he came under severe pressure to disband the POUM by governmental order, which he had resisted and would have gone on resisting. À propos of the telephone service, he replied that, broadly speaking, there had been communications difficulties everywhere but he did not believe that there had been sabotage. He stated that he had not warned Llanos about the POUM. He said that he knew some of the accused as militants of longstanding and that he regarded them, not as fascists, but as very intransigent. Questioned by the prosecution as to whether he could say, as former prime minister, if his government had been anti-proletarian, he replied that that was not for him to say. "Many fascist sectors, in addition to the POUM, had declared so."

ANGEL GALARZA (former Minister of the Interior): Stated that as the Generalitat had control of public order in Barcelona, he had no control. That the May events came about chiefly because there was a power struggle between the parties. That the settling of the May events was due mainly to the intervention of the CNT, above all to García Oliver and to Frederica Montseny, who immediately journeyed from Valencia up to Barcelona... That he had suspended the POUM's newspaper because of its refusal to submit to censorship.

MANUEL IRUJO (former Minister of Justice): Stated that during his ministry he received numerous representations of every political complexion from abroad pressing him to remove the POUM question from the political forum and hand it over to the courts so that the Republic, with complete independence of the executive and police power, might let the law follow its normal course. During his term of office he learned of anomalies in the POUM affair on the part of the police, such as the making of arrests in Barcelona, the removal of detainees to Valencia and then Madrid, only to lose track of their whereabouts as happened with Nin, who had been in a private villa instead of prison. He said that as a result of this irregular conduct on the part of the governing power, he notified the Prosecution of the Republic and the President of the Supreme Court at the appropriate time so that the matter might be placed in the hands of the judicial power. He said that the special judge who tried to take charge of the Nin affair was on the verge of being

arrested and that the police resorted to wholly irregular and excessive measures. The police — he continued — had made arrests without the knowledge of the Minister of the Interior. Departing from their duty, they had removed detainees from one site to another, to unknown locations, leading to the disappearance of people as in the Nin case, without the possibility of these things being checked.

HANDWRITING EXPERTS: Two handwriting experts who had examined three signatures from three separate documents stated that at first glance they appeared similar, but upon minute examination appeared different, with some strokes of questionable authenticity. For which reason they adjudged that they could not guarantee that they had been signed by the same person.

FEDERICA MONTSENY (former Health Minister): Said she knew some of the accused through trade union and literary business and also as anti-fascist militants of longstanding. That she had been dispatched by the government to settle the May disturbances and that, when it was possible to clarify those events, many things which presently seem obscure will come to light. That neither the POUM nor the CNT carried any blame for the aforementioned events. She alleged that the May upheaval had all the signs of being hatched behind the scenes in order to topple Largo Caballero's government and to oust the proletariat from power to the detriment of the workers. In reply to questioning by the court president she said that upon reaching Barcelona she went to the Generalitat to find some way of calming feelings, which were running high, and prevent the fighting from assuming the dimensions sought by the provocateurs, since she appreciated that it was a manoeuvre against the masses. Finally, she asked the president to allow her to say a few words to indicate that Spain was essentially a land of liberal minds and she did not expect that the persons seated on the bench would be found guilty for being liberals and anti-fascists.⁶

The verdict passed on the accused amounted to a complete rejection of the charges of espionage and high treason, since the inscription on the notorious 'N document' — the military plan of Madrid — was declared a forgery by experts.

Here is an extract from the court's findings:

'From the foregoing it cannot be proved that the accused supplied fascist elements with intelligence of any sort concerning the circumstances of the battle fronts or the organisation of the rearguard, or that they had maintained direct or indirect dealings with them, or with the police or military agencies of the invader nations, or that they were in touch with or offering assistance to this country's Falangist groups or agencies, or that they sought to support rebel fighters, or received economic assistance from the enemies of the state for their political propaganda.

On the contrary, it may be deduced from the foregoing that the accused all enjoy a great and long-established anti-fascist reputation, that by their efforts they have made their contribution to the fight against the military uprising and that the stance they espouse is designed solely to remove the democratic republic in order to install a regime consonant with their own social outlook. These facts we declare proved.'

No part of this finding was more telling than the final section, which states 'We must, and do, condemn'. In point of fact, the court had to condemn and did condemn (for want of evidence necessary to place the accused in front of a firing squad) to the following punishments: 15 years' imprisonment for Julián Gorkín (Gómez), Juan Andrade, and Enrique Adroher (Gironella) and Pedro Bonet; 11 years for Jordi Arquer; José Escuder and Daniel Rebull were found not guilty;

⁶ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 26 October 1937.

the POUM and all its organisations were ordered to be disbanded for the offence of 'secret association'.

NOTES

Chapter Eleven: From the October Plenum to the Loss of Catalonia

The most important organisational event of late 1938 was undoubtedly the National Plenum of the Regional Committees of the Libertarian Movement (CNT, FAI, FIJL) held in Barcelona from 16 to 30 October. In our examination of that important gathering, we have three documents to hand: the resumé carried by *Solidaridad Obrera* from 18 October onwards, an anthology of resolutions building to a memorandum entitled 'Agreements of the Libertarian Movement' and a draft report by a member of the FAI's Peninsula Committee. This draft contained a number of very interesting comments on the proceedings, all the more interesting if one considers that the summary carried by *Solidaridad Obrera* is a stylised resumé intended for public consumption. In our estimation, the draft report is the more authoritative document for it rather starkly reveals the internal workings of the movement whose differences of opinion erupted at the plenum.

The agenda affords us a better idea of its importance. It was as follows:

1. Scrutiny of the stewardship and policy followed by the Libertarian Movement since 19 July 1936.
2. Circumstantial engagement in politics and the approach we laid down as the axis for our conduct in domestic, political, federalist, international dealings with other military and economic persuasions.
3. How the three organisations are co-ordinated with an eye to the course to be plotted.
4. How the Libertarian Youth is to be assisted.
5. The co-ordination and articulation of the Defence Sections.
6. The Libertarian Movement's auxiliary agencies.

The plenum was attended by all of CNT, FAI and FIJL Regional Committees from Catalonia, Aragón, the Centre, Levante and Andalusia, from the CNT and FAI Regional Committees bereft of any organisational basis (due to their territory's being wholly occupied) such as the North and Asturias, the CNT and FIJL of Extremadura, the CNT National Committee and the Peninsula Committees of the FAI and the FIJL. Also present, in a rapporteur capacity, was the international anarchist militant Emma Goldman and representatives of the Portuguese CGT. The women's organisation *Mujeres Libres* was present only for the plenum's consideration of 'auxiliary' agencies.

The first session was given over to examination of the procedures to be followed at the Plenum and in fact it was agreed that, for the last time, those Regional Committees bereft of organisational basis be afforded full participant status. It was also agreed that accords would be reached on a basis of unanimity. In the event of such unanimity not being forthcoming on a given issue, a majority resolution would be put to the rank and file in a referendum.

Discussion of the first item on the agenda opened in session two.

The FAI of Catalonia delivered an extensive and well-documented address, wherein it referred to the 'existing differences of opinion' and to shortcomings in the past performance of the Lib-

ertarian Movement. Other delegations spoke up and it was soon evident that there were two schools of opinion revolving, respectively, around the line of CNT National Committee and that of the FAI Peninsular Committee.

According to the report in question, Horacio Prieto, who was representing the Northern Regional Committee, 'spelled out, with superb eloquence, a concrete, out and out reformist line, bordering on Marxism.' He contemptuously dismissed the teachings of Kropotkin and asserted that 'truly decisive action can only be brought to bear from the organs of power'. In his 'cold critique' he stressed that the errors committed had been due to the 'movement's naive outlook and to its lack of hard and fast plans'.

The report's author notes:

'In short, an outstanding intervention which did not mince its words, which tested the nerve of the plenum, causing many a conviction to waver momentarily but which was, fortunately, gainsaid by the prompt retorts from Esgleas (of the CNT of Catalonia), Andalusia and Levante (FAI) and the Catalan FAI, which mounted a great defence of our tactics.'

The report goes on to say that the FAI of Asturias, represented by Ramón Alvarez (the private secretary to CNT minister Segundo Blanco) 'rather agreed with its northern compatriot, but did not dare to strike the stance he had', but that in any event 'Horacio Prieto's stance earned respect for its resoluteness'.

This same debate continued into the third session and continued over twelve sessions. In the course of it, Prieto asserted that the FAI should be the 'movement's political agent and that the CNT should confine its activities to matters economic'.

The CNT National Committee (Mariano R. Vázquez) spoke up in the debate, come the fourth session. This is how his speech condensed:

'We need to jettison our literary and philosophical baggage if we are to get our bearings and achieve hegemony in the future. The blame for the few positions held by us today lies with our comrades' refusal to accept militarisation from the outset. If the FAI Peninsula Committee has no Sub-Commissar General, it is because of its sensitivity about a ruinous dignity. The collectives would have done better to agree to government supervision, since the government has already invested eight million pesetas in loans, a sum that would have been increased considerably had our comrades made up their minds to avail of that option. He was critical of García Oliver's performance as a minister. Spoke critically of the Control Patrols. He spoke of the "quixotic stance" of the late Council of Aragón and of the scheming of Ascaso on the fringes of the organisation to secure the presidency of the same. The May crisis was mentioned and the political, and non-technical repercussions of our intervention. He said that aid from abroad was negligible. Defended the CNT-UGT pact, as against the "non-aggression" pact drawn up by Largo Caballero. Claimed that the collapse of the Eastern Front was delayed by the CNT-UGT pact and by our entry into the government and the Popular Front. Put the case for the Negrín government in its confrontation with the PCE and its military successes. Spoke of the cowardliness of the democracies vis à vis the communists. Referred to the FAI Peninsula Committee's opposition to the Popular Front, saying that the latter is an instrument for the republicans in terms of its defence of the Constitution. Defended nationalisation and municipalisation. Asserted that there were two interpretations: the FAI's, which does not want us to be in the government, and our own, which does not want us to be in opposition. Said that there are no more than a half dozen loyal professional commanders. Criticised the document forwarded to the government by the FAI... "which can only provoke laughter and is also tantamount to an offence of high treason". Our internal

divisions being known to our enemies, this places us in a position of stark inferiority. He said: "What good dignity be to us if we are defeated?" Spoke of the liquidationists Prieto and Giral, asserting that Negrín had boldly raised the issue at a cabinet session. Said that Azaña is making overtures to the CNT to the same end. Praised Negrín's policy of resistance and said that we, being the people, cannot countenance liquidation. Viewed the FAI Peninsular Committee's arguments as on a par with those of Prieto and Azaña. Said that there was nobody to step into Negrín's shoes and, finally, expressed the view that our movement needs to become a compact, absolutely independent bloc with a political identity.'

The Centre Regional Committee, representing all three organisations as a bloc, that is to say representing the whole of the Libertarian Movement in that region, mounted a 'heated defence of the National Committee's position'.

The fifth session opened with the Catalan CNT's reply to the address of the National Committee. It championed the Control Patrols and the Collectives and launched scathing attacks on their detractors. It labelled the National Committee's account as sordid politicking and went on to say that 'it contributed to the mistaken view of Catalonia held by other Regional Committees'.

The Catalan CNT's retort was followed by the replies from Germinal de Sousa and Pedro Herrera, both of them members of the FAI Peninsular Committee. We reprint below what they had to say:

'GERMINAL DE SOUSA: Spoke up to comment in his turn upon the report delivered by the National Committee. His understanding was that this was a matter for the regional delegations, though some, such as the Centre, had already spoken without giving us a hearing, on the basis of the tendentious report delivered to the plenum by the National Committee in partnership with the Centre Regional Committee. The problem was not rooted in the incidents that had taken place between the two committees, the National and the Peninsular, but rather in the basic question of the two interpretations of the movement's situation. Defended the tactic of guerrilla warfare and *à propos* of this recalled that, not long before, the National Committee had asked them to come up with a draft plan for guerrilla warfare for forwarding to the Supreme War Council.

Stressed the contradiction between what Mariano had said and the report, which his Defence Section had put to the delegates, when it spoke of communist preponderance in the army. Demonstrated that if the FAI still did not have a Sub-Commissar, it was because it refused to accept the appointment of a Negrín nominee, and he stressed the dignity that should be pre-eminent in all our actions. Denied that the proposition put to the Popular Front might favour the republicans and that it is an advocacy of parliament: his anti-parliamentary stance was all too well known. Reference was made to the military document put to the government, which the National Committee had slated as a puerile and he stressed that it had not drawn the same response from a variety of political and military personnel and most especially from our comrades at the front who had responsibly declared their whole-hearted endorsement of the document. *À propos* of which, he said that the communists too had described it as "defeatist and bordering upon High Treason"; he underlined this coincidence of views. The PCE's violent response to it, he stated, would be enough by itself demonstrate the document's accuracy.

Concerning the liquidationists Giral and Prieto, he expressed surprise that, for all that Negrín had said and for all that had been repeated here by Mariano, the former was still in the government and the latter eulogised by Negrín's government press on a daily basis. No trust could be placed in the resistance policy of the communists who are every whit as liquidationist as the former, and we should not forget their customary behaviour and dishonesty. Said that

Giral and Prieto were not the only advocates of liquidation: Negrín himself and others are also compromised. Defended the series of circulars and the information issued by the FAI Peninsular Committee to its militants, since it represented an organisational duty towards our responsible rank and file.'

Then the other FAI Peninsular Committee member took the floor:

'PEDRO HERRERA: Said that anyone showing contempt for our principles had to be confronted. Someone who has no ideas should not be at the head of our movement, which needs to be asserted as a whole. There is absolutely no way we can associate ourselves with just anything that happens. The "doctrinal baggage" and "outmoded literature" which had been referred to cannot be dismissed out of hand by anarchists who are still proud to be such. We are what we are on account of them. Should anyone hold our teachings in contempt, because they prevent us from being indiscriminating, let him quit our ranks. We cannot be blamed for what happened in Aragón nor for the government's take-over of the collectivised industries. This tendency to excuse everything by accusing ourselves is a baneful thing and leads us into far from edifying postures.

We who still trust in our movement cannot be pessimistic, nor can we attribute every ill to that incapacity which those who say that everything failed in our ranks assure us does exist. We are optimists because we trust in what we have created, and current weaknesses must be overcome by banishing from the leadership of our movement any who, out of ignorance or apostasy, no longer have any faith in the organisation.

The truth must be spoken in our ranks. It is an act of treachery to mislead our militants. Those who call themselves, not merely men but anarchists have a duty to cherish the notion of responsibility. Nor may current errors be excused by invoking earlier ones. If there have been errors, we need only bear them in mind lest we repeat them. As regards participation in power, we cannot countenance the placing of undue importance upon the participation of the UGT, which carries very little weight in terms of revolutionary objectives. And let it not be forgotten that its representative is a socialist.

As for military reverses, in our written reports we have pointed to a multitude of reasons for these, for which we cannot claim the responsibility in that we had no hand in any of them, as the National Committee of the CNT itself has shown.

We support the CNT-UGT pact but with adequate assurances of revolutionary implications, which is not presently the case. We do not accept that it deserves the credit for having delayed the collapse of the Eastern Front. The comrades who displayed heroism in containing the enemy do not deserve that slight. At the appropriate time, we offered pertinent guidelines as to how the pact might be made effective, and they were ignored.

Nor did our entry into the Popular Front solve anything. It was due to a suggestion from the communists. Our entry into the government cannot be considered a success, being the necessary outcome of a phase during which power went begging. One does not ask for power: one either takes it because one is strong enough, or else it is handed to one out of convenience.

Our militants are not wanting in activity, opportunity or in agility. They cannot and should not be advised to resort to the methodology of duplicity, hypocrisy, coercion and deceit involved in the misnamed skilful politicking of the communists whom we have compared to the Jesuits. For our movement, ethics is not a luxury item but something vital which sets us apart from other sectors.

The policy of resistance has been and is our movement's policy and we must not forget that it was we who championed it and who have supported it more consistently than anyone else. There is no reason to trust in those who continually prattle on about it. Negrín has hijacked it in order to make it the mainstay of his tenure in government because he could rely upon our movement's sincerity in advocating it.

Negrín is not one of those who have worked hardest, as the many military calamities which have brought us to our present straits, testify. In this regard the map of Spain is very eloquent. Negrín's position cannot command our confidence. On more than one occasion we have notified the movement of our misgivings on this score and received no satisfaction, not even when the CNT, as a partner in the government, had a duty to take cognisance of such things.

Anarchist ideas do not render impossible, but on the contrary facilitate clear examination of the issues we have raised and resolution of them. We must recover our immense force by working within our organisation and by regarding governmental action as the circumstantial thing it is. Not for a moment should we lose sight of our real, revolutionary objectives. The Libertarian Movement will have to come to its senses. It behoves it, assembled here, to indicate the solutions. We are the committee of an anarchist organisation and we know the ramifications of our mission. We have obligations to our militants and it is not for us to dictate orders.'

The Catalan FAI's speech denouncing the tendentiousness of the information released to the press concerning the plenum, and the Catalan FIJL's address concluded that particular session. The FIJL delegation rebutted the contention that one had to enter the state in order to destroy it, in these words: 'it is as if we were to subscribe to the theory that, for prostitution to be abolished, we should place our spouses and sisters in the brothels.'

The sixth session heard replies from the National Committee and the CNT of the Northern Regional Committee. Following a disquisition upon anarchist philosophy and in a reference to the charge of jesuitry, the North's delegate alluded to Bakunin and to his 'sectarian, *carbinari*-style organisations'. He said:

'I am not Bakunin nor Malatesta, I am simply Horacio. I had no wish to be the first minister of the CNT, nor secretary of the AIT, so let there be no talk of personal ambition...On the day when it is reckoned that I am not an anarchist, I will quit. I am not Pestaña. In what I have said I have not spoken for effect. I did invent the term "Kropotkinist optimism": Malatesta and Merlino hung that label on it. I am not an academic or a philosopher. I study and I deduce the facts as appropriate. I try to reason things out and I have a method...The executive I cannot countenance: it turns our movement on its head, completely. Nothing I said about federalism has been refuted. But the federalism of the racial, historical, national variety is indefensible. Catalonia's so-called federalist policy must be amended. We are on course for a split. I would be delighted if the opposite could be demonstrated and I ask for such a demonstration. Let no one set himself up as having any patent on conduct and ideas.'

In its response, the National Committee rebutted the scruples of some delegations regarding certain political tactics and procedures with the line that 'votes are victories'. The Peninsular Committee also made a reply.

The seventh session was given over to reports concerning military matters. Entrialgo (of the National Committee) spoke of the harm done to the movement by 'comrades' intransigence' in refusing to agree to militarisation and accept the positions of command 'necessary to hold sway in the army'. Miguel González Inestal (Sub-Commissar General of the Land Army) outlined the work of the Commissariat and offered his assessment that the movement was well-placed in

that respect 'despite those positions which may be lost due to comrades' unbending attitudes'. Cardona Rosell, a National Committee member and secretary of the CNT Economic Council, wound up the session with a lengthy address on economic problems.

In sessions eight and nine, a number of delegations, especially the Catalan FAI, made their replies: the Catalan FAI, responding to criticisms from the Executive Committee of Catalonia, stated that it was not as described 'but was set up in special circumstances to co-ordinate activities and boost the spirit of internal unity.' In session ten, Montseny's address concluded as follows:

'...Negrín exercises an absolutist dictatorship, liquidationist in tendency. According to the report, she went on to defend guerrilla warfare. She spoke out against absurd procedures in official appointments undermining the dignity of organisations: she cited the instances of a Sub-Commissar General for the FAI, Peiró as Commissar-General of Electricity, and Blanco as CNT minister. She spoke out against the supply policy and against the state take-over of support and solidarity agencies, making specific reference to the National Council of Aid for Spain. Finally, she referred to comrade Manuel López's artful and irregular intervention at the joint regional plenum of the Centre as representative of the CNT's National Committee, on which grounds she demanded that any possible blame be properly apportioned.'

According to the report under examination here, a very rough debate then ensued — the document omits to summarise it — between the CNT National Committee and the FAI's Peninsular Committee. This debate lingered into the 12th session, at the end of which a working party was appointed to draft a resolution on item one of the agenda ('Scrutiny of the stewardship and policy followed by the Libertarian Movement since 19 July 1936').

Here is the proposal on this issue. Other proposals were then drawn up by way of public declarations:

'1. The Libertarian Movement reaffirms its basic principles and aspirations through the struggle waged by the Spanish people for the crushing of fascism and in defence of its freedom, independence and entitlement to its own revolution.

It declares that our direct intervention in agencies overseeing the political, economic and military life of our country has been prompted by our lofty sense of responsibility and the need for us to co-operate in the struggle against fascism as effectively as we may, a necessary first step in the direction of victory.

What struggles and reactions there have been *vis à vis* the needs and demands of the struggle, in acting upon living realities, have amounted, not to a revision of tactics, but rather to a circumstantial and intelligent amplification of methods of action which should be understood as a response to any changes in everyday life occasioned by the civil war and the war of independence against foreign fascism and its domestic lackeys.

In making this singular intervention into politics, the Libertarian Movement declares: that political power, the state, will always be the antithesis of anarchy; and that its own circumstantial involvement in power has been prompted by the supreme interests of the Spanish people. It was designed to oppose, from a position of power, the strangulation of the revolution and any deviation from the Spanish people's revolutionary trajectory, and to win the war against fascism through our direct and responsible participation therein. The commitment to participation has been given without setting any pre-ordained term to the actual process of the Spanish revolution, which remains open to every possibility of change.

In the trajectory followed between 19 July 1936 and the present, the Libertarian Movement has, over these two years, seen differences of interpretation within its ranks which differences

it considers the result of a preoccupation with bettering the Spanish people's changes in the struggle to crush fascism, although at this plenum, these differences can be left behind through its adoption of unanimous accords.'

The proposal on this very same item designed for the public consumption was phrased rather differently and in its text, paragraph 3 of the above, was omitted.

With the opening of the 13th session, item 2 of the agenda came up for discussion. At the suggestion of the CNT National Committee, that item was phrased thus:

'1. Should circumstantial involvement in politics continue?

If so, should it be the CNT that is so involved?

The approach we prescribe as the keynote of the Libertarian Movement's stewardship: in politics; (b) in military matters; (c) in economic matters; (d) in regard to other factions.'

As the debate got underway, many delegates expressed agreement with 'circumstantial political partnership' and this led on to an affirmative answer to the first question. As for the next, nearly all of the delegates took the line that it was for the CNT to participate in the government. But Horacio Prieto advocated a contrary line:

'North argued solidly that the class and technical character of the CNT precludes it representing its membership politically in that they are drawn from a variety of political parties, and advocated that it should be the FAI, operating as the Libertarian Socialist Party, that represents the Libertarian Movement in the government, leaving the CNT free to devote itself wholly to economic concerns.'

The debate on the two remaining clauses dragged on for another two sessions and in the end an appropriate working party was appointed. It came up with this proposition:

'The Libertarian Movement is reaffirmed in its basic principles through the struggle waged by the Spanish people to crush fascism and defend its freedom, independence and entitlement to its revolution. And it takes the view that it can carry on with circumstantial partnership in politics for as long as joint national plenums of all three branches, weighing the evidence at each juncture, deem this necessary and appropriate to the purposes of the best defence of the people's interests, the better achievement of their particular objectives and the ultimate goal of the Libertarian Movement, without setting any preordained term to the process of the Spanish revolution, which remains open to every possibility of change.

Until such time as the evolution of politics enters a new phase compelling the Libertarian Movement to reassess them at its regular plenums, our line is that it is for the CNT to represent the Libertarian Movement in government.

As a partner in government, the CNT represents the Libertarian Movement as a whole, without prejudice to the other branches' being likewise able to participate should this prove necessary, so that the Libertarian Movement may have the political representation reflective of its importance alongside Marxist and republican sectors.

OUR PREFERRED KEYNOTE POLICY.

INTERNAL MATTERS. Defence of anarchism's essential principles and precepts. Reinforcement of the identity of each branch in every sphere. Mutual consideration and responsibility with full scope for exposition and criticism in propaganda. Calumny and sniping criticism are to be punishable by expulsion, no matter who the perpetrators may be. In appointments to posts on the National Committees the endorsement of the Regional Committees will be an essential prerequisite so as to preclude the elevation to such posts of persons not commanding the confidence of their regions. Comrades shall abide by the guidelines issuing from the Local Committee,

the Area Committee or National Committee in the performance of whichever organisational, political or military task they may have been assigned.

POLITICAL MATTERS. We support the democratisation of power. We are against any selfish monopoly by any tendency and against any dictatorial ambitions. We call for the abolition of parliament and for the establishment of a People's Council with legislative powers and the right to vet the work of government. In those ministries which may require them, we advocate the establishment of Technical Councils to replace parliamentary commissions, excepting in ministries of an economic character. We advocate that the government be at all times a faithful reflection of the anti-fascist Popular Front. We advocate that anti-fascist parties and organisations have attachés seconded to our embassies and that our embassies be headed by personnel of the utmost reliability and capability, so that headway can be made in those countries which may be of assistance to us. Criminal investigation procedures must be rendered more humane.

FEDERALIST POLICY. Essentially universalists, we stand by the precepts of the unity of peoples, solidarity and economic interdependence. We acknowledge the principle of honouring the autonomous federative rights of the Hispanic peoples. The principles of defence of autonomous interests will always be our starting point. Regional and national interests being forever in competition, we shall always side with the latter. Regarding initiatives that might erode the identity of the autonomous or federated regions, the opinion will always be sought of the region concerned. Policy direction in the autonomous regions will be under the control of those responsible organs that the movement in those regions may possess or establish.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. The Libertarian Movement recognises that the foreign policy of loyalist Spain has not been as sure-footed as was required, and argues the case for a meeting of minds to seek maximum international support, without this signifying subordination to any unilateral policy. The Libertarian Movement expresses its advocacy of the abolition of all states, frontiers, religions and racial differences and will campaign for a foreign policy based upon the following:

- a) Spain's integrity and independence;
- b) retention of Protectorate areas until such time as international agreements may be revised;
- c) defence of the right of peoples to self-determination;
- d) increasing the influence of Spanish foreign policy in the Islamic and Ibero-American countries;
- e) tightening the bonds of solidarity with all of the world's people so as to secure peace;
- f) assertion of Spain as a Mediterranean power;
- g) opposition to all wars of aggression;
- h) maintenance of relations with those countries which support us and the severing of intercourse with those states that refuse reciprocity;
- i) prevention of Spain's mortgaging of her territorial assets;
- j) in the context of the inter-dependence of all peoples, the securing for ourselves of maximum scope;
- k) all foreign policy is to be geared towards peace for the sake of culture and civilisation.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER SECTORS. The Libertarian Movement proclaims its support for the retention of the anti-fascist Popular Front and for its activation. It advocates it also as an expression of anti-fascist unity, as an agency encapsulating the people's wishes and needs that examines matters of interest and devises solutions in order to influence the organs of power. It endorses the thesis of independence vis à vis other parties. It endorses the stance of non-acceptance

of pacts with parties pursuing a sectarian, solipsistic and dictatorial policy, until such time as these amend their ways. It shall seek to secure and extend all its posts in the popular agencies of authority and representation.

ON MATTERS GENERALLY. Pursuit of the line of resistance laid down by the Libertarian Movement and advocacy of the need to prosecute the struggle against fascism until it is crushed and until the last invader has been successfully driven from Spain.

MILITARY MATTERS: Deeming the army circumstantially a necessity, the Libertarian Movement's view is that there must be a serious and intelligent military policy, founded upon:

a) the Popular Army's subordination to the needs of the people, as the guarantor of their liberties and independence;

b) the Popular Army is not to be the preserve of any party: it belongs to the people. Serving military personnel are to enjoy full civil and political rights. We declare the need for training schools to prepare servicemen drawn from the militias, equipping them most effectively for higher commands. We shall combat all partisan influence within the army, as well as unequal and unfair treatment. Entry into the Popular War Schools of specialist corps such as Artillery, Sappers, Staff and Quartermaster's must be open to any civilian applicants, whatever their military status, providing they have proper educational background: they will have to sit a special entrance examination and, in the relevant schools, take those courses which may be prescribed for them by way of demonstrable training. We hold that there is a need for a review of assignments and promotions awarded, so as to forestall discontent and damaging bias, the aim being to make the Popular Army more efficient. We advocate a war policy free of all partisanship and demand the incorporation into the army of those military passed over unfairly to the detriment of the war effort.

In the forces of public order and rearguard forces, we call for proportionality for anti-fascist groupings, with any surplus being incorporated into army units. We take the view that Carabineer forces are for revenue duties, and public order and rearguard forces for the specific duties allotted to them. The strength of these forces must be reduced. Persons serving in these forces who are included in the call-up should be placed at the disposal of the Defence Ministry. There should be no further recruitment to the armed corps. Here, too, we call for a thorough review of promotions. And call for abolition of the category of higher ranks in the Security Corps.

We call for all anti-fascist groups to serve on the National War Council, and grapple intelligently with problems and the military situation. We want to see scrupulous screening by the CRIM. We want all comrades' capabilities and attitudes analysed by the appropriate sections, and, in accordance with superior officers, the introduction of whatever changes in command personnel may be felt appropriate for the sake of increased efficiency, by means of the aforementioned analysis.

Our organisation, having been the first to promote the War Commissariat, reaffirms its value, asking that it be endowed with appropriate powers within the Army, Navy and Air Force, with fair and proportional representation, free of any sectional bias. We advocate establishment of an Armed Forces, Public Order and Carabineers Commissariat and seek the repeal of the decree empowering the Treasury to make appointments of Inspectors-General of the Carabineers.

Given the magnitude of the mission to be performed by the SIM, we urge that it be overhauled and improved and adapted to purposes appropriate to national defence.

We speak up for unconditional solidarity with the war injured.

We call for the creation of a powerful war industry to end our dependency on outsiders. The Armaments Under-Secretariat, on which the two trade union bodies should be equally represented, will be staffed by technically qualified personnel and work towards the extension of trade union control over the procurement of war materials from abroad.

ECONOMIC MATTERS. We advocate a serious supply policy, free from privileged treatment. We reiterate each and every one of the accords of the Extended Economic Plenum and express our determination to carry them fully into effect. Endorsement of all earlier accords on economic issues and reaffirmation of our basic libertarian communist aspiration with whatever scope there may be for economic experimentation compatible with the potential of our country and anarchism's essential postulates.

We endorse the CNT-UGT pact and will countenance no campaign against it.

We defend the collectives and the formation of organs of a socialist type and aim to raise the levels of morale and expertise of technicians, a most crucial factor in economic reconstruction.

As a matter of urgency, we aim to set up a Higher Economic Council, with proportional representation for the two trade unions. This will stem political and economic counter-revolution, the recovery of capitalist power and any would-be exploitation of workers, industrial or agricultural.'

The 16th session began with an examination of item three of the agenda: 'How the three wings of the Libertarian Movement can be co-ordinated, the better to adhere to the prescribed line'. It was a question of setting up an umbrella body to coordinate and advise the movement at national and regional levels, in order to forestall potential recurrence of the differences which had been emerging. The CNT National Committee tried to rally support for its contention that each wing had to be assigned a 'specific mission' of its very own, but the majority stuck to the view that it was for each separate wing of the movement to determine that mission.

So, on the basis of agreement that such an umbrella arrangement should exist, its make-up and functions were established and a working party appointed to frame a resolution on this item.

Here is that resolution:

'THE PLENUM UNANIMOUSLY AGREES:

1. To create a body to coordinate and politically advise the Libertarian Movement. Said body is to be known as the "Libertarian Movement Liaison Committee".

It is to be made up of six distinguished militants. These will be the general secretaries of each National Committee (relieved as appropriate in the event of emergency) plus one representative freely chosen by each of the three branches.

The National Committee will examine whatever draft plans and solutions each of the three branches of the movement may submit through its representative, and has the ineluctable duty of orchestrating and devising solutions to every problem. The National Committee will not be able to implement any overall policy decision that has not first been scrutinised by the National Liaison Committee (NLC).

Matters to be dealt with and resolved by the NLC are to be solely those of a general nature, it being disqualified from examining the private organisational problems of each of the movement's branches.

The NLC will not of itself act upon any accords which it may reach, but is to forward these to the appropriate National Committee whose task it will be to act upon and implement proposals emanating from the NLC, provided that such decisions conform to the policy line which this plenum has prescribed.

Should the need arise to arrive at some decision and it proves impossible to secure unanimity among the members of the NLC, the matter is to be submitted immediately for scrutiny by a joint meeting of all the members of all three National Committees, convened for this purpose by the NLC. This shall attempt to arrive at some unanimous resolution; in the event of failure, the minority organisation will be free to refuse to abide by the accord, but will be required not to obstruct its implementation, in public or in private. The two majority organisations will be empowered to report back to the organisation on the NLC's behalf, while the one in the minority may append its own counter-report. There shall, basically, be no reason for the minority to back down pending a decision from a further joint national plenum.

Nominations to posts of national political significance are to be made by the NLC at the prompting of the respective National Committees, this being the only way to avoid internal squabbles and ensuring that the nominated comrades reflect the feelings of the Libertarian Movement in its entirety.

Similarly and with all due regard for the characteristics peculiar to each region, regional bodies will be set up with missions akin to the one outlined in this resolution.'

The closing sessions of the plenum were of less consuming interest. Provision was made for the Libertarian Youth to receive all necessary moral and economic assistance. And, as for the request of the National Federation of the Mujeres Libres for recognition as an integral but autonomous wing of the Libertarian Movement, a resolution to this effect was drafted and would be put to the rank-and-file for approval by means of referendum.

The final document of note was the following resolution on the restructuring of the Defence Sections. This too, was referred for referendum:

'1. The Secretariat of the Defence Section shall comprise one direct delegate from each wing of the Libertarian Movement. The general secretary is to be appointed by the National Committees from among the three secretariat members. In consideration of the CNT's role in the government, steps will be taken to ensure that it is the CNT representative who is designated.

2. The secretariat, along with the National Committee of the CNT and the secretaries of the FAI and FIJL Peninsular Committees, shall second whatever expert personnel this body may need if it is to function properly.

3. It shall be the task of the secretariat to oversee all Libertarian Movement militants serving in the army, to propose appointments and promotions and resolve whatever problems of military organisation our movement may run into.

4. In the event of dissent arising within the secretariat, such disagreements are to be resolved by the National Committee of the CNT and the Peninsular Committees of the FIJL and the FAI.

5. The Regional Defence Sections will be governed by the same regulations as the National Section in terms of structure, representation and functions.

Implementation of this resolution shall be conditional upon its being submitted to a referendum of all three libertarian organisations, with a period of grace of no more than 30 days being afforded for its amendment or endorsement.'

The report concludes with the following paragraph:

'In proposing that the business of the plenum be concluded, the CNT National Committee raised the issue of its differences with the Peninsular Committee of the FAI. In reply, the latter expressed surprise, saying that it, for its part, was not aware of incompatibility with any body, in that, cognisant of its responsibilities, it would immediately tender its resignation should that occur.

With this, the chairman settled the matter, winding up the business of the joint plenum of the Libertarian Movement at midday, 30 October 1938.’

The second half of 1938 was marked by complete compliance by political and trade union forces with the government’s policy. The Popular Front, revamped following the disaster in the east, remained what it always had been: a compliant tool of the government. Parliament was a charade. The Generalitat and the Basque government, which had withdrawn their representatives from the cabinet in August, eventually conceded in the face of Negrín’s promises and blandishments. Ministerial collaboration bound the CNT to its National Committee, and yoked the latter to the Prime Minister’s chariot. However, the government’s policy, despite the CNT’s input, could scarcely have been more of a catastrophe. No substantial amendment had been made to it. Military reverses continued, as did compliance with the dictates of the USSR. This particular government policy was becoming more markedly personal and absolutist. Negrín, a dictator who obeyed the dictates of Russia, set new records for extravagance and greed. His administration was bristling with administrative and financial mismanagement. The populace, weakened by hunger, had, psychologically, lost all interest in the war. It would have taken a comprehensive political change, starting with the replacement of Negrín, to give it new heart. The man empowered under the constitution to make this replacement — Azaña — was every whit as intimidated as the rest. According to Araquistáin, Azaña once made the attempt. ‘You will not depose me’, Negrín answered him, ‘and if you try, I will resist at the head of a revolt by the masses and the army, which is on my side.’

In late 1938, a commission from the FAI Peninsular Committee had talks with the President to sound his opinion as to the chances of a radical political change beginning with the removal of Negrín. Azaña agreed with them in his assessment of the gravity of the imminent military position and the only way of standing up to it, but he showed no readiness to shoulder the responsibility for separating Negrín from the reins of power.¹

The Libertarian Movement was torn by disagreements that had virtually effected a divorce between its National Committees. In his book, *Por qué perdimos la guerra*, Abad de Santillán has this to say:

‘This whole series of political trifles, of hugs and concerted action in line with support for Negrín did not prevent say, the PCE from issuing its teams with instructions to so operate inside the CNT in order to dismember it, to provoke a schism inside its ranks, to bring influence to bear upon a number of more or less representative comrades, etc. It is true that our National Committee denounced this ploy, but on paper only. In its everyday conduct there was no sign of the vigour with which there had, in times past, been a backlash against this disease. And our bickering grew as we watched the CNT abide by a line of policy prescribed by the PCE.’²

We do not believe that the CNT was obedient to the PCE’s line, but we do believe in the hallucinatory impact that the *negrínista* policy of all-out resistance had on the organisation. This policy was rooted in the need to prolong resistance in the hope that international tensions might work the miracle of drawing the war in Spain into a world conflagration such as was believed at the time to be imminent. Today, with hindsight of the events that ensued in Europe only a few

¹ Antonio García Birlán, who arranged this interview, replied to a question from the author in 1953 thus: ‘It was a Commission that was entirely ours: Federica, Santillán and I. My longstanding relations with Azaña allowed me to tell him, in no uncertain terms, what we thought of Negrín and of him, who I invited to break away from the dictator. But he was already very cowardly.’

² Abad de Santillán, *Por qué perdimos la guerra*, p.181

months after the end of the civil war, Negrín's stance appears the most astute. The *negrinistas* can seize upon the argument that, had resistance been maintained for but five more months, complete victory might have been secured over Franco by means of a European war.

This argument is built on sand. No one can argue that events which came to pass in Europe in September 1939 would equally as well have come to pass had the Spanish resistance held up. Those events might well not have come to pass. There we need only remember that 1938 had seen situations cropping up in Europe that were every whit as serious as the German aggression against Danzig and Poland. We refer to the annexation of Austria and to the occupation of Czechoslovakia. The democracies merely watched the Anschluss and cravenly backed down at Munich. In any event, international conflict appeared to hinge upon the outcome of the war in Spain.

In 1938 the Libertarian Movement still retained much of its power and influence in the shaping of events at national level. But, as we have just seen, it was split into two main tendencies: the one represented by the CNT National Committee was markedly fatalistic, while that of the Peninsular Committee of the FAI stood for a belated backlash against this fatalism. But between the CNT's fatalism and the death rattles of orthodoxy from the FAI, stood the tendency (not a circumstantialist tendency, but an enduring one) of blatant tinkering with tactics and principles: its spokesman was Horacio Prieto. This tendency, which advocated that the FAI become a political party representing the Libertarian Movement in the government, in the organs of the state and in electoral contests, was the harvest of all the seeds of ideological retreat sown since 19 July by the CNT and the FAI alike.

In a text entitled 'Polemical Essay', published by Horacio Prieto in *Timón* prior to the October 1938 National Plenum of Regional Committees, Prieto sets out at some length his plan for a revamped anarchism, revamped until only the name survived.

Here are some of the premises to his essay:

1. Libertarian communism should be thought of as the ultimate phase in the evolution of the state and the real point of departure of philosophical anarchism, endeavouring, in the period transition, to embark upon experimental ventures, without any pretence to generalising or systemising them, tailoring its tactics and procedures in accordance with a rational opportunism designed to shorten and smooth the approach to the final objective.

2. Acceptance of the coexistence and temporary compatibility of those forms of production and trade described as nationalisation, collectivisation and limited private ownership, campaigning for fair division of high office in the running of the state, between the state and the producers, making provision for an equitable sharing of dividends and prescribing appropriate levies for collective and private enterprises.

3. Advocacy of a political, juridical and administrative federalism within the limitations of the military, economic, preventive and diplomatic capacity of the central state, which would find expression as the lawful realisation of social democracy with a new constituent phase being ushered in.

4. Partnership in government alongside other anti-fascist sectors for the duration of the war, paving the way for the conquest of political power by whatever means the occasion may commend, including participating in parliament through full and direct participation in electoral contests.

5. Recognition of the current need for a regular army, public order apparatus, judicial apparatus and state administration, organs of power that must undergo a comprehensive overhaul designed to ensure their most thorough democratisation.³

As for his scheme for a 'Libertarian political party', the author, with his characteristic baroque style, has this to say:

'So as to preserve and develop its identity, the movement steps aside from apoliticism and totalitarisation. The FAI's peerless ivory tower anarchism can remain pure and this will be a splendid thing, but the Libertarian Movement has need of a homogenous force, a party, to serve as its political representative, uniting the bulk of its militants, representing a body of the spiritual refinement of which the CNT may be proud, while following its lead, and of which the Spanish people may likewise feel proud as it sees totalitarianism and petit-bourgeois ventures thwarted by a body that is the effective instrument of social evolution, the sole guarantor of liberty and democracy.

So far, the CNT has acted as the political representative of the movement, not from any deduction from theory — even if some may think so as the result of mental aberration — nor from any authoritarian leanings on the part of its "leaders"; it entered the government for reasons which override any principled scrupulosity and because the FAI would have refused to do so, and, had it been willing, was not possessed of the necessary solvency to govern. There are wise heads aplenty who fancy that a political imbalance had arisen, tipping the scales in favour of the supposed self-sufficiency of the union and minimising the historical role of parties, not understanding that their theorising is made of the same stuff as summer clouds.

The trade union organisation cannot have any other line than that of direct interventionism and, if one will, of helping out, it being a class body with very one-sided interests and aspirations. To turn the CNT into a political/trade union body would amount to unwittingly launching it on its decline, if it is to have a lasting engagement with politics. Either the ford or the bridge. If the CNT acts as the political representative of the Libertarian Movement, the FAI is redundant, and if the movement wishes to draw a distinction between political and class considerations, then it falls to the FAI to provide the lead politically.

If, when the war ends and, taking it for granted that victory is ours, the country goes to the polls, then what are we libertarians to do? Participate, and no question about that. Given that correct hypothesis, by what rationale and with what prospect of success will the CNT be able to offer itself as a candidate? In its ranks are many members who follow bourgeois parties and lots of others who, given their bourgeois mentality, would vote for whoever best caters for their wishes, and there are those, too, who are in proletarian parties. Nobody knows for whom the neutral mass of the CNT would vote, since there is no organisational discipline binding its membership.

Also, the absurdity of it would be ironic, common knowledge as it is that competing in elections requires a preliminary campaign mounted by a specialist machinery which no trade union can ever possess; it is quite ironic that the political performance of a union can ensure that its members, who are members of other parties, receive the double benefit of being doubly represented. They put up with the governmental policy of the CNT because of the compulsory unionisation in force today. Tomorrow, once normality has been restored, they would not countenance it.

Anarchism is not the ideal of a class, nor is the FAI itself a class organisation. Beyond the class struggle lies the human, the new social ethic and the contribution of this comprehensive

³ *Timón*, September 1938

progressive undertaking which is not the preserve of any single class or political faction. The people's interests are many and satisfying them is a complicated business, and they are all catered for under the common heading of political action.

With the establishment of a libertarian socialist party we would be reinforcing trade union autonomy and making strides towards the unification of the proletariat in a single body, relieving the CNT of an enormous burden along the way, making it the focus of all trade union and economic matters, handling the task of promoting collectives in technical and administrative terms and handling participation in state economic agencies.

But now and always, it should be the specifically anarchist organisation which is in government and in parliament, grappling with problems and making its name through its activity and level-headedness, seeking to act as the people's social vanguard through initiative, work and a healthy ethic which gives due consideration to human needs and attending to these and rewarding man's most deserving contributions towards total emancipation. The day of the aguiluchos and the tribes is past. The day of the creators of wealth and the mentors of a refined and progressive future has arrived. Success will go to the most intelligent and best organised. Our history places us under an obligation to ensure that these are not the bourgeois or the dictators.⁴

While Prieto fails to say as much in his article, wherein he minutely reviews all the inconsistencies of organised Spanish anarchism, particularly as they relate to the period begun on 19 July 1936, it is easy to deduce that he correctly drew the logical consequences from the resolution approved by the FAI Peninsular Plenum of 7 July 1937.⁵

On 16 December 1938, the FAI Peninsular Committee issued a report to its members briefing them on political developments. Primarily, the report mentioned an interview that had brought Negrín and Companys face-to-face on 3 December. In view of the frictions existing between the central and autonomous governments, frictions that had been aggravated by the financial restraints the Treasury had been imposing on the revenues of the Generalitat, such an interview was of great political significance. According to the briefing, this necessarily 'suggests that some spectacular moves were being hatched behind the scenes', moves which might make it possible 'to consign to the waste paper basket the calculations and intrigues of political elements inimical to the policies of Negrín and the communists.'

Around this time, the communist press was whipping up public opinion with banner headlines urging a closing of ranks by the forces of the Popular Front and unreserved backing for the 'Government of National Unity'.

These siren songs always heralded political chicanery or military difficulties. The approaching situation was in that category. The communist mouthpiece, *Frente Rojo*, which seemed to have a monopoly on sensational government news, carried the following editorial on the morning of 7 December 1938:

'ON THE LOOK-OUT EVERYONE! WE HAVE A GREAT BATTLE TO FIGHT. It is perfectly obvious that the invaders of Spain are making ready to attempt operations which may compensate them for the summer losses beyond the Ebro and which may contribute some military advantage to the new international ploy of clamouring loudly for Corsica and Tunis only to win, on the quiet and Munich-style, concessions which may ease their passage in their invasion of Spain.

⁴ *Timón*, September 1938

⁵ See volume 2.

We are all agreed upon this essential analysis of the situation. However, occasionally it is noted that when we talk of such enemy plans we do so as if they were scheduled for the long term. Not a bit of it. Their implementation is imminent, a matter of days off.

Fascism has no time to waste. Its generals are under pressure from Rome and from Burgos by eyes focussed upon their rearguard, which grows more and more hostile by the day. In April, Mussolini and Hitler believed that they had victory within their grasp, but their songs of triumph on the seashores died away many months ago and today victory seems as distant a prospect as ever.

No. The invaders will not delay. They will seek to make up for lost time with military successes boosting their standing in Spain and abroad.

Once again their plans, built upon maps and inspired in the atmosphere of the Chancelleries, will fail as they run up against the steely reality of our fronts, where these land grabbers are awaited by Spanish troops with a tremendous record, troops know that today, even more than yesterday, the value genuinely anticipated.

Given this general belief in the imminence of a further onslaught — a belief that must be spread with equal intensity right through our fronts and rearguard — the enemy must find us ready and united. Ready in the lines of battle, so that neither by surprise nor through intensity may his attack find any breach through which to make inroads into our territory, every metre of which has by now acquired an incalculable value. Prepared in the rearguard so as to increase output and mobilise all our resources to meet the requirements of the new phase of warfare which is about to begin. More united than ever. Today, the unity of the working class and the unity of all anti-fascists are more necessary to us as the focus and example of national unity, the patriotic bloc which will line up behind our army to cut the legs from under the invaders and, in the other zone, will raise the very stones against the common foe of all Spaniards.⁶

On that very same 7 December, the Prime Minister summoned the representatives of the parties and organisations of the Popular Front to his residence in Pedralbes. The gathering was attended by Mariano Vázquez and Horacio Prieto for the CNT and Diego Abad de Santillán and Pedro Herrera for the FAI. Herrera took notes of the talks with Negrín and those notes are attached as an appendix to the document under examination.

Here are Herrera's impressions:

'Negrín opened by stating that the object of the gathering was simply to brief the political parties and organisations of the Popular Front on the current situation...

He went into explanations regarding the Ebro operations, going back as far as July when they had been devised and initiated. He indicated the reasons why these operations had been mounted — the need to pre-empt the enemy's initiative and to relieve the pressure of his steamroller advance on Sagunt and Valencia, which seriously endangered that zone. His opinion was that it had been a much greater success than had been initially anticipated and that, thanks to the mettle of our troops and the strength attained by our army with its discipline and good organisation, an enormous set-back had been inflicted on the enemy and precious time bought, making possible improvements in the international climate. Consequently, he reckoned it had been a laudable operation worthy of us all and that, even though we had taken heavy losses, the enemy's losses had been heavier still; and that our losses...in dead, missing, wounded and totally incapacitated, had been matched by the prisoners we had taken.

⁶ *Frente Rojo*, 7 December 1938

Then he alluded to past worries when we had been forced to contemplate withdrawing our troops from the far bank of the Ebro. He said that this had been planned well in advance of its having been done, which testified to the steadfastness of our will to resist. He also noted that, in a display of great goodwill, organisations and parties had presented him with plans for military operations to be mounted, amendments, etc., all of them valuable suggestions which taken into consideration as far as possible and that, of these, one had insisted upon the need to order the retreat before disaster might overtake. He reported that the withdrawal had been a marvellous achievement, accomplished tactfully and with such extreme precision that he himself had been quite startled, especially when he had already resigned himself and expected that it would be a very costly business in terms of men and materials, when it had been carried off without undue losses.

He dwelt at length on comments about the enemy's circumstances, indicating that they were very grave for the enemy since discontent was growing in his rearguard. On the international scene, he was losing credibility and was, economically, in very dire straits. All of which had obliged him to prepare for a great offensive which might bring him the military successes with which to rebuild his tremendously fractured credibility.

It appeared that they were on the verge of mounting a great offensive, as indicated by the massing of troops and material in some places. He warned that an operation planned with such a substantial deployment of troops must result in some momentary breakthrough. Of course, he reckoned that what is coming will not be too serious, since appropriate provision had been made against catastrophe. Naturally, he believed that the odd kilometre would be lost, but vital areas would not and there would not be any unduly dire consequences as long as every one of us was on the alert and ready with our support.

In such circumstances he regarded it as vital that morale be sustained in the rear and also in the army. The latter had provided ample proof of high morale and capability, whether to resist or to attack. The rearguard had likewise shown that it had guts and could stoically endure all manner of privations. However, in these times, which may be considered difficult, the anti-fascist groups had to concern themselves with maintaining their united action and thought, keeping clear of all squabbles and selfish ambitions.

He pointed out that, as far as provisions went, whilst we had weathered a very difficult period, it seemed that the worst was now over and we were on the road to recovery. Though the problem could not be considered solved, it could be argued that it was considerably improved. That being so, we all had to do our bit to keep up morale on the front and in the rear, both of them necessary, since morale in the one had a considerable influence on the other. On these grounds, he wanted parties and organisations in touch with the public to keep the public discreetly up to date, of course, as to what might be going on, so as to avert needless alarms.

Someone from Izquierda Republicana said that all sectors, cognisant of the seriousness of the situation, would strive to keep the people's morale high in order to forestall demoralisation.

Vázquez, from the CNT said that, in the light of what the premier had just said, all anti-fascist groupings had to aim to play their part in a concerted action. And that the Popular Front might come together urgently to decide on the way to act upon the commitment it had given some time ago to unity, with each organisation acting responsibly in its individual activity.

Negrín spoke again to declare that he neither wished nor was able to meddle in the lives of the parties. That he had turned to them because the irregular circumstances precluded him from addressing himself to democratic bodies and that he had gladly issued this warning to the Pop-

ular Front, which he looked upon as the highest expression of anti-fascist opinion. However, he ventured to recommend to all that there be no squabbling at the present time, nor any thought of such in the near future, since, besides its meaning that the war would be protracted, the situation in which our country would find itself once the war was over required a supreme effort, feasible only if everyone was united, as he hoped might be the case.'

Following this meeting, the government held a cabinet meeting to decide a series of measures designed to smooth over resentments and guarantee assistance from the autonomous governments, and also, no doubt, to play to the gallery. In essence, these measures accelerated the process of statist centralisation of which *negrinismo* had made itself the pace-setter.

The ERC had its Under-Secretaryship of state returned to it, a position which the party had resigned at the time of the August crisis. The establishment of a Commissariat of Faiths was a concession to the Basque PNV. Other decrees were directed at the populace: decrees amalgamating the supply services and the administration, the overhauling of the Passive Defence Junta, amalgamation of army health services and those of the armed corps, mobilisation of people qualified in medicine and surgery, mobilisation of legal advisors and secondment to the Ministry of National Defence of mobilised personnel in the Corps of Carabineers and Assault Guards.

As for the CNT, it believed that the time had come to press its political demands as regards the government of Catalonia. A campaign to that effect was waged from *Solidaridad Obrera*. In its 17 December issue, the paper summarised the Confederation's demands as follows:

'The CNT demands a place in the government of Catalonia simply in order to inject greater vigour into the great work that Catalonia is doing and may do on behalf of the anti-fascist war effort, and to take up positions of responsibility, and not simply for the sake of having a role in government or to enjoy the "crumbs" of power. Those who seem to advocate absurd "concessions" in the form of some derisory role, with a fairly circumscribed and secondary portfolio, would do well to bear that in mind. That is not, and cannot be the issue. We have sought a responsible role with proper responsibility in the agency controlling the destinies of Catalonia, for the purposes outlined above, not for the sake of some formality or to get our hands on some power. Our stance cannot honestly be mistaken for anything other than it is. Either our honest offer of collaboration on a fair foundation is accepted or it is rejected. But it has to be done clearly, without recourse to (censored word) solutions which our organisation's dignity forbids us to consider.'⁷

The Confederation's demands were never heeded.

The spokesperson for the Catalan and Basque governments declaimed with the fiery words of patriotism. Needless to say, the most strident voice was that belonging to the communist press which appeared to have forgotten its persistent assault upon popular morale and its disruptive politicking. The extreme gravity of the situation furnished Negrín and the communists with their chance to capitalise upon the common danger in order to achieve two specific aims: eliminate the opposition which had been growing more acute of recent months (opposition from the Generalitat and the Basque Government especially) and, at the same time, bolster their political position with the extraordinary measures that were being adopted.

An article in the 9 December issue of *Solidaridad Obrera* mingled exhortations to heroism with quite blatant allusions to the personalised, messianic, absolutist policy of Dr Negrín. The most salient conclusion of the article is the obvious effort to spread, above all else, belief in the only possible miracle: reliance on the people.

⁷ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 17 December 1938

‘The entire populace fights united...the entire populace ought to give a lead through its representative bodies. For one man, the responsibility for bringing the issue to an end would be too much. There is no man in any country or in any circumstance like ours, without precedent in history, to tackle this...

We should like to come up with some new style of persuasion and communication that has not been misappropriated in pursuit of futile exhortations, the demagogy of some individual or faction...Duty must be done. It is no abstract duty. It is a direct, urgent, elemental duty. Let’s defend our lives. That is it. Nothing more than our lives.

In the face of the enemy sharpening his axes and readying his gibbets, in the face of the invasion now mustering its maximum strength to crush anything which may resist its schemes, we must defend our lives, those of our womenfolk and of our children. Let us see how many men there are! We shall see who is worthy of being a free man! Who are deserving of the sacrifices of our glorious dead, of the blood spilled for the emancipation of our people, for the liberation of our land and our homes from the enslaving totalitarian invaders! Stand back, cowards! Away with the weak in spirit! Let all who have regarded the war merely as an opportunity for self-aggrandisement stand down everywhere, those who have made the war their livelihood! It is not a question of “livelihood” now! What is at stake is a fight to the finish so that our people may live eternally in history and put its present straits behind it!

...The enemy must break his horns not only against our exertions, but also against our tough morale, as terribly tough as may be necessary. We cannot afford the luxury of sentimentality and evasiveness. We should accept only those reports of defeat delivered by the dead. We would have had to shoot the soldier from Marathon.’⁸

This is how things stood on the eve of the enemy offensive on 23 December 1938.

The military developments that put paid to resistance in Catalonia and, months later, to the war as a whole, were a logical consequence of the battle of the Ebro. Since the outbreak of hostilities, both armies — the Francoist and the republican — had fought a stubborn battle over one key objective — Madrid. The Francoists made the capture of Madrid their overriding objective, the republicans did likewise when it came to its defences. This obsession would have allowed either of the two armies to marshal its reserves and embark upon offensive operations on other, relatively less well-manned fronts. Only the Francoists managed this occasionally and this enabled them to take Málaga and mop up the whole northern coastline, but they never fully exploited this opportunity. Since the outbreak of the war we have seen them mounting repeated attacks in hope of occupying Madrid. They regarded capture of the Spanish capital as vital in tipping the balance of the war in their favour.

The republican command, for its part, deployed all its military might to thwart the Francoists in this, their supreme ambition, for they, on the very same grounds as the Francoists, prioritised political and diplomatic considerations over military ones. However, while the Francoists had the capability of sometimes waging a war of movement on other fronts far removed from Madrid, their counterparts on the republican side refrained from any effective initiative along such lines. And whenever they did attempt it, they displayed manifest incompetence. The Battle of Brunete was one such example. The republicans embarked upon that operation on the very same Madrid front they knew to be thick with enemy troops. The attack along the south Ebro in September 1937 was made after upwards of a year of inactivity on that front, which is to say, too late. Then

⁸ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 9 December 1938

again, in Brunete and the south Ebro alike, military successes were the least of the concerns of those who actually commanded the republican army.

The most disastrous operations were mounted from December 1937 on. The first of the series was the Teruel offensive. We have already seen that this operation was mounted at a time when the enemy had successfully concluded his campaign in the North and already had his reserves mustered in the Guadalajara sector. The enemy plan, as ever, was to encircle Madrid from the east. And the republicans' aim was to thwart this. In that event, it was quite reasonable to deploy their reserves in an all-out attack through Extremadura or Andalusia. Among other things because Teruel was a sort of arrow menacingly targeting coastal communications between Catalonia and the Centre-South zone. Given the enemy's offensive superiority, as known (as we shall see later) to the republican command, the luring of the enemy towards the Teruel salient implied — in the event of an irresistible counter-attack — the offer of access to the Mediterranean.

Thus the Teruel operation was mounted in the full knowledge that the enemy had his powerful operational forces mustered very close by, and that he had them posted at communications centres which would enable them readily to access any threatened positions and to render assistance. General Rojo, according to what we have stated above, in defending himself against charges levelled against him for confining the operation to the mere capture of Teruel and for failing to continue the offensive northwards to secure follow-up positions which might have allowed him to secure the conquered territory, has admitted that he had not sufficient troops to do that. So, the enemy was provoked on the most perilous point along the whole front, where he had his army of manoeuvres standing by, and that without there being enough troops standing by to cope with any backlash.

The Teruel operation, while it achieved its objective of protecting Madrid, compensated Franco generously for the thwarting of his own plans. With Teruel now under his control, but with his original intentions exposed, he resolved to extract maximum profit from the gift presented to him. His first move was to test the strength of the republican lines in Aragón, for he had very astutely divined that those lines had been weakened so that the 15 December attack might be mounted, and that the Republic's reserves would remain in the Teruel sector as a precaution against any possible enemy breakthrough towards Valencia and the sea. Within one month, this reasoning enabled him to mount his spectacular March 1938 offensive which led to the collapse of Aragón. The republican command had once again managed to save Madrid, but at the cost of drawing the fascist menace down upon Catalonia.

It was vital for the Republic that Aragón and Catalonia be protected. This implied the maintenance of communications between its two main zones and the communications of the whole of loyalist Spain with France and Europe via its only viable frontier. Catalonia itself was the industrial zone par excellence for the output of war materials. The importance of retaining this eastern zone outweighed any defence of Madrid. Franco's obsession with taking the Spanish capital suited the interests of the republicans, but they in turn persisted in suiting Franco's interests.

So the loss of Aragón was a consequence of the Francoist counter-attack at Teruel. We who experienced the disaster at first hand can state that the holding of the enemy attack on the line from the Segre to Noguera Pallaresa came as a real surprise. An army which for months had been uninterruptedly retreating, exhausted by foot slogging and jettisoning its weaponry and baggage, with no fortifications or reserve troops to fall back to, with its units out of touch with one another and with hardly any ranking officers, is a defeated army.

We have seen already that the offensive was halted, not by the Republic's Army of the East, but rather by the attitude of France, and that it was diverted towards Levante until the greatest of catastrophes had befallen — the loss of the Levante land bridge and the bisection of the territories loyal to the Republic.

The enemy— in spite of himself, we believe — once having secured his bridge-heads on the left bank of the Segre and at Noguera Pallaresa, and having settled in all along the Ebro, from the junction of the Segre and Cinca rivers to the Mediterranean, pressed his attack along the Levante coastline and across the Maestrazgo in the direction of Valencia. Once again it veered away from Catalonia. But the republican high command intervened to force him back towards that region.

According to General Rojo himself, at the end of June 1938, the Republic's Central High Command drew up its operational plan for the second half of the year. It was as follows: resistance in Levante; a breakthrough across the Ebro and an attack via Extremadura. As we have seen, the enemy had overrun Extremadura in the onslaught since 19 July. But despite this drawback, the crossing of the Ebro, which was the main operation, was carried out six days later. The Francoist army of manoeuvres was again drawn back towards Catalonia. And upon the conclusion of the battle of the Ebro, which was wasteful not to say ruinous for someone who could not afford the luxury of extravagance, Franco's strategists realised that the time had come to deal a decisive blow to Catalonia and to the war as such. It had not escaped them that the republican army of Catalonia was isolated and had taken 70,000 losses on the Ebro. This time, France and England would not be cross, for, on the occasion of the Czechoslovak crisis, Franco had assured those democracies of his neutrality.

In his book *¡Alerta a los pueblos!*, General Rojo admits that the Francoist offensive of 23 December 1938 had been anticipated by the Central High Command and that, in order to resist it, a manoeuvre had been prepared in the Centre-South zone. In the words of Rojo:

'Men and weapons were in short supply, especially the latter. The former had been gobbled up by a corrupt organisation that tended to reinforce the agencies of the Interior Ministry to the detriment of combat units. The manpower available fell short of the figure of 80,000 men armed with less than 40,00 rifles.'

According to General Rojo himself, on 5 December 1938 there was in Catalonia an army of 220,00 men. But in terms of its equipment, that army was the equivalent of only 100,000 men, inclusive of its services. Its brigades were all under strength. Many of them were in the process of being reorganised as a result of the losses suffered in the battle of the Ebro and their numbers had been reduced to 50 per cent of normal strength. The minimum regulation complement of arms for such units was 1,850 rifles, 32 machine-guns and 48 automatic rifles. However, most of the units had had their equipment reduced to 1,000 rifles and 20 automatic weapons. In terms of artillery they had barely 250 artillery pieces of all calibres, and 46 anti-aircraft guns. Also available were 80 fighter planes and 26 bombers, plus 49 tanks and 80 armoured vehicles. Out of the 220,000 men available for service, only 140,000 were in combat units.

By contrast, the enemy had 340,000 men, 800 artillery pieces, 80-100 anti-aircraft guns, between 200 and 300 tanks and 500-600 planes.

Again according to General Rojo, in anticipation of the offensive, the Central High Command made provision for the following diversionary operations. An attack on the extremity of the Southern front, in conjunction with a landing at Motril that would threaten Málaga. The object here was to draw off the enemy's reserves from Andalusia and Extremadura. This operation was scheduled to begin on 8 December. The main attack would take place on the Córdoba-

Peñarroya front towards Seville. In order to sever communications between the Madrid front and Extremadura, a complementary attack would be launched in the Centre. If successful, this ploy would draw off the enemy's reserves from Catalonia. If unsuccessful, reserves from every front would be pinned down and this would prevent replacement of the troops who would be casualties in the Catalan region.

In that region, republican fighters had been issued with orders to hold out to the bitter end. In the event of a breakthrough, counter-attacks would be left to the reserve troops (?). Two lines of retreat had been provided for.

Regarding the failure of this plan, General Rojo says that Miaja, the Chief of the Army Group of the Central Region, and the Chief of the Navy, disagreed with the Motril operation and they called for the overall plan to be amended. A counter-order was issued to the ships escorting the landing brigade when they were already at sea. In response to this, the ships returned to base.

The new plan consisted of a thrust towards Granada. It was scheduled for 24 December but was then postponed until 29 December. Eventually the enemy realised what was in the offing and strengthened the front targeted for the operation, whereupon a free hand was available to mount an operation in the most suitable direction. This, as we shall see, turned out to be in the direction of Extremadura at the start of January 1939. Too late!

The enemy made no secret of his intention to attack Catalonia. So the Republic's fighting men were issued with specific and defiant watchwords. And the cry of 'Bring on the bull!' raced through the lines, especially when, on 10 December, the promised date of the enemy attack (proclaimed with a great fanfare) came and went uneventfully. But severe rain and snow forced the Francoists to postpone their moves. The attack came 13 days later, which is to say on the morning of 23 December. It came at two distant points — in the sector near to Tremp (Montsec) and via Serós, near the Ebro. These sectors were manned by the 11th and 12th Army Corps, and the troops directly attacked were from the 26th Division and the 56th Carabineer Division. The former held up well, albeit losing some ground, the latter collapsed and was routed by the mere softening-up bombardment which was really not that impressive. According to General Rojo, these Carabineer troops were as well-armed as could be. Rojo himself had this to say of the 26th Division:

'The battle reports from the Tremp area were favourable, though they erred on the side of optimism. Superb resistance had been put up: there had been a slight buckling of the front but the terrain lost was virtually negligible. To be sure, the affected area was not very large, but some of the positions lost on the other hand were very important. The 26th Division manned that sector: given its libertarian ideology, we had feared some irregularity in its conduct and for the precise purpose of gauging its true state of morale and the circumstances of its commander, I paid a visit to its headquarters a few days prior to the attack. I came away from that visit with a very good impression. In point of fact, its performance throughout the attack was excellent: let us place this on record with admiration.'

But the seal was set on the disaster when the sector of the Army of the Ebro, the vaunted military fiefdom of the PCE, gave way. With the Army of the Ebro pulverised, the enemy was able to mop up the remainder of the front with ease and thrust deeply towards the heart of Catalonia in a variety of directions; towards Tarragona, aiming to head off the evacuation of troops from the Tortosa sector; and, via Cervera, Igualada and Manresa, towards Barcelona.

Barcelona fell to the invaders on 26 January 1939. The government, which right up until the end had proclaimed its steadfast determination to re-enact the Madrid epic there, was the first to

abandon the city, leaving it militarily defenceless, for it took the anti-aircraft guns with it. After a short delay, the leaders of the parties and organisations followed the government's example. In reality, Barcelona, facing the prospect of complete encirclement by land and sea was militarily indefensible. The only way to mount a defence, and for a short time only, was first to evacuate the civilian populace which, in the wake of the retreats from Aragón and from Catalonia itself, had expanded considerably. Thought of evacuating the civilians was just a dream, especially if we remember the fruitless efforts made in this regard in Madrid. With Barcelona besieged by land, sea and air, without supplies, water and lighting, resistance could not endure much longer.

After the awful blow to morale represented by the loss of Barcelona, there was scarcely any organised resistance left. So events followed hard one upon another with a speed that startled even the most pessimistic. Negrín set up his base in Figueres and from there pressed on with his policy of lies and bravado, as is proven by his last speech, delivered at a sham meeting of the Cortes:

'Spaniards: The inevitable has happened. We have lost Barcelona. The enemy wants that loss to mean the collapse of our fronts and the collapse of our rearguard so that he can speedily achieve our final destruction. This he will not achieve...

The government needs everyone's help. It has never deceived you and the fidelity of my conduct entitles me to ask for your confidence. Unless you wish to go under like a flock of lambs or perish amid starvation and misery, you must heed my words and adhere to the instructions of the government...

I am confident that my appeal will be heeded. Should it be otherwise, the common interest and the overriding considerations of the common weal will compel the government rigorously to enforce the severest measures without a second thought or hesitation.

After the capture of Tarragona, it occurred to me to address the Spanish people in order to set the reality of the situation before you. Do you know why I did not? Because I could not confess my worries nor foster in others hopes and illusions which I did not share. Indeed, I was worried that, in the circumstances in which we find ourselves, Barcelona might have a hard time avoiding falling into enemy hands...

Is there a cure for this ill? Yes. Is the remedy in our hands? Yes. To both questions I answer roundly: Yes. Let me tell you why I say this. Our army is not in disarray. It is weary and, at times, downcast, perhaps, given the inadequacies of its fighting personnel, but it retains its spirit and its morale which my words will boost.

Fresh recruits incorporated into the battle-hardened units which the government has brought in from the Centre zone, will offer reassurance to exhausted fighters, giving them encouragement to maintain their heroic efforts. The drafting in of armed units from the Centre zone, breaching the blockade contrived by the rebels and maritime forces and airborne forces of Italy and Germany, is perhaps one of the most daring, most expert undertakings ever seen in modern warfare. As far as the fighting men are concerned, as regards equipment, in circumventing the naval blockade with impressive daring, side-stepping all the difficulties posed by clandestine procurement of weaponry, into which we have been forced by Non-Intervention and laws which, ironically, go by the name of neutrality but, which as one illustrious head of state has conceded, merely favour the aggressors...Overcoming all of these obstacles, the government has managed to stockpile considerable arms reserves which, properly used, guarantee that the enemy will encounter an impregnable barrier. We have the courage of our troops. We have replacement troops that should spare us from exhaustion. We have equipment and even now it is beginning to be deployed in

a quantity, scale and quality hitherto undreamt of. It has come belatedly, just as its arrival in Madrid was belated, but it has still come in time, just as it came in good time in 1936.'

Tragic reality was soon to expose the final miscalculations of a policy founded upon the ineptitude of its representatives, on their arrogance and cynicism.

On 28 January 1939, enemy forces were deployed all along a front, which, stretching from Arenys de Mar on the coast, left Barcelona, Sabadell and Terrasa in the rearguard passing through Granollers and beyond Manresa. The immediate objectives of those forces were Vic, Berga and Girona. These towns were captured between 1 and 4 February. By 5 February Girona had been swallowed up and the onslaught, meeting with scarcely any opposition, rolled on towards Ripoll, Figueres and Palamós.

In the Northern sector, the Republic's 10th Army Corps pulled out of Coll de Nargó, Organya and Seu d'Urgell. The 26th Division had been attached to the Army Corps for tactical purposes when relieved from active service on the front, shortly after the loss of Artesa de Segre. Its ferocious action in Montsec — rewarded with the Medal of Valour — had taken a very heavy toll on its men. Among the leading anarchist militants to perish in the fighting were the Commander of the 1st Battalion of the 119th Brigade, Antonio Valero (Antolín), and the Brigade's Commissar, Martín Gental. The 121st Brigade too took considerable casualties in the same sector. Whole sections held out until buried in their own dug-outs by enemy shells.

The 26th Division fell back, following the course of the Segre. When these troops reached Seu d'Urgell, which is overlooked by the Pyrenees and the Serra del Cadí, the plan was to dig in for diehard resistance there. Among the psychological factors prompting that decision was the attitude of certain French newspapers which, at about this time, had begun to alert their readers, and of course their country's authorities, against the imminent invasion of the south of France by the anarchists of the Durruti Column who were described as born criminals and rapists, the dregs of society, fugitives from every Spanish prison.

The 'Republic of El Cadí' plan — as it was dubbed — consisted of fortifying the heights commanding the narrow gorge of the River Segre, the Serra del Cadí itself and, further East, the border pass known as Collada de Tosas. Tactically the set-up was as follows: the Carabineer troops and Assault Guards of the 10th Army Corps — which was under Jover's command — would be stripped of their weapons and organised into fortifications battalions. The 199th Brigade would man the approaches to the area via the Segre, and the 121st Brigade the positions in the Collada de Tosas. The 120th Brigade would be held in the rear as a stand-by force.

This Numantine scheme was, it seems, ruled out by the High Command and also by the survivors of the CNT committees who had opted for evacuation via Puigcerdà.

The seal was set upon the Republic's defeat when Negrín's last bulwark, the castle of Figueres, was captured. On 6 February, just nine days after delivery of Negrín's 'stand fast at all costs' speech, presidents Azaña, Companys and Aguirre presented their passports for inspection by the French ambassador and crossed the frontier. Negrín was not long in following suit on the night of 5-6 February without bothering to say his farewell to his Chief of Staff (for which the latter takes him to task in his book).

Civilian refugees, including women, old folk and children, mixed up with the remnants of the republican army and forming the most imposing exodus in the whole of modern history, also began to cross the frontier in their hundreds of thousands, carrying on their backs what remained of their homesteads. In the Puigcerdà sector, as night fell on 10 February, the troops of

the 26th Division, marshalled into perfect ranks, finally crossed over into France. They were the last organised forces to quit Catalonia.

Inevitably, the flood of refugees swept aside the lines of Gendarmerie and French colonial troops posted at strategic border points. Having been disarmed, the civilians and servicemen were herded like flocks of human beings towards locations that would earn notoriety: the concentration camps of Argelès-sur-Mer, Barcarès, Vernet d'Ariège, etc. The vast majority of these refugees would not know complete freedom again until after the conclusion of the Second World War. Their Calvary in the French concentration camps and in the labour battalions, their tragic lot under the German occupation, the ghastly circumstances of their deportation to France's African colonies and to the death camps in Germany, where tens of thousands of them would perish, the heroic contribution of these refugees and chiefly of the libertarians to the French resistance movement, to the '*Maquis*', the Allied military units, in the Sahara, in the Italian campaign, in the liberation of Paris and the ultimate victory over German Nazism: all of these episodes, so replete with sacrifice and suffering, are beyond the preview of this present work.

Nor shall we concern ourselves with the titanic struggle of the Spanish Libertarian Movement in France during the occupation of that country and especially in the wake of the Allied victory, a struggle which still continues, aimed at extinguishing the despicable Spanish Falangist regime which, to the shame of the civilised world is sustained, abetted and kept afloat by the democracies.⁹

NOTES

⁹ See the bibliography at the end of this for the documents produced in exile by the National Committee of the CNT and the General Council of the Spanish Libertarian Movement.

Chapter Twelve: The Last Bulwark

We have enough unpublished material for a detailed reconstruction of the performance of the libertarian units in the Centre-South zone prior to and after the military occupation of Catalonia. Scrutiny of this documentary evidence will enable us to make a firsthand study of the events that brought the war against fascism in Spain to its tragic conclusion. For the most part, it is drawn from the official archives of the FAI and broadly consists of the minutes of its meetings, those of the Liaison Committee of the Libertarian Movement and of what came later to be known quite simply as the National Committee of the Libertarian Movement.

In January 1939, Negrín ordered the mobilisation of seven classes of draftees. Some sixteen were already on active service. This new disposition was drafting men between the ages of 17 and 35.

On 6 January 1939, the FAI's Peninsular Sub-Committee held the first of a series of meetings at which the aforementioned orders were raised and it was resolved that an inquiry be mounted into their impact on military circles where, it seems, implementation of them was regarded as ill-advised. The only people regarding them as acceptable were the communists and the UGT. It was agreed at this meeting that guidance would be sought from the National Committees in Barcelona and, pending this, the federations and committees were advised to resist any moves towards a general mobilisation. Interested parties spread rumours to the effect that the government had adopted such extreme military measures on account of the meeting between Chamberlain and Mussolini, failure of which would herald the eruption of war in Europe.

At around this time correspondence had been received from the FAI Peninsular Committee in Barcelona, in which there was talk of a SIM raid on the Casa CNT-FAI in Barcelona and of a breakdown in relations between the Peninsular Committee and the CNT's National Committee.

Attempts to contact Barcelona, by telephone and by radio, proved fruitless, thanks - the minutes state - to the intemperance of the CNT's minister Segundo Blanco. And yet the general mobilisation order meant not only that manpower would be diverted away from production, but also organisational and party cadres would be thrown into disarray. Consequently, several emergency meetings were scheduled. At the 13 January meeting, the FAI's Peninsular Sub-Committee reached the following conclusions:

‘1. It is vital that all our resources for revolutionary action be mobilised in a solid and coherent fashion, in anticipation of any eventuality.

2. Through those organisms with political influence in which they have a foothold, they will attempt to smooth the way for whatever feasible solutions may be available for overcoming the situation, conditional upon the necessary powers to assure the survival of our regional and provincial organs of production and organisation.’

This implies that the FAI was concerned to obtain a certain number of exemptions from military service so as to ensure the normal functioning of its liaison bodies, for the mobilisation order was a blanket ordinance, affording no privileges of any sort to militants holding down any trade union or political office of responsibility.

On 19 January a Plenum of FAI Regional Committees was held, possibly in Valencia. The reason behind the meeting was to hammer out a hard and fast policy with regard to the mobilisation order. The Peninsular Sub-Committee had this to say:

‘The military situation in Catalonia, as on the fronts, is testimony to the blatant incompetence of the government. As a result, the political aspects of the problem have to be tackled, bearing in mind that the government has failed in every regard. As far as the outward aspect goes, an attempt has been made to mislead not just public opinion, but anti-fascist sectors as well, with the loans coming from America. The supply problem is as serious as ever. The war situation is difficult...The enemy has added another hundred kilometres to his hold on the Mediterranean coast, etc... If the government carries on like this it will lead us to disaster.’

It was made clear that, quite apart from offering no solution, the decrees aimed at undoing organisation completely. At the meeting, the delegation from the Centre spelled out its stance, which was as follows:

‘The decrees are politically driven and are damaging to the organisation and for the country at large...Only 30% of those currently in service have weapons...

The Centre [Regional Committee] will not comply with the dismantling of the movement in any way and if the government fails to grant exemptions to enough militants, it will hold on to them in defiance of government ordinances.’

The danger represented by the armed forces held in the rearguard was also pointed out, as was the fact that numerous fascists from the countryside were holed up in the recruitment centres or, rather, were under the protection of those running such centres and that the communists were keen to have martial law declared and control of the economy concentrated into state hands.

Matters internal to the organisation were tackled and stress was laid on the CNT’s National Committee’s reluctance to act upon the accords of the last plenum of the Libertarian Movement. ‘On which basis’, the Peninsular Sub-Committee stated, ‘we hold that whenever the political crisis comes to a head, the national committee itself must also be taken to task, for it is the faithful agent of the present government.’ The accords mentioned as not having been implemented were primarily the ones concerning the formation of the national liaison committee, failure to observe which, it said ‘means that there have been appointments and certain events of note in which the FAI has had no hand, since they have only been publicised after the fact.’

It was agreed that all these issues would be brought up at the forthcoming national plenum of the Libertarian Movement of the Centre-South zone.

That plenum went ahead in Valencia on 20, 21, 22 and 23 January and was attended by (in addition to the national sub-committees of the CNT, FAI and FIJL) the regional representatives of all three organisations.

There, it was reiterated that the general mobilisation order was acceptable only as it affected Catalonia. As far as the Central zone went, it was pointed out, among other things, that there were two army corps made up of recruits drawn from replacements drafted earlier but who had no armaments. The authorities in the zone, even taking this into consideration, simply insisted that the orders of the government had to be obeyed. The UGT representation on the national liaison committee expressed support for a general draft, though he stated that all the members of committees and union secretaries would be mobilised in the posts that they already occupied. But the Armaments Under-Secretariat militarised industries regardless.

As the CNT’s National Committee had been invited to sit in on the business of the plenum, but had been unable to make the trip to Valencia, it was simply promised a report on that busi-

ness. As for the FAI Peninsular Committee, it had informed its representatives in Valencia that it wanted no part in formulating the decrees in question, having not even been consulted about them. So some delegates repeated that a delegation from the CNT National Committee or from the Libertarian Movement National Committee needed to sit in on the plenum's deliberations. This suggestion implied that consideration of the problem should be put off until such a delegation turned up. The FAI queried this, arguing that there was enough evidence available to make a proper conclusion possible. The FAI delegation even threatened to walk out of the plenum unless it tackled the matter in hand. But it was decided that Barcelona would be asked to send down a rapporteur delegation that would enjoy the backing of the Libertarian Movement as a whole.

The CNT Sub-Committee (national level) then delivered a report on the military situation in the zone. In Extremadura, since the dismissal of Colonel Burillo, libertarians had been gaining the upper hand and in the Army of Extremadura. In Andalusia, they had considerable sympathy among higher-ranking officers. In the Centre, the movement controlled the 4th Army Corps, a division and eight brigades. In Levante, it had eight brigades with like-minded commanders. As for the Commissariat, the presence of the communist Jesús Hernández in the Commissariat-General was proving a real hindrance.

At the 21 January session, the FAI again raised the need to adopt a policy with regard to the mobilisation order. Already it was known from its own press that the CNT National Committee had wholeheartedly embraced the orders promulgated. But, especially on the part of the delegation from the Centre, there were still fantasies which went so far as to insist that, given the defiant posture of the totalitarian countries, the democracies, headed by England and France, had advised Negrín that it might be advisable to mobilise all his reserves, promising him the required weapons. In the minutes, the Centre delegate goes on:

'He went on to say that, if this supposition were to prove incorrect, then what we are dealing with here is a political ploy...aimed at a communist-style military dictatorship...From what we know ourselves and from the report delivered by the Defence Section of the National Sub-Committee of the CNT, upwards of 50 per cent of our present army is without weapons, and on that basis we consider the mobilisation unwarranted and catastrophic, since it will drag draftees, with all sorts of difficulties, through the recruitment centres, wearing them out, and eroding their morale for the heroic feats which may yet be required of the proletariat...working a transformation in them, the better to serve dictatorial ambitions. The government, rather than committing to this atrocious act, could and should have turned to the armed forces of the rearguard. The Corps of Carabineers has nearly 200,000 well-paid, well-fed, well-clothed, well-trained and well-armed men, but those troops are being held back for the protection of the dictatorial state...'

Another delegation from the Centre referred to the PSOE's dismissal of Prieto from the Defence Ministry and to his new role as a secret envoy working to obtain loans in the Americas, placing Spain in hock as a result. According to the same delegate, Madrid's industrial establishments were, 55 per cent of them, lying idle. The militarisation of the industries would affect all workers 'with the sole exception of the barbers'. And the government would stifle popular discontent by reading the Code of Military Justice to the militarised workers. The communists, urging state control of all the essential assets of the country, were acting in character. By obstructing such a take-over, the libertarians were being true to their own character:

'Until such time as we receive assurances that arms are available, we shall make it clear to Negrín — without recourse to violence — that the mobilisation of industry and supplies must be revoked, until such time the CNT pulls out of the government.'

The FAI delegation from Levante read a document condensing many of the aforementioned remarks about the drawbacks to militarisation in the purely military sense.

The same delegate asserted:

‘That it is plainly contrary to the very interests of the Libertarian Movement...since it, ipso facto, implies cancellation of all the economic effort achieved by the people since 19 July and sustained by their constancy throughout the whole of the war...the entire endeavour of our collectives and economic councils would be extinguished and thus the economic benefits won by the people would be lost, and our movement’s achievements would be reduced merely to ephemeral liaison activity, with our identity in socio-political terms being completely lost...It is our reckoning that this ordinance sets the seal upon the communist’s ambition of creating a formal totalitarian state by means of which they may position their unquestioning supporters in its various agencies, so that they may at all times control and determine all of our country’s official policies.’

The delegate also spoke in favour of all the rearguard troops being moved up to the front.

‘Allowing the rearguard troops to carry out vigilance activities on the fronts or in the rearguard is an offence against the morale of the fighting man, who then sees the blatant injustice on display.’

This delegate’s contribution to proceedings called for incorporation into infantry units of all able-bodied, non-specialist personnel and their replacement by persons equipped to render auxiliary services to the army! The rounding-up of all available arms in the rearguard, a 50 per cent reduction in exemptions granted to war industries and various specialist centres and bodies, the transfer to the front lines of all available personnel serving in the rearguard, mobilisation of civil servants and their assignment to tasks for which they were qualified.

The CNT delegation from Levante, Joan López, was the most moderate. He reckoned that the decrees had to be complied with, for opportunistic reasons:

‘In 1936 the situation was rather more difficult for us...our aim then was to bring to government notice the need to introduce discipline...as a matter of military necessity. Let there be no repetition now of what befell us then, when, distracted by that debate, we lost a lot of ground, giving the communists their chance to cash in. What we must do is take the lead in this mobilisation, for I do not believe that it is a communist ploy.’

Another member of the same delegation expanded upon this view:

‘We are conversant with the pessimism of Prieto who, from the Ministry of Defence, was willing to capitulate, but who did a sharp U-turn following the failure of European policy in Spain...let us remember that Prieto has been sent by the government to North America. We should not look upon him as Prieto the pessimist, the defeatist. We should see him only as the reputable financier. In North America, there is a strong backlash in loyalist Spain’s favour...it would be suicidal not to agree to the mobilisation and militarisation decrees and to try to cling to the revolution’s gains. What we should do is try to capture the commanding heights so as to bolster our positions and hold ourselves in readiness.’

Some delegates drew comfort from the argument that the decrees had, possibly, been devised to the prescriptions of the democracies, to US abandonment of her Neutrality Laws and to substantial offers of war materials. At the 22 January session, a delegation was appointed to set out for Barcelona, and again the issue of the need for democratic debate was raised. The FAI’s Peninsular Sub-Committee stuck by its view that resolutions should be proceeded with, and in the end a working party was set up which framed a resolution. The minutes record only one statement,

which endorses the mobilisation measures, and it seems designed for public consumption more than anything else.

A commission from the plenum had had an audience with General Miaja. Miaja had expressed his readiness to mobilise 50 per cent of the workers but the plenum rejected this on the basis that the measure offered little reassurance. It was agreed that exemptions should be negotiated for militants in the socialised industries.

On 23 January, as the sixth session was under way, came the proclamation of martial law throughout the republican zone. That martial law had not yet been declared some 30 months into civil war can be explained by the reluctance of parties and organisations to abdicate power to the military. And General Miaja, reporting this fact to the representatives of the Popular Front, had stated that he would not extend the remit of the military into those realms that were the proper preserve of the organisations and parties. In response, the FAI recalled that the October Plenum of the Libertarian Movement had passed a resolution against any declaration of martial law. Other delegates stated that any such declaration had to be opposed and the government addressed 'as one equal to another' and Miaja told that he would be made to answer for any violence sparked by implementation of such measures.

The Levante CNT delegation also spoke up at this point in support of the government. As it saw things, the government had allegedly been forced into extreme measures in order to raise reserves for the Army of Catalonia. The three National Committees were empowered to sound out General Miaja, through the CNT-UGT Liaison Committee, about the lengths to which he intended to take his latest decree.

The plenum endorsed a proposition wherein a start was made by studying the situation of the armies of the zone, flagging up any shortcomings such as inability to outgun the enemy with his superior firepower. Another point raised was the demoralisation of troops — this was ascribed to shortages and to the ineffectuality of official propaganda. There was talk of taking steps to replace certain higher-ranking army and army corps commanders, and replacements were nominated. Another proposal was to set up a higher war council on which organisations and parties would have seats and a monitoring role, overhauling the SIM to banish all political hegemony from it, and to recruit reliable volunteers. It was also proposed that wartime morale be boosted by means of propaganda against the foreign invader, propaganda likely to make an impression upon the enemy's fighters. An end to the independence of the air force, upon which the requisite co-operation with the army had to be imposed. In the matter of nominations for high commands, General Miaja was nominated as General Inspector of the Group of Armies, with an eye to 'removing him from leadership of the troops, since his is solely a decorative figure.' Colonel Segismundo Casado would replace Miaja as Commander of the Group of Armies.

At a 23 January meeting of the FAI's Peninsular Sub-Committee, it determined to propose to the other wings of the movement that a national liaison committee of the Libertarian Movement be set up in the Centre-South zone. This would be modelled on the one which the National Plenum of Regional Committees had agreed to establish the previous October. Also agreed was the formation of a national defence secretariat and publication of a manifesto explaining to the public the Libertarian Movement's stance with regard to such grave times. There were measures to stem the repercussions of the possible capture of Barcelona. At all costs, loss of morale on the fronts and in the rearguard, grist to the mills of the Fifth Column, had to be avoided. It had also been anticipated that the government might well move into the zone and that a defence junta needed to be established which would prevent their being delivered up to the government

bound hand and foot. A revolutionary tribunal would be set up, as would a committee of public safety or a straightforward counter-*cheka* with an eye to the PCE, for in Valencia there were two rearguard battalions equipped by like-minded brigades from the Levante front operating at the party's behest.

Here are some of the final conclusions:

'Establishment of relations with the military through the Popular Front and other organs of the anti-fascist movement.

Draft of a manifesto to be put to General Miaja through the National Liaison Committee. This would comprise of the following parts:

Formal liaison through the National Committees.

Strengthening of the national Popular Front politically.

Purging of commanders, the question of exemptions, public order forces, the survival of industries, etc.

Close scrutiny of the drafting of the joint manifesto in order to avoid potential loopholes.'

There was a firm decision to set up a counter-*cheka* made up of handpicked personnel, and on affording the co-ordination section whatever it required for its further development.

The first meeting related to the establishment of the Libertarian Movement's National Liaison Sub-Committee took place on 30 January 1939. Once formed, agreement was reached on organising a revolutionary defence system based on the old action groups, but adapted to the current realities. It was left to the co-ordination section to look into this. Other resolutions were that the formation of the Popular Front should be proceeded with and that the attitudes of trustworthy military personnel be sounded.

On 1 February 1939, the three secretaries of all three branches of the Libertarian Movement forwarded the following letter to General Miaja:

'Most excellent señor don and distinguished colleague José Miaja,

The need for an objective analysis of the true circumstances of the struggle against the Italo-German invasion and its lackeys, the rebels, faces the anti-fascist organisations, which are duty bound to resolutely and competently tackle the problems posed by the current circumstances and solve them urgently.

These are supremely critical moments through which we are passing, not so much in terms of the objective situation, since we remain convinced that the unbreakable will of anti-fascists can overcome all the reverses which may be inflicted on our army by a materially superior enemy, but in psychological terms, what with there being an imperfect connection between the two loyalist zones, and the rumours peddled by our concealed enemies.

It will not have escaped your grasp that the best and only means of getting through these critical moments and embarking upon a new phase of resistance and re-conquest consists of strengthening the people's faith in our course and in the direction of its destinies.

It is the judgment of the undersigned organisations, representing the bulk of the front-line fighters and rearguard workers, that in these times our army must not be denied a single resource so that it may the more effectively stand up to the enemy. As hitherto, so also from now on, we stand ready to give of our blood, our manpower and our labour in defence of our common cause.

The military authorities, saddled today with the functions of government, cannot effectively perform this task without the cooperation of all anti-fascist organisations, the identities and weight of which cannot be disregarded or overlooked without inviting risks, the consequences of which would be detrimental to the anti-fascist cause. Without diminution of those authorities

and precisely in order to afford them the civilian support and moral strength they deserve, it is vital that the rule of the military authorities is, at every step, backed by the support of Spanish anti-fascists. In this respect, we feel it incumbent upon us to recommend the advisability of Your Excellency's establishing ongoing and full contact with accredited national representatives of the anti-fascist organisations of the Centre-South zone.

We believe that the procedure of establishing individual contact with the Popular Front in each province enormously hampers Your Excellency's activities. As we believe also that the Popular Front of any province, be it Valencia or Madrid, is in a position to gauge only the problems in its own province, without taking into consideration a wider view with greater ramifications obtaining in that zone and right across the anti-fascist territories.

The undersigned committees, accredited national representatives, hereby volunteer their services in facilitating such tasks and their co-operation in the current situation. We have no doubt that other anti-fascist organisations will follow suit, if you, dear General, with your prestige and authority, recognise the soundness and urgency of our suggestion and take this disinterested initiative on board.

The tragic position in which the Catalan zone finds itself, the Popular Front government's remaining in that zone and the slowness and difficulties of communications, necessarily lead to problems which the enemy is quick to exploit, sowing mistrust and pessimism in the minds of the weak and the hesitant. The maintenance of public order, the mobilisation of resources for the war effort and the marshalling of new conscripts, provisions, etc., etc...are best and only resolved through the loyal and effective co-operation which, in our view, should be publicly forthcoming from anti-fascist organisations.

While we do not think it necessary to belabour all these problems thrown up by our grave times, and which we must confront in a concerted way, and certain that calm study of the situation will already have led you to the very same conclusion as we reached above, we are confident that you will adopt these measures in which we offer our services, the better to serve the common cause.

Obviously, we reiterate our staunch belief in the final victory of the invincible Spanish people. Our actions speak louder than our words.

Accept, dear General, our best wishes and the expression of our fervent libertarian salutations. Yours and for anti-fascism...'

On 3 February, the Libertarian Movement's Defence Secretariat met with its sub-sections and with representatives from the Extremadura and Andalusia Regional Committees. It was reported that a meeting had been held with General Miaja to sound him about a national agency that might embrace all sectors of anti-fascist opinion. At that meeting, the question of military exemptions had also been raised, and a promise had been extracted from Miaja to the effect that one of these days a communiqué on that point would appear in the press.

Also reported was a meeting with Generals Menéndez (commander of the Army of Levante) and Matallana, 'designed to bring pressure to bear on the Chief of the Group of Armies (Miaja). The individuals cited had shown themselves very willing.' It was reported that 600 cannons, 50,000 rifles and 2,000 machine-guns and plenty of other US-made equipment was on its way to the Centre. This information came from Miaja, who had let it slip at a meeting with Matallana, Menéndez, Camacho and Jesús Hernández.

At the meeting of the Defence Secretariats there was a lively debate about the outcome of recent operations on the Extremadura Front.

When the all-out assault on Catalonia began, the Central zone had an army of 400,000 men. Those troops might have been able to mount significant offensive operations, for they outnumbered the enemy troops facing them. The order to attack had been issued: the attack would take place in Extremadura, in a thrust towards Mérida.. The operation was launched on 5 January, which was when the Catalan front began to collapse: enemy lines were broken and the initial objectives the command had set itself were easily achieved. But on 8 January the operation ground to a halt on orders from above, with no better excuse than the rainy conditions. By the time an attempt was made to resume the offensive, the enemy had managed to reorganise and was now in a position to commit troops moving in a wide arc only seven kilometres from the breakthrough point. However, the anti-fascist troops were superior to the enemy in manpower and materials. A report from the 28th Division's Commissariat (the 28th Division being the unit actively involved in operations) mentioned 7,000 rifles against 1,000.

At the 3 January meeting there was talk of 'lack of discipline, and of the terror required in any war' and of this failure not being attributable to the commands which had laid down specific instructions, 'but in enforcement of which everybody has been too humane and which have remained dead letters.' 'Our units', it was pointed out there, 'are a very clear instance of such reports because of undue indulgence and criticism and the irresponsibility manifest in all orders being debated instead of carried out.'

The FAI representative asserted:

'We cannot systematically heap the blame for all mishaps on the trooper who merely carries out his orders, nor ascribe excessive indiscipline to those who bear all manner of sacrifices and display a morale as high as our troops were able to demonstrate during the phases of the Extremadura offensive, maintaining it on the defensive, after they had to fall back under enemy pressure due the shortcomings of the entire artillery and of the army's own high command.'

On 6 February, the FAI's Peninsular Sub-Committee held a meeting. At it the arrival of Negrín and of Alvarez del Vayo in the Centre-South zone was noted. The view was taken that, failing some change in the situation, this fact at least commended the adoption of a principled attitude. The government was a corpse, but the removal of Negrín was inappropriate: his conduct had to be subjected to the scrutiny of the organisations. Unless this was done, there might be a repetition of the chaotic situations that had been witnessed in Catalonia. Consequently, the following resolution was agreed:

'Pose the matter of Negrín's authority, not that he should be removed from the premiership, but we should insist that he sets up a mini-cabinet (consejillo) with representation for Marxists (socialists and communists) and libertarians (CNT and FAI), without whose endorsement he will not be able to achieve a thing.

See what plans exist, what chances and prospects there may be in every respect, for ensuring that they receive due consideration from everyone.

Authorise the Liaison Committee of the Libertarian Movement to take whatever pre-emptive action may be required.

Ensure that all accords reached are implemented as a matter of urgency.'

Once the Liaison Committee had been set up, a plenum of Libertarian Movement Regional Committees was convened. This plenum was held on 10 and 11 February in Valencia on the premises of the FIJL Peninsular Committee, and had the same characteristics as the one held in Barcelona from 16 to 30 October 1938. The agenda was as follows:

‘1. Report from the delegation of the CNT National Committee and from the national representatives in Valencia.

2. The Libertarian Movement’s stance vis à vis the current situation:

a) vis à vis the military situation (report from Defence);

b) vis à vis the political situation.

Organisational measures for tackling the situation.

General business.’

According to the plenum’s minutes, the first to report was the Liaison Sub-Committee of the Libertarian Movement. There was reference to the rapporteur delegation, appointed to travel to Barcelona, having had to land in Toulouse, France, due to an inability to land on Catalan soil. Next came a report on the position regarding military exemptions. It was stated:

‘Thus far, we know only that around 35,000 requests have been submitted to the Personnel Section of the army and as far as our application is concerned, no reply has been received by us although we imagine that the response will be satisfactory.’

General Miaja had been visited and the suggestion put to him that a commission (based on political and trade union members) be set up to work in collaboration with the army. Miaja had not acceded to this suggestion, arguing that he was the sole government representative in the zone, and that he was not prepared to share his political and military authority with anyone. Talks had been held with various military figures and the impression from these was that, even if the war was regarded as a lost cause, resistance might be sustained for three or four months. Miaja had revealed the PCE’s plans for setting up a sort of government under Uribe. He opposed this and Miaja indicated that he was not about to surrender command even to Negrín himself unless he was accompanied by the President of the Republic or by Martínez Barrio. The General himself had leaked a telegram appointing him *Generalissimo* of the Army, Navy and Air Force:

The minutes note:

‘CENTRE REGIONAL COMMITTEE (Defence): Expressed wonder that the organisation had tolerated General Miaja’s claptrap, designed to gag the people.

PENINSULAR SUB-COMMITTEE (FAI): Said that the organisation had not tolerated this. What had happened was that we had been unable to get other parties to act responsibly and treat our people properly.’

The record also includes the following remarks from one member of the National Sub-Committee of the CNT:

‘The communists have virtually mounted a *coup d’état*. [He said] that he had just come from talks with one serviceman, the latter having indicated to him that the meeting with Miaja ought not to have concluded until such time as the relationship to obtain between the General and the people’s representatives had been clarified.

‘...That Meula and Matallana are unquestioningly loyal to Miaja and the plenum must reach a quick decision and let these gentlemen know that there can be no toying with the organisation’s 150,000 rifles.’

Note the disparity between the figures given for libertarian armaments. On the one hand, there is talk that the Libertarian Movement controlled 150,000 rifles. Elsewhere this estimate inflates to 300,000. There is disparity also in the figures for total manpower. On the one hand we have the contention that when Catalonia was occupied there 400,000 fighters in the Centre-South zone. This figure later inflates to 640,000.

All of this had been brought home to Miaja, and if nothing came of it, it was due to the cowardice of the political and trade union organisations.

Next came a report from a delegation recently arrived from Catalonia. The report, according to the minutes, was delivered not merely on behalf of the CNT National Committee, but also on the behalf of the Libertarian Movement in its entirety:

‘...When Tarragona fell into the enemy hands, the Libertarian Movement thought of broadening the present government to include political personalities like Martínez Barrio, Companys and others. Let it be stressed that this viewpoint was championed by Mariano Vázquez, Frederica Montseny, García Oliver and others. But the persons concerned declined any such responsibility. Later, along came the declaration of martial law, following government consultation with the organisation, which agreed to it, albeit with reservations. Thought was given to the creation of a commissariat of the Barcelona military precinct and the post was awarded to the organisation, which thought of appointing comrade García Oliver, who declined the appointment...

...The fall of Barcelona was due more than anything else to a basic military error since there were fresh troops who might have headed off the rebels’ thrust towards Barcelona. This was not done and the consequences have pained us...as a result of the fascists’ advance on Barcelona, we see that demoralisation has set in agencies and parties and affects the very government, making people consider that everything is lost and they are not bothering to put up effective resistance, which, while it might not have resolved the situation, might have made possible a retreat with fewer losses in terms of men and material.

As an urgent aid to resistance, the government thought to organise eight machine-gunner battalions, but had time to set up only one because it was overtaken by events and a decision made at one point was rendered irrelevant within hours, having been overtaken by the circumstances.

If one adds to all this the fact that martial law was proclaimed just as the government was quitting Barcelona and that it took defensive equipment with it as well as evacuation trucks from the ministries, which travelled through the streets in broad daylight, one can appreciate the demoralising impact this had upon the civilian population.

Measures for boosting civilian morale were suggested by the Libertarian Movement, but it met with no response from the organisations and parties, most of their local organisations having pulled out of Barcelona...

The report added that on 26 January, the date when the Catalan capital fell, there were only three cannons and one company of auxiliary services left there. Every single one of the militants of the Libertarian Movement had managed to escape to safety even though they had been the last to quit the capital. A delegation had not been sent to the Centre-South zone before because Negrín had forbidden movements of any sort. The Cortes, meeting in Figueres, had condensed Negrín’s famous 13 Points down to just three: 1. Respect for national sovereignty and independence; 2. the holding of an immediate plebiscite by which the people might endow itself with a regime it deemed appropriate; 3. freedom for those who might so desire to leave the country without loss of rights of nationality. The aim was to seek a solution to the war on this basis: France and England were working to that end, but were meeting with intransigence from Franco, who aimed to deliver up to the courts those who had committed what he described as ‘criminal’ offences, and who rejected the idea of a plebiscite: the CNT’s National Committee intended to relocate to the Centre-South zone, etc.

Remarks from the Defence Section of the CNT National Sub-Committee wound up this first session of the plenum:

‘From talks held with military personnel, it emerges that these are still at their posts, not so much because they are anti-fascists but due to military honour. Accordingly, it cannot be entirely ruled out that someone will commit treachery against us. The sector where the enemy advance is most dangerous is the one where the 4th and 19th Army Corps meet.

In reply to a question from Defence of the Centre concerning the position *vis à vis* war materials and men, the reply was that our army today comprises 640,000 men, of which only 300,000 were under the orders of the organisation.’

The FAI Peninsular Sub-Committee reported the loss of the island of Maó. The CNT Regional Committee of Andalusia declared:

‘We are in a position to resist and to win, and so all of the speeches of the Regional Committees should be designed to encourage resistance. We must ensure that morale does not fall in our zone, for there would be a repetition of what happened in Barcelona, with the aggravating circumstance that that we have no border here, but only the sea.’

In the second session there was again talk of the Negrín government coming to the zone, of its refusal to acknowledge the validity of the decree on the collection of weapons from anti-fascists, of the need to purge the rearguard and give a boost to the Popular Front ‘which should now step into parliament’s shoes’. In replying to the CNT National Sub-Committee, which asserted that it did not believe in a communist *coup d’état*, the Defence Section of the Centre stated that Jesús Hernández was juggling with the posts recently allocated and that it found ‘Miaja’s appointment as Grand General very telling, since he has wasted no time in issuing suspect orders.’

The CNT representative from Levante said that he had had reports that the government was negotiating for an armistice and that the war was about to be concluded:

‘Notwithstanding, the climate of conscious resistance has to be maintained, that is, we must resist, but not to the extreme lengths of committing collective suicide.’

While the working party which was to frame a proposition about what had been covered was meeting, the necessity was broached of paying Negrín a call to explain:

‘that most military commanders were disgruntled with Miaja’s appointment and that it had to be stressed to him that the most trustworthy military commander left in our army is Segismundo Casado.’

It was therefore agreed that the National Committees would call on the head of the government ‘and tackle him as bluntly as circumstances recommend’.

One contribution from the co-ordinating delegation from the Centre Regional Committee stated:

‘We must insist he reports fully on the present situation and on the policy which the government means to pursue in this zone. Should this be a policy of mediation or liquidation, representation must be demanded on any commissions that may be set up, so that we can salvage all of the moral and material assets of the Libertarian Movement, amounting to some 50,000 comrades...We should not be unduly trusting of the resistance plans which Negrín means to implement, but should be on the alert, lest we be wrong-footed by his manoeuvres.’

The plenum concluded its business at 3.00 a.m. on 11 February. At 6.00 p.m. that very day, the FAI held a meeting of its regional secretaries. The minutes of this refer to implementation of the previous plenum’s resolution about an audience with Negrín. And the Peninsular Sub-Committee reported that, having sought such an interview twice to no avail, the Sub-Committee had suggested that the Liaison Committee send Negrín a ‘forceful letter’. Within minutes of the letter being sent, the head of the government replied by telephone that he was very interested in

a meeting with the Libertarian Movement, but asked that he be sent another letter as he regarded the first one as unduly harsh. He was sent another letter 'which was satisfactory as regards form, but which retained, undiluted, the content of the previous one.' The delegation was sent for in the early evening. The general secretaries of the Libertarian Movement's three branches arrived for the interview, but 'as the interview began an incident of some seriousness occurred since the premier tried to reject one of our delegates, Grunfeld, the FAI secretary, on the grounds that he was not a Spanish national', and 'upon the latter's replying in the same tone employed by the former', that he was not there 'in a personal capacity, but representing a Spanish organisation, some words were exchanged and the delegation was on the verge of withdrawing. In view of which Negrín gave way, but as the other envoys lacked forcefulness, our delegate was excluded from the interview despite his being on hand.' The other delegates engaged in dialogue with Negrín and, according to the minute, 'unfortunately handled things rather clumsily, failing to implement all the accords reached at the plenum as well as by the Liaison Committee of the Libertarian Movement.'

One of those present states in the minutes:

'An important battle has been lost because Negrín, a shrewd man, managed to capture a tactically advantageous position. From our letter, he must have understood the danger looming over him and looked for some form of attack by which he might rout the enemy...That attack, while not flattering to Negrín, was enough to embarrass his adversaries...Grunfeld, under a cloud, failed to provide a detailed account of what passed at the interview, because, according to the report made to the Sub-Committee, the issue of the safety of the membership was raised, not by our delegates, but by Negrín.

Grunfeld specified that it was Iñigo who raised it, and indeed that Negrín had praised him for his candour.'

The Levante delegate said:

'We must not lose sight of the basic issue. The Libertarian Movement should not have gone to prostrate itself before Negrín. We were not equal to the challenge...The pretext cited by Negrín is worthless. We know that he has already had dealings with foreigners...with Russians, the French, etc...and so it was wrong to take his bait.'

According to that same delegate, certain issues had not been put to the Premier, matters concerning which 'immediate solutions should have been demanded, instead of which there was talk of liquidation, when it had been specifically determined that this was not to be mentioned.'

On 14 February, a circular 'To all militant comrades' was issued over the signature of the Defence Secretary. It noted the loss of Barcelona and Catalonia, the evacuation to France of the Army of Catalonia and huge masses of the population and the circumstances of those interned in France. Then it referred to the political and military situation that had emerged in the South-Centre zone:

'Appropriate analysis has been made and the results are as follows: we can hold out against the enemy for some months, using the material at our disposal and counting on the steely determination expressed by all commanders and troops not to let themselves be overrun or misled by the fascist hordes, putting maximum effort into the struggle.

Visits have been made to some army commanders and those of our comrades who are unit commanders have been consulted. What would be the point of our stating the great satisfaction we take in the knowledge of their determination to win or to die, winning or perishing like men not ready to parade their misfortunes through the world and, worse still, scorned by those

countries which have thus far not seen fit to defend themselves with the commitment we have displayed in defending ourselves?

On the 10th of this month, Negrín and the Minister of State, Álvarez del Vayo, arrived in Valencia. They were promptly visited by our organisation, represented by the three secretaries of the Libertarian Movement. The stance we have set out for you above was made clear. In the course of the conversation, there was a broad agreement with our view, and the arrival of the entire government in the Centre-South zone was cited as proof of this.

In that conversation, Negrín hinted at the possibility of recovering equipment evacuated from the Catalan zone, equipment which is plentiful and good, and also expressed the hope that prolonged resistance in our zone might lead to a weakening of the international fascist onslaught which already believed the war over, and might also prompt the democratic countries, if not into a sensitivity to mutual security between countries, then at least, over time and in view of the selfishness of the dictators, into a clash of arms that would cool the totalitarian countries' enthusiasm for bullying.

In view of the vagueness of these statements, our movement has adopted a posture of closely monitoring any political developments which may ensue from this day forth.

Comrade Blanco's arrival in this zone will make this task effective, a task to which all of the higher agencies of our movement commit themselves with all enthusiasm and in close collaboration.

[We must] resist to avert a disaster that would plunge us into real chaos. And this mandate from the organisation must be honoured in spite even of the enemy war machine's superiority. It should be borne in mind that any hint of irresponsibility is tantamount to an act of treachery which the organisation will punish.

Between comrades and militants of every persuasion and especially within their own units, the most cordial relations should be established between commanders and officials. This is not the time to keep one's distance: on the contrary, it is time to reinforce our relations. Trench-digging and sentry work must be undertaken everywhere...Officers must be appreciative of the responsibilities they carry, rather than of their formal ranks, creating the required spirit of struggle for confronting any eventuality.'

On 15 February, an important meeting was held in Madrid; present were the three regional committees from the Centre, the CNT's National Sub-Committee and the Peninsular Sub-Committees of the FAI and the FIJL. The arrival of Segundo Blanco in the zone was announced to the meeting. Blanco had stated that, after the fall of Tarragona, the government had bought a huge amount of arms from Russia and that the scale of the purchase matched all previous purchases added together, especially where air force supplies were concerned. Blanco declared:

'But Russia's negligence, whether out of a desire to evade its actual commitment in respect of the shipment, or on account of the meagre interest it seems to be showing in the Spanish problem, has meant that nearly all the equipment, among which I might mention the acquisition of 500 aircraft, will be left to await shipment and that what was shipped out has not been able to get beyond the French border, because it arrived too late.'

Blanco also stated that opinion in France was in favour of a complete end to the Spanish war. 'Vázquez, Frederica and García Oliver are making overtures to Azaña with an eye to resolving the issue of the Centre-South zone', in that France and especially England intended to recognise Franco. Our committees in France had sent a letter containing a series of instructions. It bore

the signatures of Mariano Vázquez and Pedro Herrera. Segundo Blanco himself had been handed another, drafted in similar terms. Here is the text of that second letter:

‘INFORMATION.

1. Be it known that Negrín has reached agreement with Azaña on the pursuit of a policy to end the war.

2. The Mexican government has arranged with the Spanish government to take in 30,000 families “selected” from among the most compromised. It asks for fair-mindedness and that the place of residence, the political affiliation and the profession of each individual are recorded. Passage is to be paid.

The government has set up a Commission to take charge of this task, and has appointed Garcés from the SIM, to head it. On Mexico’s insistence, Torres Campañá is to join the National Aid Committee.

POLITICAL GUIDELINES.

1. The government, though it may not say so, is liquidating. You should bear this in mind and seek to reach agreement with the republican ministers on these matters since they will know what they are about and, anyway, it is with them that we are going to work. Work and activity should be focused on the idea of saving our “militants”. They must not be left behind. The others have few to rescue, while we have many lives to consider. Again our earlier proposal comes into its own: that foreign ships come to carry away the anti-fascist militants.

You must insist upon a place on the government Commission, which may be set up to handle these matters. It cannot be left to Negrín and del Vayo. This Commission should see to it:

- a) that the foreign ships arrive at the appropriate time;
- b) that the evacuation be organised with clear dossiers on who should be taken out;
- c) that it is conversant with the economic resources of the state and that these be put to proper use, each militant receiving a sum to carry him through the initial stages.

2. With the end of the war, the government disappears. But a commission must survive to take charge of the remaining sundry business and concerns. This commission should comprise Azaña, Negrín, Martínez Barrio and one figure from each party and organisation serving in the present government.

3. This commission cannot go beyond finding placements for the compromised, which is to say the militants. And steps must be taken to ensure that there is no attempt to give precedence to state functionaries, who are not exactly those most compromised. Catalans and Basques are excluded here, since their needs have already been or are being catered for in direct fashion.

4. The problem of France merits special attention. Resources are the property of the State and, in government, responsibility is shared, so there can be no question of Negrín’s being trusted with the Treasury.

OFFICIAL POLICY. The situation of the Public Education Ministry’s services and of children must be highlighted abroad. The Delegation must be issued with sufficient francs to cope with any eventuality, even after the international recognition of Franco, to whom they will not surrender the colonies immediately. Money must be demanded to cover the pay of the functionaries left here, the Under-Secretaries prominent among them.

ORGANISATIONAL POLICY

1. In anticipation of your reaching the other zone ahead of the delegation of López, Val and Amil, you should assemble the militants and brief them fully.

2. They should be informed that we will see a ship chartered for our militants and that, should we be successful in this, it will arrive and place itself at their disposal. This without prejudice to inclusion of our militants in the official evacuation arrangements.

3. We are busily ensuring that our militants can be accommodated abroad.

4. We are going to be in touch and in close collaboration with Martínez Barrio and Azaña to ensure maximum advantage for our militants.

5. Work permitting, we shall dispatch a delegation to the other zone. Meanwhile, the highest organisational authority there is vested in the Sub-Committees.

Explain our situation to them and explain that a goodly number of the members of the committees are in concentration camps.

Let dossiers be compiled on militants and their families so that they can be placed in a variety of countries or prepared for organised evacuation.

We also recommend that the CNT, FAI and FIJL operate in concert as the Libertarian Movement in order to avert duplication of efforts.

Recommend discretion in the work to be undertaken to get our militants out in order to pre-empt greater catastrophes.

There is a Popular Front accord on the creation of a similar body in that zone. You should see to it that it is set up and tackles problems better. But this should not lead to reliance upon it to resolve our problems.

On behalf of the FAI Peninsular Committee, **Pedro Herrera**; on behalf of the CNT National Committee, **Mariano Vázquez**. 10 February 1939.'

Madrid was the scene on 16 February 1939 of another meeting of the Libertarian Movement's Liaison Committee. It may have been a continuation of the proceeding one. This meeting was of tremendous significance. It all revolved around an alleged attitude on the part of Lieutenant-Colonel Cipriano Mera, which 'might have dangerous and counter-productive consequences for the business in which the organisation is engaged.' Until such time as organisational procedures and all political remedies had been exhausted, the secretary of the CNT National Sub-Committee took the line that there was no 'call for extreme measures'. The political issue could not be raised because of the absence of the President of the Republic or the Speaker of the Cortes... 'And a hard line might precipitate disaster'. Several communist commanders, Lister and Modesto among them, had already arrived in the zone and it was suspected that Negrín 'will want to award them some command'. Given Mera's attitude, the argument was that the organisation's accords 'stipulating that no militant and no body... may make decisions or adopt stances unaided', had to be borne in mind. Mera was just another comrade among the many and he had to be made to abide by the accords.

At which point Mera was afforded access to the meeting. And he was informed:

'That it is regarded as improper for a CNT militant to be, or to believe himself answerable to any person, even should it be Casado, rather than to the organisation. Consequently, in the belief that the time has not yet come to act in the manner sought by Mera, the organisation, along with all its militants throughout the zone, will conduct itself accordingly when it deems appropriate.'

And here, taken from the minutes, is Mera's reply:

'He states that he has made a decision on the basis of his analysis of the current situation. Alludes to the remit and confidence deserved by the committees, which cannot give assurances that their performance has always been effective. In this regard, he says that they briefed him just the other day about a commission, which had been for talks with Negrín. That commission

had carried hard and fast accords from the organisation. It was a matter of treating with Negrín as one equal to another, but it emerges that when Negrín challenged one comrade on the grounds of his being a foreigner, the commission dropped its offensive posture. Men and organisations will have to answer before history for their actions.'

Mera went on to say that he regarded himself as a disciplined militant and thus regarded the reference to his allegedly showing deference to Casado as frivolous.

'Then again, his view is that the committees should be cognisant of the responsibility they incur [for] some failed committees would deserve to be shot, as happens in any revolution.'

It was pointed out to Mera 'that the organisation as a whole had to operate in accordance with plans across the whole country', that his co-operation and that of all comrades was being relied upon 'for whatever might arise', but that the committees were engaged in certain negotiations and no other decisions could be taken until such time as certain avenues had been exhausted. 'One has to remember that one wrong move in the current circumstances would enable anarchism's enemies to seek to besmirch our conduct and charge us with disasters for which the blame belongs to them alone.' It was a question of 'allowing Negrín, or any other government, to carry on just as long as we may oversee and effectively partake in this performance, and if the committees fail to achieve this aim, they will deserve shooting.'

At which point Mera withdrew from the meeting. Here are some other interesting excerpts from the minutes:

'[the secretary of the CNT National Sub-Committee] reports on the cabinet meeting at which the question of government resistance, the disposition of the Fleet and that of the provinces of Alicante, Murcia, Albacete etc. were raised. The government will definitely not reside in Madrid. All the ministers spoke out against the communists, Negrín included. A forceful telegram has been sent to Azaña urging that he come immediately so that the political issue can be tackled. A telegram was received from the Ambassador of Spain in London, who had met with Mr. Halifax to tell him that his government was authorising the British government to enter into negotiations for peace on the basis of Negrín's 13 points. According to the same source, Halifax heartily welcomed the suggestion and promised that his government would look into the matter without delay. It seems that the British government is to supply transport and food...

On the other hand, it is agreed Negrín be informed, through Blanco, that in no way will any of the communist commanders and commissars arriving from France be allowed to be appointed to any post. It is agreed, furthermore, that the Centre Regional Defence be given the go-ahead to hold talks with Casado in order to communicate our position to him directly and to forestall Modesto's or Lister's or any communist's being appointed to any position in the army...'

Through the meetings, which we have been examining, one can detect an escalating friction between members of the FAI's Peninsular Sub-Committee (now the Peninsular Committee pure and simple, given the transfer of functions from the one which stayed behind in France) and the CNT's National Sub-Committee.

This sniping became acute after the incident, which occurred on the occasion of the visit to Negrín. The ambiguous stance of minister Segundo Blanco meant that he was suspected of supporting *negrinista* policy.

This situation was dealt with at a meeting of the FAI Peninsular Committee on 22 February, in which there was a discussion of the 'inferiority complex in which some comrades from the movement place themselves in their official business, among them the secretary of the CNT's National Sub-Committee, no less, in his dealings with the minister of Public Education, comrade Blanco'.

To overcome the situation what was needed was the 'speedy arrival of the responsible elements from the National Committees which are in France.' A telegram had to be sent off promptly to comrades Germinal de Sousa and Pedro Herrera, 'urging upon them the overriding necessity for one of them to travel with the utmost haste to this zone'. The CNT's minister had to be influenced through 'direct contact with the Libertarian Movement' and through some comrade who would be more steadfast than the secretary of the CNT National Sub-Committee. In the face of Blanco's ineffectuality as a minister and as a defender of the Libertarian Movement's interests, definitive solutions needed to be worked out at the forthcoming session of the movement's Liaison Committee. Moreover, 'in view of the PCE's action, it is vital that appropriate action be ordered in order to overcome it.'

The aforementioned meeting of the National Liaison Committee of the Libertarian Movement was held on 25 February. The secretary of the CNT's National Sub-Committee then reported back on his talks with Blanco. Blanco had confirmed that Azaña was refusing to return to the Centre-South zone, which undermined the government's prestige and simultaneously prevented any cabinet re-shuffle.

The government's intention was to carry on with the war, given that Franco was refusing a negotiated settlement. The government had agreed to restructure the army command and had appointed Miaja as Inspector-General of the fronts. There were no indications of any immediate plans for an enemy onslaught.

According to the minutes, the FAI offered the following elaboration on the information above: 'As for enemy troop movements, we have contrary reports which suggest that within one month the enemy is to launch another huge offensive.

We know that Azaña has made public statements in the French press refusing to come to this zone and talking of resigning the Presidency of the Republic.

The prime minister is forever misleading our minister and he us. We must put an end to this.

The PCE is installing its pawns. We must be wary of this since we will not be able to do anything, should we resolve to prevent it, once it is a fait accompli. All of the trends of which we are aware point to what we have just indicated.

Under this government, there is no possibility of arranging an honourable peace. Inevitably some government or Defence Junta offering this option will have to be set up.

The presumed reshuffle of some army commands inspires no confidence in us, given that our minister has not, as the latest accords prescribe he should, supplied the names of the replacements.'

Towards the end of February, contacts were established between parties and organisations with a view to setting up a Popular Front Liaison Committee. At a meeting held in Madrid on 26 February, the Libertarian Movement's Liaison Committee resolved to stake its claim to the secretaryship of the future Popular Front Liaison Committee and that this claim would be pressed at cabinet level. It would also make an issue of the Popular Front's laying down rules for the government to abide by.

A delegation from this committee would travel to France for talks with Azaña, inviting him to journey to Spain to resolve the political crisis.

At the aforementioned meeting, the FAI's suspicions of the secretary of the CNT's National Sub-Committee grew even more shrill. He was accused of making overtures to the government in concert with Segundo Blanco and behind the back of the movement's Liaison Committee and especially unbeknownst to the Peninsular Committees of the FAI and the FIJL.

This meeting continued on 27 February and at it, the decision was made to raise within the Popular Front meeting, summoned for that very evening, among other suggestions, the proposal that a Higher War Council be formed and Segismundo Casado appointed chief of the Central High Command.

At the CNT's request, on 1 March there was a meeting of the Libertarian Movement. There was no more talk now of the Sub-Committees. The organisation that had summoned the meeting opened the proceedings by attacking the Libertarian Movement's Liaison Committee, describing it as useless and a hindrance to the snap decision-making required in the circumstances. It proposed that there should be one single committee making the decisions and that that committee should be the CNT committee, to which members of the FAI and FIJL might be seconded.

The minutes show the following:

'The FIJL Peninsular Committee spoke up to state that there was no time to waste and that it was taken aback at the CNT National Committee's clumsiness in disguising what it was after. That it ought to state clearly what underlay its proposal, which was nothing more than a wish to act as the guide of the Libertarian Movement without any interference from anybody.

It would not matter to us if the CNT were to take charge of everything, were not its conduct riddled with errors and miscalculations and had it shown itself throughout to be equal to the challenge. Its attitude does not surprise us, for through its performance we have observed its coolness towards us.

The CNT National Committee greatly regrets that the other committees have spoken as they have...but we declare frankly that our sole motivation in so doing is the logical consequence we deduce from the Liaison Committee's being a non-entity...This is all the more serious given the critical times we are living in, times that are aggravated by one treacherous faction which, turning a blind eye to the fellowship that should obtain between all anti-fascist sectors, seeks to impose its totalitarian views.

The FAI Peninsular Committee took the line that the CNT National Committee had declared itself in revolt, that it was operating outside of the remit of the organisation it represents and that, as such, its position is inadmissible. To date, the Liaison Committee has been simply feeding on the initiatives from the FAI and FIJL, which is testimony to the ineptitude of the CNT National Committee.

At this time, the National Committee seeks to make us accomplices in the non-implementation of accords reached by the organisation, and declares itself in breach of the accords of its own organisation.

The FIJL Peninsular Committee states that the present gathering does not have the authority to decide upon the CNT's proposition and that the discussions should be discontinued. Should the CNT believe that an executive committee needs to be set up, let it state this clearly and we shall put it to our Regional Committees.'

On 3 March, there was another meeting of the same calibre, attended this time by Segundo Blanco. In his report, Blanco said that he had taken appropriate steps to thwart Negrín's plans to have Casado replaced and that he had secured from Negrín a declaration against the 'intentions of the communists'. Nonetheless, Negrín persisted with his plans for a reshuffle in the army. The minister also reported that Azaña had tendered his resignation, which made it impossible to raise the political problem and that negotiations were under way for the speaker of the Cortes to come. But the speaker had adopted an evasive attitude. Blanco also mentioned that Franco had been

recognised by France and England. On 27 February 1939, the British Prime Minister made this statement to the Commons:

‘His Majesty’s government has devoted particular attention to the Spanish situation and the action it should undertake on the basis of the intelligence available to it. As a result of the fall of Barcelona and the occupation of Catalonia, General Franco now controls the larger part of Spanish territory, within the peninsula and beyond. Although the republican forces on the southern zone continue to keep up a show of resistance, there can be no doubt as to the final outcome of the struggle. Moreover, His Majesty’s government cannot regard the Spanish republican government as the sovereign government of Spain, scattered, as it is, having no army nor solid appearance of authority. Given these circumstances, we have decided to communicate to General Franco our decision to acknowledge his government as the government of Spain and, to this end, formal action has been taken this very day. My understanding is that the French government is also to announce a similar decision. His Majesty’s government welcomes General Franco’s public declaration regarding his and his government’s determination to ensure Spain’s independence and take action only against those facing criminal charges.’

Segundo Blanco was optimistic with regard to the communists’ attitude. The situation was not in their favour and all nervousness had to be avoided, along with any precipitate action. On arrival in the Central zone, the government had come across the parties’ preparations for the rescue of their militants. Formal overtures were being made to some countries with an eye to evacuation, and governors had been issued with instructions to issue passports discreetly, but a frightful chaos had resulted from whimsical interpretation of these orders. In military terms, the government saw that the situation was very difficult. What little reserves were available could not sustain the fight for more than three months. In anticipation of the worst eventuality, contact had been established with the European powers with a view to avoiding reprisals. ‘As for the possibility of ultimate victory’, Blanco wound up, ‘no one with any commonsense can conceive of it.’

The focus of the debate that followed Blanco’s address was the speech that the leader of the government was due to deliver around this time and it was agreed that, in order to banish his customary demagogic and personal tone, guidelines should be laid down for this speech, after which the meeting moved on to consider the military position and the following opinion from the FAI appears in the minutes.

‘By our reckoning, the relevant proposals spelled out by the Libertarian Movement - Central High Command, Higher War Council, reorganisation of the Commissariat, changes of command and replacement of Jesús Hernández — should be implemented immediately. There is also the Under-Secretaryship of the Army, whose reassignment would be very welcome.’

Colonel Casado’s candidacy for command of the Central High Command was endorsed, and General Matallana was recommended for command of the Army of the Centre, a post that Casado would be vacating. Avelino González Entrialgo would be nominated for Commissar of the Cartagena Naval Base.

We shall leave the grave and important events triggered by the Negrín government’s presence in the Central zone to the following chapter.

Chapter Thirteen: Woe to the Vanquished

With the arrival in the Central zone of the leader of the government, together with his ministers and his communist staff, the political disintegration under way in that zone was exacerbated. From Negrín, the communist leaders had secured exclusive title to air transport to central Spain aboard the Republic's aircraft and very promptly the big guns of their demagoguery and misrepresentation fired off a salvo. This was a softening-up operation ahead of an assault upon the military and political positions upon which they had set their sights. The opening salvos came from *Mundo Obrero*, which tried to heap the blame for the loss of Catalonia on the non-communist groups. And this campaign came at a time when nobody was trying to bring communist generals to book for their repeated reverses on the Catalan front, particularly Modesto and 'El Campesino', who were the first commanders to be overrun by Italian armour there.

Publication of *Mundo Obrero* was suspended after it carried a defamatory manifesto which fell foul of the censor. It was a reprint of one released by the PCE Politburo in the middle of the disaster in Catalonia. In it, Largo Caballero was accused of bearing the responsibility for that disaster and was labelled a 'thief' and a 'murderer' and it was alleged that he had decamped to France like a coward. Despite suspension of this communist diatribe, the manifesto was reissued as a flyer and distributed among troops in the trenches.

According to Casado's account in his book *The Last Days of Madrid*, Negrín had a four-hour interview with him upon arrival in the central zone. He opened by announcing that Casado was being promoted to the rank of general. Casado briefed the Prime Minister on the situation of the fronts and the rearguard. Provisions were in alarmingly short supply. Madrid's civilian population had food for just two days. There was no milk available for children over two years of age. Electricity reserves were not enough to guarantee continued operation of the few remaining war industries. The loss of Catalonia had meant a 70 per cent reduction in war industry establishments. Raw materials and means of transport were in short supply, and there was no possibility of bringing in supplies from outside. If the enemy were to succeed in his aim of severing communications between Madrid and Levante, the unconquered capital would have to surrender within 48 hours or watch its inhabitants perish of hunger. The army was short of defensive equipment and the propaganda to which the communists applied themselves had made the army ineffective. 70 per cent of the comrades were in the hands of the PCE. Troops were going hungry and unclad and the Catalan disaster had profoundly undermined morale. The army reserves had been whittled down to eight green, poorly-armed and badly-officered divisions. Yet across the trenches from Madrid's southern flank the enemy had 32 divisions arrayed with masses of tanks, artillery and automatic weapons aplenty. A Francoist brigade had twice as many men as a republican brigade.

In conclusion, Casado broached the need to bring the war to a dignified end in order to avert pointless loss of life.

Negrín replied to all this reasoning with the tired can about there being some 10,000 machine-guns, 500 artillery pieces and 60 planes available...in France, to be sure. And that all attempts to wring peace with honour from Franco had foundered, leaving heroic resistance the only option.

Later, Negrín assembled the representatives of the Popular Front and regaled them with an eloquent speech in which his hundreds of artillery pieces and thousands of machines were brought up again. He closed his address with a paean to resistance and pre-empted any possible comeback by alleging that he had to leave for his desk as a matter of urgency.

Some days later, he summoned the Commanders-in-Chief of the Army, Air Force and Navy to Los Llanos (Albacete) airfield. For two hours he spoke to them about his peace negotiations, which, he revealed, dated back as far as March 1938. He had made use of friends, some of them fascists or pro-Franco, and of the British government, but to no avail. So there was nothing for it now but to resist. And he underlined his concluding words by citing the usual avalanche of weaponry of all sorts that he appeared to have within reach. Among his boasts featured the Army of Catalonia, a battered army interned in the concentration camps in France. 'He omitted to mention', Casado points out 'that, in light of his failure, he was ready to tender his resignation.'

In the face of the orator's euphoria, the high-ranking army officers insisted in a dignified way upon the need to enter into peace negotiations with the enemy. Admiral Buiza reported that the fleet was threatening to quit Cartagena unless peace was negotiated immediately.

'And why have you not had these upstarts shot?' shrieked Negrín.

'Because my opinion coincides with theirs', came the Admiral's steely reply.

Air Force Commander Camacho and Bernal, the Commander of the Naval Base, agreed with their comrades in arms. Only Miaja sought to ingratiate himself a little by taking up the Premier's song of resistance.

'Agreed', Casado cut him short, 'but let us make a start by repatriating the families of all those officers whose families are outside the country.'

Miaja was forced to hold his tongue.

As the meeting broke up, Negrín, realising that he was sitting on a powder keg, accelerated his plans for a *coup d'état*. He would begin with the army. Matallana would be appointed chief of the Central Staff, Modesto would be promoted to general, like most of the other communist military commanders, and would take over from Casado as commander of the Army of the Centre. Galán would be appointed to command of the Cartagena Naval Base.

J. García Pradas, in his book, *La traición de Stalin* has written:

'Let the reader gauge, then, how loaded was the atmosphere when the cream of libertarian militants from the Centre region prepared to hold a plenum, scheduled for the last fortnight in February. What a gathering! We came together in a hall of the Public Entertainments Union, at No. 29 in Miguel Ángel Street, adjoining the mansion in which Durruti had set up his headquarters in November 1936. Present were some 250 comrades of well-tried mettle, sound revolutionary credentials and disposed to daring decisions.

That plenum was the epitome of dignity. At length we examined the situation in the zone and found it so disastrous against this background it struck us as impossible not only to resist but even to make peace. We all agreed upon the necessity of organising the pace of the fighting, with enthusiasm for the fray in our troops and in others. We aimed to negotiate a path between this war to the death of which many spoke, as if suicide by an entire people were possible, and the honourable peace which some were beginning to contemplate. We hoped we might avert the chaos, the angry chorus of the abandoned or defeated masses, the ghastliness of a military defeat

followed by the disintegration of our rearguard which, in the space of a few hours, might bring mad panic and despair in its wake, as had occurred in Málaga, Santander, Asturias and Catalonia itself.

And with this end in mind and in order to undertake operations encompassing more than our own specific circles, the plenum resolved to set up a Regional Defence Committee to which all others had to be strictly subordinate and in which the following sections would come together: military organisation, statistics, political police, propaganda and guidance, supervision of our economic might, transport and deployment of technical personnel.'

The Defence Committee immediately issued a statement in which, Pradas (he having drafted it) says 'it declared itself strong enough to attempt to make a reality of the slogan "Either we are all saved or we all go under"' previously popularised by the government.

A few days later the question of a National Defence Council was raised 'and there were open talks with Casado'.

'...Whereupon we stepped up our efforts: we increased the pace to a frenzy, confident that he who strikes first strikes twice as hard! Overnight, at a large private residence in Serrano Street, where the Marqués de Luque de Tena, owner of ABC, had lived prior to the war, the Defence Committee orchestrated the revolt... Two or three times daily, Val and Salgado passed on our resolutions to Casado and through this liaison the tiniest details of the rising were ironed out. Segismundo — or Segis, as we used to call him — had taken charge of liaison with the military personnel we needed. He was the most prestigious figure among them by virtue of his professional talents, republican record, his subtle and perspicacious intellect and his opposition to any chicanery against the anti-fascist unity of the people: he had had a hand in a number of plots against the Bourbon monarchy, had later commanded the presidential escort; during the war, he had emerged as a confidant of Largo Caballero as Director of Operations for the Central Staff, directing part of the battles of Jarama and Brunete — making good other people's mistakes — commanding the Army of Andalusia and the Army of Aragón and finally carrying the hopes of the Army of the Centre, which, when Negrín promoted him to the rank of general towards the end, could not have dreamt that Negrín had already made provision to have him removed and, maybe, to have him shot.'¹

Casado in his book notes that, on 1 March, he was summoned by Negrín to the notorious Yuste position, a sort of fortress garrisoned by elite communist troops. Negrín had ordered that, upon leaving Madrid, he should hand over command of the Army of the Centre 'temporarily' to Colonel Ortega, the communist commander of the 3rd Army Corps, whom we have already encountered. But, finding this ploy repugnant, Casado handed over to his Chief of Staff, for which Negrín naturally took him to task. Negrín's scheme collapsed, but Casado availed of his visit to Levante to have talks with General Menéndez and other military chiefs to whom he revealed the intentions he suspected Negrín of having, as well as his own intention to mount a revolt. From these chiefs he received the promises of support that he needed.

On 3 March, on returning to Madrid, Casado held talks with trusted military leaders whose number undoubtedly included Cipriano Mera, Commander of the 4th Army Corps.

That same day Casado was visited by a woman, one Rosario del Olmo, an agent of Negrín's, who showed up with a suggestion that he sign a declaration of unqualified loyalty to the government. Casado excused himself on the grounds that doing what she proposed was out of place and

¹ J. García Pradas, *La traición de Stalin*

at odds with regulations, since in fact every serviceman had pledged his support as a functionary of the government. Casado understood perfectly well that this was an ultimatum from Negrín. This was shown by the fact that within a few hours Negrín summoned him to talks due to be held in his own home. Consequently, del Olmo's visit was closely bound up with the Premier's invitation. The summons indicated that Casado had been marked for arrest and this suspicion was confirmed by the fact that Matallana and Miaja had also been sent for. By telephone, Casado told the latter of his unshakable determination not to walk into the trap. This time Miaja gave his approval. Matallana deferred ultimately to professional scruples.

As a result, over the telephone wires, there ensued between Casado and Negrín the sort of tug of war one sees between two skilful wrestlers cognisant of each other's abilities.

On the very day the interview was to have taken place, orders elevating Modesto to General, and Tagüeña and Vega to garrison commanders of Murcia and Alicante and Francisco Galán to commander of the Cartagena Naval Base were made public. By Negrín's reckoning, publication of these orders had to be timed to coincide with the arrests of Casado, Miaja and Matallana. Only Matallana, the sole member of the trio to show up at the Premier's residence, was actually detained.

Although his game had now been rumbled, Negrín persisted, sometimes with polite requests, and sometimes with veiled threats, in trying to draw Casado into the trap he had set for him and he offered Casado every sort of facility for making the journey, from his own personal car to a Douglas aircraft expressly dispatched to Madrid (but which returned empty to the Yuste base, of course).

On the same day, Cartagena witnessed the grave developments that led to the fleet quitting that port. Afterwards Negrín pressed Casado to present himself at his stronghold the next day (5 March), and no excuses.

Casado wrote in his book:

'I gave him my sincere word this time, for if we had not revolted he, as a prisoner of the communists, would have had to resort to force.'

In the early evening of the same day, Casado established what would be the headquarters of the Defence Council in the cellars of the Treasury Ministry. At the stroke of 8 pm the future council members gathered there, except for Miaja who remained in Valencia, oblivious of what was afoot. The declaration due to be broadcast to the nation was gone over and before that could be done, they awaited the arrival of a CNT brigade, the 70th, from the Army Corps commanded by Mera. The 70th Brigade would take over the strategic positions in the city centre in anticipation of an expected communist counter-coup.

Over to García Pradas:

'At 11.30 a.m. the CNT brigade arrived, under the command of Bernabé López. Its troops were deployed in the agreed positions and comrade Septién, Captain of the company occupying the Treasury Ministry, went down to see Casado. The doors of the building were closed and at midday when the official declaration of war was about to be "broadcast", we all made for the department where the headquarters microphone had been installed. There was a link-up with Radio España and Unión Radio. The official "announcer", promoted to Captain of Carabineers as if by magic or by the grace of Negrín, began to read out the declaration, unaware of what was to follow, and he was dumbstruck when, as he stepped back from it, Julián Besteiro, stooped with age and suffering, stepped towards the microphone and declaimed:

“Citizens of Spain! After a long and pained silence, I find myself obliged to address you this day on grounds of conscience...”

The time has come to unleash the truth and claw away the web of lies in which we are enmeshed. It is an ineluctable necessity, a duty to humanity and a requirement of the supreme law, which says that the blameless and irresponsible masses must be spared.

With its euphemisms for truth and its half-truths and deceitful intentions, the best that the Negrín government can hope for is to buy some time, time that has been squandered as far as the interests of the bulk of the citizenry, combatant and non-combatant, are concerned. And this policy of time-wasting could have had no other aim than to feed the unhealthy belief that complications in international affairs may unleash a catastrophe of worldwide implications, in which the proletarian masses of many nations would perish with us.

One can lose, but with honour and with dignity when overwhelmed by disgrace. And I tell you that a moral victory of this sort, which is no defeat at all, is worth a thousand times more than the mirage of actual victory bought with the currency of surrender and ignominy...”

In the Council’s declaration, which follows, and which, according to Pradas, was drafted by the Libertarian Movement, passages like the following stand out:

“To pre-empt us, to blot out such disgrace and avoid desertion in times of greatest trial, a National Defence Council is being set up and on behalf of this body which rescues from the gutter the powers discarded there by the so-called government of Dr. Negrín. We address ourselves to all workers, all anti-fascists and all Spaniards to offer them the assurance that no one will be able to shirk performance of his duty nor evade the responsibility incurred by his promises...”

We call for resistance, lest our cause founder amid derision and disgrace. To this end, we ask the co-operation of all Spaniards and offer the guarantee that no one will abandon his responsibility. “Either we are all spared, or we all succumb to extermination and opprobrium”, said Doctor Negrín: this National Defence Committee assumes as its first, last and sole task, the conversion of those words into reality.’

As the statement concluded, Negrín made a telephone call to Casado.

‘General. I’ve just listened to the declaration you have broadcast to the nation and I consider it an act of lunacy.’

‘Colonel is all that I am. As for what has occurred and insofar as I personally am concerned, my conscience is clear. I have done my duty as a soldier and as a citizen. And it has the people’s endorsement. Its true representatives are here with me and as convinced as I am that they have done Spain a real service.’

‘Consider. There is still time to come to some arrangement.’

‘I don’t understand what you mean. I believe everything has been arranged and to the people’s satisfaction.’

‘At least send me a representative so that I may surrender the powers of the government to him.’

‘Don’t bother, you cannot surrender what you do not possess. I have just picked from the gutter the powers that you and your government discarded.’

‘Won’t you accede to my request?’

‘No.’

Since Casado had no wish to look like a dictator and since Besteiro had voiced the same misgivings, the presidency of the Council was awarded to General Miaja. The *Junta* was made up as follows:

Chairman General Miaja (non-partisan)
Defence Colonel Casado (non-partisan)
State Julián Besteiro (non-partisan)
Internal Affairs Wenceslao Carrillo (PSOE)
Treasury and Agriculture González Marín (CNT)
Communications and Public Works Eduardo Val (CNT)
Justice M. Sanandrés (Izq. Republicana)
Public Education José del Río (Unión Republicana)
Labour Antonio Pérez (UGT)

Once the Council had been constituted, Casado informed Negrín that General Matallana should present himself at his headquarters before three hours had elapsed; otherwise, all members of the government were to be shot. The message was understood and complied with. Shortly afterwards, Negrín and his ministers scuttled away to France by air.

Meanwhile, what had happened in Cartagena?

According to Casado, on 2 March, Admiral Buiza summoned together his ships' commanders and commissars to tell them of the coup being hatched by Negrín and that representatives of the army and of the political organisations were ready to retaliate by forming a National Defence Council. The latter move won the endorsement of those assembled. But when Negrín learned of this, he immediately dispatched minister Paulino Gómez to Cartagena. Gómez told the fleet's commanders that the government was aware of their conspiracy and was ready to take appropriate action. Immediately, the *Diario Oficial* carried notification of Galán's appointment to command of the naval base. Galán journeyed to Cartagena with orders to take action against the disaffected. By agreement with the base authorities, the fleet commanders had undertaken not to surrender command to Galán, an undertaking which, inexplicably, was not honoured. As a result, a variety of attempts at subversion ensued ashore and on board the ships. One of the mutineers was Artillery Colonel Armentía.

The situation was aggravated by the uprising of the Fifth Column, joined by other persons who, anticipating the way the war would turn out, were in a hurry to earn themselves some useful credits. Colonel Armentía surrendered to the fascists and later took his own life. This defection delivered into Falangist hands a number of forts complete with powerful batteries, as well as the base radio station. With these, the fascists intimidated the fleet into surrender. This threat, the all but constant over-flying of the ships by enemy aircraft and the outcome of the fighting underway inside the city still uncertain, all weighed on the minds of those in charge of the fleet who opted to put out to sea.

According to Casado, the fleet commanders on the high seas were able to verify that the revolt had been put down and that Cartagena was still loyal to the Republic. So, instead of heeding the French government's suggestion that their ships put in at Bizerta, they were able to make their way back to the base and helped rescue the thousands of anti-fascists whom their flight had condemned to become the victims of vicious Francoist repression.

Let us see now what happened in Madrid after the National Defence Council had been proclaimed.

As soon as the proclamation of the *Junta* had been read out, Casado started talks with the Army and Army Corps commanders. Some had already pledged their support spontaneously. In the Centre, Colonel Barceló, commanding the 1st Army Corps, stated that he was unconditionally

‘at your disposal’. Lieutenant-Colonel Bueno, in charge of the 2nd Army Corps did not come out with a definite answer.

‘With me or against me: I want no vagueness’, Casado replied.

Colonel Ortega, in charge of the 3rd Army Corps, took Casado to task for not having warned him of what was afoot and asked for time to think things over. This was Casado’s reply:

‘Don’t think me so stupid as to give you notice when I knew you to be an active member of the PCE. Tell me categorically how you stand, but remember that anyone who opposes the will of the people is to be shot.’

Casado concluded that he could only depend upon the 4th Army Corps commanded by the anarchist Mera. He had some hopes for Barceló, but was completely mistaken there, for Barceló was the first to rebel and then assumed the leadership of the revolt against the National Defence Council. As for the armoured corps, the Assault Guards and the Air Force, their commanders and even their junior officers were mostly fanatical members of the ‘party’. The commanders of the Armies of Levante, Andalusia and Extremadura had aligned themselves unconditionally with the new set-up but it could not be forgotten that in Levante there were three Army Corps with communist commanders and three reserve divisions of the same persuasion in Extremadura. The Army of Andalusia was in the hands of the CNT and the PSOE.

To be honest, the situation was not promising. Consequently, urgent action had to be taken. Loyal troops were positioned at strategic points around the capital, for one thing. Everything would be done to prevent the opposition forces from Levante and Extremadura from being in a position to swoop upon Madrid.

The communist rebellion was not long in coming. In the early morning hours of 5 March, the 8th Division commanded by Ascanio rebelled. Together with the reserve troops that it had some 12 kilometres outside Madrid, it marched on the city centre with tanks and artillery deployed. There were also rebellions in Alcalá de Henares and Torrejón. By 7 March the fighting was fierce. Barceló mobilised all of his reserves against the Council, and this extended even to units manning the fronts. The lines were left at the enemy’s mercy. These troops also entered the city and occupied the headquarters of the Army of the Centre. Several commanders were taken prisoner and shot.

In this, the first phase, the situation could not have been more delicate. According to Pradas:

‘As may be seen, our position was difficult: but, even so, we held our nerve and did not lose confidence in our decision, or our faith in the people, which applauded us. Colonel Casado, who had never let himself be drawn into political squabbling in the rearguard, placed greater hopes in the “radio” and in the press than in our arms, and even when the Council’s military inactivity afforded an opportunity for some barracks inside the city to rebel, he was against one single soldier’s being pulled out of the front.’

The situation remained consistent, until certain scruples were overcome. As Pradas makes clear:

‘Our patience was exhausted. The 14th Division, forged in the Casa del Campo and in the Prado, put to the test in the Jarama, victorious at Brihuega and heroic in Brunete, was moved up to Madrid! Mera telephoned Guadalajara, where the UGT’s Liberino had succeeded him in command of the 4th Corps:

“Send me Gutiérrez with the 14th! Let Luzón come too. They will find enemy troops in Alcalá. Hit them hard! They must be crushed without hesitation!”

These troops put down the disturbances in Guadalajara and Torrejón and pressed on towards Jarama to attack the communist forces from their rear. After heavy fighting, in which artillery was much used, the men of the 4th Corps managed to break the resistance and recaptured the Army of the Centre's headquarters. During this fighting, some 30,000 prisoners were taken from the communist forces and these were mustered in Alcalá de Henares. But in Madrid city centre there was still fierce fighting, for the opposition, well-endowed with tanks, some of them secret ones from the PCE's underground depots, put up a die-hard resistance. The position did not alter until 10 March when the headquarters of the 2nd Army Corps commanded by Ortega, surrendered. Ortega offered to mediate and wasted no time in briefing the Council as to the opposition's surrender conditions...a guarantee that the lives of the rebels would be spared, their newspapers allowed to publish again and...a place for the 'party' on the Defence Council!

The rebel forces returned to the front on 12 March. The spirit of clemency prevailed in the Council. Only Lieutenant-Colonel Barceló and his Commissar, Conesa, paid with their lives. Execution was justified in terms of the shootings the pair had ordered against people who were their prisoners, Colonels José Pérez Gazolo, Arnaldo Fernández Urbano and José Otero.

With the communist uprising snuffed out in Madrid, other centres of resistance were easily mopped up. The equally dangerous redoubt in Levante was neutralised when a number of tanks were intercepted while en route to Valencia.

Now let us turn our attention to the organisational activities of the Libertarian Movement.

A restricted circulation letter sent out from the CNT National Committee, endorsed by General Secretary Manuel López and addressed to the Regional Committees, with the injunction that no copies should be made, but that their militants should be given a verbal briefing, spoke about the constitution of 'an Executive National Committee of the Libertarian Movement'. This was to replace the movement's Liaison Committee which, of itself, the circular asserted, was a hindrance, for such Liaison Committees deprived the CNT of '50 per cent of its representation and powers.'

The document alludes to the Confederation's suggestion that the FAI and the FIJL be absorbed into the CNT National Committee and says: 'But the whole thing was in tatters, for when our suggestion was put to both Peninsular Committees, they launched into a storm of vituperation', the National Committee being obliged to give way for fear of provoking a split in the organisation. Meeting in a further session, the three committees agreed to the formation, under their supervision, of a panel of nine comrades, an interim arrangement that would operate until a National Plenum of the Libertarian Movement would take place. The agenda of that plenum having been issued and circulated, the CNT National Committee, it says, refrained from sending out rapporteur delegations to the Regional Committees, but this was specially undertaken by the FAI Peninsular Committee which called meetings (plenums) of militants in the regions, which it attended and at which it 'created prejudice with tendentious reports against the CNT's National Committee, for the sole purpose of excluding it from the new committee that was being formed, thereby pushing the candidacy of its own nominees just the same as any political party pushes its candidates in times of election.' The circular said that when the National Plenum met, 'an absolute majority of the comrades favoured by the FAI Peninsular Committee' were nominated to fill the new body.

The document went on to say that the body thus established had been saddled with certain exaggerated rules of procedure 'which we have agreed to in part, but not in whole, because that would be tantamount to a total eclipsing of the National Committee, which we are not prepared

to countenance until such time as the organisation determines otherwise and entrusts it with the responsibility implied by such action.'

The circular closes by transcribing several letters received from that body, letters that the National Committee regarded as presumptuous and humiliating.

Now let us move on to the contents of other documents.

The Libertarian Movement's National Committee had been constituted on 7 March. It was made up as follows:

General Secretary Joan López

Vice-Secretary José Grunfeld

Military Affairs Avelino G. Entrialgo

Trade Union and Economic Affairs José Almela and José Grunfeld

Propaganda Lorenzo Iñigo

At its 11 March meeting, the Committee turned its attention to policy guidelines. What emanates from the following contributions was adopted as such guidelines:

'GRUNFELD: Proceed with examination of the current situation in order to determine the ultimate prospects for our activities. Thought it as symptomatic that the enemy offensive had not come to pass and this he attributed to current developments. Believed that international diplomacy was seeking the speediest conclusion to our war, with assurances that all manner of outside meddling in Spain's future might be eliminated. Regarded the following as immediate issues: the evacuation issue (today all but an impossibility for a large number of the militants of the anti-fascist organisations), the rescue of the Libertarian Movement's present assets and its future prospects, with regard to which relentless vigilance was required. Innuendo about apparent similarity between our own unions and the syndicates of the Falange Española, should it take hold among our comrades, might cause us serious difficulties. Thus, as far as ending the war went, we have to be in a position to manage our movement clandestinely and nimbly. As for the PCE, even though it might be right not to insist upon its disbandment for the time being, with an eye to bringing the existing contest to an end, intelligent and calm scrutiny of ways and means of ensuring its eventual elimination is worthwhile.

LÓPEZ: We should tackle the problem from three angles: general prospects, in accordance with the National Defence Council, conclusion of our war through an honourable peace and adoption of appropriate measures and policy with regard to the PCE.

The overall trend is towards a liquidation of our war thanks to the predominance of British policy. This, however, will not render the regime ineffective. Our every act should be designed to rescue as many militants as possible so that tomorrow they can reconstruct the life of the country in a free regime.

Our general policy should be that the National Defence Council ought to stick to a policy of resistance to the end, so as to achieve an honourable peace. A world war is regarded as inevitable and while there is any chance of victory for the democracies, I believe we must strive to sustain the Spanish revolutionary spirit that may then make it easier to recover our country's liberty. The state of public opinion, with its tendency to disintegrate, has to be taken into account, and the tact we display in the tempering of our propaganda will be very effective in this connection.

Our policy *vis à vis* the PCE. We have more than enough reasons to turn on them and wipe them out, but it is equally certain that we have scores to settle also with regard to the socialists and the republicans. The policy of the Popular Front has been responsible for all our failures and for our current predicament, including our present diplomatic position.

In this regard, we can concentrate all our criticism upon the communists, but we must be shrewd in choosing our moment. Our public stance should be: "We do not seek eradication of the PCE, nor of any party, but quite the opposite. We want everyone to join the Popular Front and cooperate fully with the National Defence Council. So far, so good. The communists will have no access to power."

When this same committee met on the morning of 16 March, there was a briefing 'on a peace overture which, should it come off, requires us to look into ways and means of evacuating our moral and material assets.' There was, it was said, very little time to lose. Should the plan fail, dogged resistance had to be organised. It was agreed at the same session that it be proposed to the National Defence Council that commissions be dispatched to France, Britain, the United States and Mexico for the purpose of recovering the assets transferred there by the Negrín government and, simultaneously, paving the way for the shipment of what produce might be exported from Spain. There would be a central commission resident in France, acting as the agent of the Defence Council.

The session continued into the evening, in the presence of the libertarian representatives on the Defence Council. The latter took note of what was agreed, in order to raise these matters at the Council scheduled for that very same evening. The meeting reconvened at 11 p.m. and, at it, Eduardo Val and González Marín reported that the Libertarian Movement's accords had been accepted in toto by the Council. Val himself reported on the substance of the Defence Council meeting:

'Among other issues, the refugee problem was dealt with: here, Besteiro spoke of the need to table negotiations in Mexico and in Paris, which gave us our opening to bring up the name of Mariano Vázquez so that the Council's official representatives might liaise with him. This commission is one that we will be able to appoint, since Marín was given authority to make the necessary appointments.

Provision has been made for suspending all of the Communist Party's press organs, and PCE personnel have been warned to make a declaration of support for the National Defence Council within six days, with the concession that any failing to do so will be issued with the necessary passports to quit Spain. As regards military emblems, elimination of the five-pointed star was agreed. As regards the carrying-out of the death sentences passed on communist personnel, it was agreed that any that had not been suspended should be carried out, and that the rest be referred to the National Council for scrutiny. As for death sentences passed on fascist personnel, the dispositions of the Negrín government on the matter were accepted.

A reorganisation of the SIM has been mooted, and the matter has been left with ministers for consideration and a final decision in their forthcoming meetings, Casado being afforded full powers to decide upon outstanding, short-term business. We must find a comrade to take charge of the SIM command in Almería. It was determined that Mera will take up the command of the Army of Extremadura.'

The commissions which were to operate abroad were appointed at a meeting of the National Committee of the Libertarian Movement held for that express purpose on 17 March. The one operating in London and Paris was made up of Bartolomé Pascual, Facundo Roca and José Pros; the one in the USA, of Joan López, Higinio Noja Ruiz and Julián Martínez; the one in Mexico, of Melchor Rodríguez, Manuel Villar and Miguel Basulie. It was also resolved that National Committee personnel abroad should not be used but instead that they be 'recommended to make their way to this zone with all speed.'

On 17 March, a communist handbill was distributed on the fronts. It stated:

‘Comrades: the repression targeting the PCE continues. The Defence *Junta* has tabled talks with our Central Committee. The party has insisted upon the following conditions if it is to recognise the *Junta*:

1. the establishment of unity;
2. immediate freedom for the party, the release of our prisoners from detention and reinstatement of all ousted communists;
3. a dignified and honourable peace guaranteeing Spain’s independence.

Should the *Junta* fail to accept these conditions, the party will struggle against it, with all that this implies.

So be alert comrades. Let us not be caught unawares by any development. Ready for anything, to prevent capitulation and the handing-over of the people and, first and foremost, of communists.

Bind yourselves to the people. Refute all of the calumnies against the party. Make it be known that the formation of the Junta is a ploy by international capitalism to liquidate the people’s gains, to enslave them and eliminate the communists, their finest defenders.

If we manage — and we are capable of it — to whip up tremendous mass pressure, the Junta, devised to deceive the people with the mirage of a “dignified” peace, will not be able to survive nor will it be able to capitulate.

We will achieve a dignified and honourable peace through unity and by being ready to resist.

Work, discuss, and whip up a wave of sympathy and solidarity for the party in the factories and unions, across the whole proletariat, across the entire people.

With their support, we shall triumph, have no doubt.

Long live Spain’s independence! Long live the PCE!’

On 22 March, the following statement was issued by the National Committee of the Libertarian Movement apropos of the peace talks and conditions:

‘TO THE COMBATANTS, TO THE WORKERS IN GENERAL: The Libertarian Movement, averse to pointless chatter, believes that there is a need to speak out today as bluntly as the circumstances require. There is a deliberate confusion which we need to dispel immediately, intrigues which we must eradicate, possible weaknesses against whose progress we must erect the bulwark of our unshakeable steadfastness.

The time for mistakes, hypocritical palaver and half-truths worse than lies has passed. Nonetheless there are those, inured to the consistent lying of the Negrín breed of politicians, who have yet to grasp this fact, and who seek to misrepresent the facts in order to turn them to the service of their interests or ambitions.

When the National Defence Council, in a display of absolute honesty with regard to its commitments and the anti-fascist people, announced that a proposal for an honourable and dignified peace had been framed, some people were only too quick to float the rumour that the peace had been signed and indeed that this peace, far from being the result of concessions exchanged between two adversaries, is nothing but unconditional surrender, the humiliating and shameful delivery of anti-fascists to the enemy with whom they have been doing battle these 32 long months.

Under cover of this falsehood, lurk falsehoods of the pro-fascist variety, hasty professions of totalitarian zeal by folk who have previously made a phoney pretence of anti-fascism. Confronted by such audacity on the part of our foes, the National Committee of the Libertarian Movement

says to the workers: there is nothing, absolutely nothing beyond what the Council has publicly declared. A proposal to safeguard Spain's independence and the dignity of all. The war goes on and will continue without faltering or hesitation. The struggle is framed in the same terms as hitherto.

No prey to pro-fascist tendencies may remain at large. Anyone who, by word, deed or conduct seeks to undermine our fighter's morale or the security of our rearguard, must be brought to book and sentenced under summary procedure with all the severity that the laws of war demand.

When the National Defence Council was set up, it set out its aim clearly: to guarantee a decent peace and prosecution of the struggle to the end. It has done and is doing everything necessary to the achieve the former, but not for one second does it lose sight of the possibility that it may have to carry on with the war with all due severity. No matter what fascists, more or less concealed, may say, the National Defence Council will countenance no settlement that might imply dishonour for the workers, the surrender of anti-fascists or humiliation for any who today adhere proudly to the same ideological positions they held on 19 July.

It is possessed of the requisite moral courage to state publicly the need for a peace that averts further bloodletting. But it will not accept such a peace unless the moral values of Spanish anti-fascism are preserved from threat. The Libertarian Movement clearly and emphatically endorses this stance. And it states, further: whereas Negrín, for all his talk of resistance, was laying preparations for the leaders to escape and for people to be sacrificed, we stand ready to save the people by arriving at an honourable peace even if it requires sacrificing all our militants.

But let it be well understood that there are conditions upon our peace. It will not be a craven "every man for himself" affair in which those with the means of escape take to their heels, betraying their comrades and leaving to the mercy of the enemy, but rather a decorous arrangement permitting all who so desire to quit Spain, and guaranteeing those who stay behind against all threat of reprisal, criminal treatment and extermination. In the absence of these conditions and whatever others may ensure the complete independence of our country, there will be no peace.

The Libertarian Movement which is on a war footing against weaknesses in all quarters, assumes full responsibility for its words. The contest will go on with all of the violence this presupposes. We have no taste for theatricality or demagogic talk. But, shunning both in equal measure, we guarantee, quite simply, that struggle to the death will be a fact.

The Libertarian Movement wholeheartedly embraces the policy publicly voiced by the National Defence Council. But to all of its militants, and, by extension, to Spanish anti-fascists generally, it says that confusion must be shunned and all manner of weaknesses strenuously repudiated.

We must stand by our every post — in trench and factory alike — with greater vigour and determination than ever. The honourable peace...the only one we will countenance...is not yet accomplished. The war goes on and at any moment may take a doubly dramatic turn. Level-headed, determined and resolute, the Libertarian Movement is on standby, just as it was on 19 July, 7 November and 5 March. With it, alongside it, showing indulgence and complacency towards none, all Spanish anti-fascists must stand, ready to prosecute the war and win the peace.

For the Libertarian Movement, the National Committee.'

At its March meeting, the Libertarian Movement's National Committee decided that comrades Melchor Rodríguez and Joan López should set out immediately for France along with Colonel Romero, to conduct the negotiations entrusted to them by the Economic Council. For the time being, the planned mission to the USA was shelved.

At the meeting, González Marín reported on the proceedings of the meeting of the Defence Council held the previous day, at which the death sentence passed on the communist Conesa and others implicated in the recent rebellion had been dealt with.

The meeting found it necessary to look to the organisation's future in Spain, the FAI Peninsular Committee being deemed the agency best suited to look into this. There was also agreement on requisitioning the services of Ricardo Sanz, Gregorio Jover, Juan Manuel Molina, Miguel González Inestal, Miguel Yoldi, Manuel Mora Torres, Antonio Barea, Gil Roldán, Vulcar del Mateo, Mariano Vázquez, Pedro Herrera, Germinal de Sousa, Germinal Esgleas, Francisco Díaz Andino, Rafael Iñigo, Juan Ripol and Angel Rodríguez for the Centre-South zone.

The minutes of this committee's meeting of 24 March, the object of which was to listen to a briefing by the anarchist Council members concerning the outcome of negotiations entered into with the enemy, read as follows:

'The enemy refuses to countenance establishment of any pact or signed document. He goes on to lay down a number of necessary preconditions for our surrender.

First among them is that on the 25th of this month, in a symbolic gesture, our aircraft should be mustered at their airfields from 3-6 pm. He was told that we would not agree to surrender without some written undertaking.

From the remainder of the conditions imposed and which we have in writing in our possession, it follows that his bona fides cannot be accepted. This has also been acknowledged by the Council itself.

The enemy reiterates the concessions made by him as long ago as 28th February, with regard to the sparing of lives and saving the lives of those looked upon as ordinary criminals. All manner of assurances have been granted to professional military personnel.

The negotiations have been conducted with, among others, Colonel Ungría who was Director-General of Security in the rebel camp and who has handled the organisation of public order services in Barcelona, without, it is said, recourse to reprisals. He showed great understanding, acknowledging that we had a case in nearly every point, but concluding that they had no authority to negotiate. The negotiations are proceeding without the slightest foreign influence.'

Val and Marín then stated that that very evening they were to report to the Defence Council meeting with specific instructions .

In the minutes, stress is laid upon the following accord:

'It is agreed that a blanket refusal to accept the conditions imposed by the rebels is called for, and that we insist upon signing of a document, agreement or undertaking specifying the conditions on which peace is to be established in accordance with the undiluted spirit of the initial parameters presented by us. In the absence of such a guarantee, it will be necessary to break off negotiations and commit ourselves to a furious defence of our interests, lives and liberty.'

March 26 saw another meeting, held at the request of the libertarians on the Council. González Marín gave a briefing on the latest negotiations with the enemy. This new contact was broken off abruptly. While the negotiations had been in progress, Franco had asked Colonel Ungría by telephone if the republican air force had been handed over and upon hearing that it had not, ordered the talks suspended.

Nevertheless, the Defence Council agreed not to regard the talks as having broken down and to send a fresh message to the rebel camp asking them to reconsider this attitude. After Casado had examined this message, he sent for the CNT representatives, Val and Marín, who made up the opposition on the Council, to tell them that the message constituted a definitive breakdown

and that 'our air force commanders say that we have only 70 aged planes, scrap metal, and that there should be no problem about surrendering these.' Since the other Council members had given their consent by telephone, Val and Marín gave theirs also.

Immediately, a radio message was sent to the enemy camp: it contained a declaration by the Council that it was prepared to make the symbolic surrender of aircraft. Later, this reply was received from Burgos: 'Impossible to halt movement of our forces. Offensive begins this morning. As soon as it begins white flags should be hoisted and forces surrendered.'

The Council immediately contacted the Army commanders, to finalise the details of the defence. Once the enemy offensive began, the public would be told of the breakdown of negotiations:

'AMIL: once the offensive is unleashed, we must proceed with all severity, coordinating activities so that we may withdraw in an orderly fashion from areas we may lose without undue losses. We should not forget that we will be attacked on all sides, nor should we omit to pay due attention to our rearguard, with the rebel personnel ensconced there who will undoubtedly spring into action...

VAL: when the balloon goes up, we have to act accordingly. In our rear there is a slight danger. We already have the SIM in hand and it will, of necessity, be useful to us. The Council is well disposed to acting in accordance with our guidelines. Guidance needs to be offered to the Regional Committees and personnel moved up to the Levante and Andalusian fronts, mainly to boost morale and cultivate a favourable disposition beforehand.'

At that very moment, news arrived of the enemy's offensive having been unleashed in the Pozo Blanco sector (Andalusia).

On the morning of 27 March, the Libertarian Movement's National Committee held a further meeting, also attended by Val and Marín. The latter reported that in Andalusia, after some initial resistance, not a shot more had been fired. The enemy had advanced 40 kilometres without encountering any resistance. Val continued:

'Then we agreed to release news of the situation, which was broadcast. We had to do some tough talking, quarrelling with other Council members who were identified with the contents of the bulletin. Casado did not do badly in what he had to say.

The bulletin lacked a sufficiently strong introductory comment. And in the final section, dealing with evacuation, the first paragraph said it all. But the others insisted on the remaining paragraphs.

In anticipation of our reaching some peace arrangement, we drafted an evacuation scheme founded on a concentration on the Staffs of the Armies and Army Groups, with the unions and parties involved. Yesterday the other Council members took the line that it was high time things were set in motion, but I opposed this on the grounds that it would have a demoralising effect in that people would refuse to fight on the fronts. Today, at 10 am, we meet again and the matter will have to be ironed out. The professional soldiers, Matalana and the like, are utterly unnerved...

SALGADO: The Defence Council operates on the basis of a mistaken appreciation of the position. The document released to the public is highly dangerous because it is demoralising. The evacuation plan aims to avoid disordered flights, the fruits of collective panic, but to no avail. A further note to the enemy camp would be utterly pointless, since, in the wake of their victorious advance, they will not be amenable to reason, for they will no longer see us as seeking to avert bloodshed, but rather as being completely unnerved, and they will insist upon abject surrender.

So the Defence Council's policy is totally wrongheaded. Only after some days of bitter resistance on our part could we make overtures to them again regarding negotiations.

It is vital that the whole passport business be dropped and that no one is allowed to leave, least of all those in the drafts mobilised. Unless we save all compromised personnel serving in the front lines, we cannot compromise over anybody's salvation.

MARIN: The position is extraordinarily critical. The passport policy brought down the previous government and triggered the creation of the National Defence Council. Let us analyse our situation.

Loss of morale has hit the Centre hereabouts too in the past three or four days. The "panic" by the Cuatro Caminos comrades has had a catastrophic effect on morale in this region. Desertions are multiplying on every front. As for the air force, planes are going missing daily as are officers, especially communist ones. People have no stomach for fighting. The enemy launches an offensive and our troops fail to respond.

All of this has led to violent confrontation inside the Council which was set up, not for the purpose of resisting, but for the sake of peace. To resolve the situation we arranged for a commission to leave for the outside world to make basic provision for evacuation. The previous government was already working on this. We have probably 170,000 tonnes of shipping available. We have stressed the need to halt the disorderly evacuation of runaways, but all in vain. Appropriate orders have been officially issued, yet they still leave. Unless we want to re-enact a second Numancia, let's get to work on saving our membership. The climate abroad is quite favourable for us and the same goes for the rebel zone itself. So, we need to make lists of those militants who must be saved. And to muster our forces at the point of our choosing and organise the defence of that place by our troops so as to ensure the salvation of all of our movement's moral assets.

We should place absolutely no reliance upon others. They will not concern themselves with a general rescue. They will bother only with their own people. We, then, must look to our own resources.'

The concrete conclusion of this meeting, which was to continue into the evening, was this: 'The establishment of an Evacuation Junta is endorsed.'

The record of the meeting held that evening is the last document in the series we have been looking. Let us transcribe the most essential portion of it.

'In response to the previously mooted question of admitting the PCE on to the National Evacuation Junta, and to the invitation issued to this party by a section of the army, it was agreed that granting it admittance would constitute a political error.

MARÍN: Reported on the meeting held in the Defence Council that morning concerning the evacuation question, which took up all of the discussions. It was resolved that Evacuation Juntas be set up and that a start be made to the removal of compromised personnel from Madrid and from the Centre region on the basis of the level of threat they faced. To this end, he said, four ships of large tonnage have already put in, spontaneously, at the port of Valencia.

Wherever the enemy attacked, the surrender of ground would continue and personnel would be evacuated from that front without delay. There was a need — and it had been so agreed — to amass as much foreign currency as possible in order to afford each citizen some initial living expenses. With 70 or 80 million francs available, each individual would receive 2,000 francs. So the aim was to evacuate some 40,000 people.

He had already issued orders to the Director-General of Security to proceed with procurement of the maximum possible amount of foreign currency, and to proceed with the sale of products

(almonds, mercury, saffron, etc.) through which such sums might be obtained. The foreign currency funds would be allocated on a proportional basis to the various Evacuation Juntas, so that the latter might oversee the dispensing of these monies. This had to be brought to the notice of our Regional Committees so that they might prepare mustering stations and gauge the numbers of comrades for evacuation. The level of the enemy offensive left the door open to the realisation of our plans.

It was agreed that a radio address be broadcast that night by the Libertarian Movement to the effect that the Defence Council should indicate to other parties and to the UGT that they in turn should do likewise, encouraging their members to maintain morale, that the Defence Council should issue another memorandum, making clear the bad impression created by the statement released to the public, that the Regional Committees be briefed on the situation and suitable guidelines drafted for their incorporation into the Evacuation Juntas, that it be understood that relocation was only for compromised militants and not for their relatives and near ones, that the final passports were to be issued in Valencia and that special safe conduct passes would be issued by the various armies, that the use of dynamite be scrapped unless circumstances dictate its use...'

From the above, one gets some inkling of the state of disintegration which appeared on the fronts once the chances of a negotiated peace were dashed. Soldiers abandoned their trenches in small groups, fraternised with their enemy counterparts or simply crossed over to the other side, as was the case with the communist 40th and 42nd Brigades, among others. The fraternisation among the troops was infectious, and it was impossible to speak of duty or of adherence to discipline to men singing and dancing in celebration.

'At 7 am, on the morning of 28 March, when there was not one single trooper on the front, saving on the Guadalajara front, I issued orders to the commander of the Army of the Centre to make contact with the enemy with a view to formal surrender...The enemy command summoned that officer to the Clinical Hospital at 11 am, sharp, along with his staff.

When that moment arrived, I considered that my mission as a member of the National Defence Council had ended. The work which awaited me in Valencia was of greater importance. The remaining armies had to be disbanded along the same lines, although we hoped to delay this last stage long enough to successfully muster in Alicante and Valencia as many as possible of those whom Franco would classify as having a case to answer. At the same time, I wanted to urge the governments of France and Britain once again to send us, by sea, the requisite means of transport and authorisation for our refugees to remain temporarily or permanently in Oran or in France.

From Madrid, I dispatched a message to the President of the Republic of France anxiously seeking authorisation for as many as wished to get away to sail for France, and at the same time, I asked him to intercede with the British government so that the latter might allow the use of some units from its fleet for transportation purposes.'²

On 28 March, Colonel Casado quit Madrid accompanied by his *aide de camp*, by General Matalana and Council member Val. By the following morning, all of the armies had, to all intents and purposes, been disbanded. On the same day, messages were sent out again, this time from Valencia, to the usual democratic statesmen. The best that their consulates had to offer was facilities for specific individuals, and, at a later stage, the possibility of asylum in a British embassy. Any who accepted this offer might still be handed over to Franco should he request their surrender.

² Casado, *The Last Days of Madrid*

‘As in Madrid, an Evacuation Junta had been set up in Valencia. In the harbour there were two merchant vessels in the process of unloading their cargo. One of them, the *Lezardieux* was able to get away that very day, sailing for Oran with upwards of 500 refugees on board, many of them communists. The one left behind, a British vessel, refused volunteer cargo-handlers and the unloading ground to a halt. Nearly all of the people packed into the port abandoned all hopes they had staked on it. The Stanbrook, chartered by the Council, put in at Alicante. In Cartagena, there was the Campillo and at various places along the coast there were fishing boats ready to sail. Our comrade Llopís, chairman of the Alicante Corporation, called us every half hour. Everything was going fine: we could send comrades to that port, for their getaway from there was assured. We passed this on to the National Committee and to the Centre and Levante Regional Committees of our movement and they decided to recommend a march on Alicante. Few comrades paid them any heed. Then passports were handed out. Tension was growing. In Valencia, which was filling with people from all over, the atmosphere was at fever pitch. The comrades from the Centre had no news of Bajatierra. The socialists told me that Henche de la Plata, the mayor of Madrid, had been unable to get out of the capital because the corporation’s drivers had refused to drive him. Of Javier Bueno, there was no word either: no one had seen him. Our entire union membership arrived safely in Valencia. In mid-evening we had the joy of watching the army arrive. Mancebo, Amil and Bastán informed us that the evacuation of the Centre had been completed. The Council, meeting in permanent session, again received representatives from the International Committee – French, Norwegians, British, etc. – and from Mr Forcinal, who was its most active member. It received the promise once more that France, with her warships, would ensure the getaway of any who needed to quit Spain, and, so sure was he of what he was saying, that he did not hesitate to stake his nation’s honour upon it. Discernible in the International Committee there was an especial keenness to rescue a large number of communists for reasons which I have no desire to discover, but its assistance really did not deserve to be contested by ingrates.

There was no frontier in our zone. Its evacuation was the most daunting of problems and confidence that we would be able to solve it filled us with joy. Almost at the same time we received two distinct reports: of the breaching of the Levante front, due to spontaneous and inevitable abandonment by the troops, whom it was not right to use to provide cover for the evacuation, and of the arrival in Alicante harbour of the *Maritima*, a ship of the Mid-Atlantic Line, capable of accommodating several thousand people. These reports reached the Council just as calm was beginning to fade in Valencia as the streets teemed with people. There was a disorderly procession of army trucks full of well-armed troops formed, followed by a flood of tanks from adjacent fronts. Alicante was the port furthest removed from the abandoned trenches and the only one where there were ships at that point too. Forcinal was spoken to. He said that he would get in touch with Oran and Marseilles, to get them to dispatch their shipping to Alicante. Everybody was there!

Petrol pumps throughout the region were ordered to dispense fuel free of charge. On the decision of the movement, Bastán had to leave for Cartagena and Manuel Amil for Alicante, etc. The better-known militants were entrusted with special missions. They all beavered away, holding their nerve. Thanks to this, it was possible for a caravan of hundreds of vehicles, with 4,000 or 5,000 anti-fascists led by a detachment of military forces complete with officers and weaponry, to set off, perfectly organised, from Valencia for Alicante at 8 pm.³

³ J. García Pradas, *La traición de Stalin*

Few if any of the desperate figures who made for Alicante in this impressive caravan, nor of those who awaited them there, nor any of those who would arrive from the distant Guadalajara and Extremadura fronts, would manage to get out of Spain.

On 3 March, the National Defence Council had dispatched Trifón Gómez to France, to arrange the dispatch of passports needed for evacuation purposes, among other business. In France the Negrín government had the fleet of the Mid-Atlantic Line, with its capacity of 150,000 tonnes, under charter. That charter would not expire until the month of May that year. But even should things have gone wrong, Negrín had fabulous sums of money for chartering as many ships as were needed to effect the evacuation.

But with things at their most worrying, Trifón Gómez told the Council that the ships had been frozen because of a failure to honour the financial clauses of the charter. Then again, on the early morning of 28 March, the captain of the *Maritima*, a 9,000-tonne ship of the Mid-Atlantic Line, had hoisted anchor out of the port of Alicante with just 40 refugees on board, leaving the quays teeming with would-be evacuees. And worse was to come. The Mid-Atlantic Line, in whose name Negrín had deposited the merchandise of the Campsa-Gentibus (the official company for supplies to the Republic at war) had surrendered its papers and goods to the Burgos government, no less.

That action was the final straw. For all that was achieved by repeated appeals to the humanitarian feelings and generosity of the democratic heads of state can be found set out in the two documents below, which we have lifted from Casado's book.

On 4 April, the International Coordinating Committee for Aid and Information to Republican Spain released the following communiqué:

'This Committee, having listened to the International Delegation upon its return from Spain, and learnt of the erroneous reports carried by the press, wishes to state the following:

Due to the rapid turnabout in events, the international delegation which travelled to Spain to work on the supply of provisions to the civilian population as well as to collect useful information, found itself obliged from the moment it arrived there to undertake further efforts: the evacuation of numerous republican celebrities, scientists, writers, soldiers and politicians, including thousands of friends of France, over all of whom the threat of death was hovering.

For six days all of them, whose survival is a matter of concern to France, have lived under threat of death in Alicante where a French member of the delegation, Deputy Charles Tillon, remained behind. Since then and despite repeated reassurances from the French government, the Coordinating Committee's vessels have not been able to enter the port of Alicante and the French warships that were to have guaranteed their safety have received no instructions to protect ships and transports flying the French flag.

Today those men, women and children whom we formally promised to ferry to Mexico may yet be rescued.

The International Coordinating Committee, which during the war performed a strictly humanitarian mission (supplying provisions, medical equipment, etc.) feels that it has an ineluctable duty to see this mission through to its end, especially where the saving of jeopardised human lives is at stake.

The Committee has assumed this responsibility at its own instigation. And it has asked the relevant ministries to take steps and to rehearse those steps to the Burgos government, which France has recognised and with which diplomatic and commercial relations have been established.

The Committee, in taking this initiative, is confident of fulfilling the spirit and purest tradition of the democracies which have always acted in defence of the most selfless humanitarianism.'

On 6 April, this same International Committee published a further statement:

‘Yesterday the press carried a report from an official source, declaring that the French government had done everything necessary to save the 4,000 Spanish republicans under threat of death in Alicante. This assertion is based merely upon two points.

On the one hand, the sending of a telegram to the French consul in Alicante, dated 29 March, and, on the other, on negotiations between the Quai d’Orsay and the Burgos Government on 4 April.

With regard to the first point, we have to state that the telegram reached the French consul in Alicante on the 30th, authorising him to evacuate, through any means at his disposal, specific republican figures whom he himself would select. At the same time, there were absolutely no means of effecting that evacuation in Alicante and the destroyer, *Le Tigre*, which could have come on the 30th, arrived on the 31st in Gandía.

That said, the curious official statement makes a leap from 29 March to 5 April. The Quai d’Orsay surely must have known that since 30 and 31 March, when it received a telegram from the French Consul in Alicante, there was a neutral zone there that was tolerated by the Italian authorities occupying the city.

Despite repeated, extremely urgent appeals from the Spanish Aid Organisation, the government let 24 hours pass without lifting a finger, on the pretext that the French Minister of the Interior had not authorised the disembarkation of 4,000 Spanish republicans in France, even for transit purposes.

The loss of those 24 hours, for which the French government bears the responsibility, was decisive. In any event, on the Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs (other ministers say that it was up to him to decide on the matter) reiterated to our organisation formal undertakings which are yet to be honoured and to which the official statement does not deign to refer.

On the morning of 4 April, the Italian press carried a report referring to the bombing and capture of Alicante harbour. After 24 hours of deliberation, the Quai d’Orsay, probably prompted by this news, resolved at last to get in touch with Burgos, itself proof that it had not done so previously, having delayed until it was too late, or so it reckoned at any rate.

Nonetheless, we should point out that the ships of the International Committee had been off Alicante since 29 March, prevented from entering the port to ensure evacuation only by the absence of French warships. During this time, French and British torpedo boats acted as guarantors only for the rescue of Colonel Casado, the National Defence Council and certain Spanish republicans, while taking on board 167 Italian fascists who were put ashore at Palma de Mallorca.

Nor is it true that only the local authorities in Alicante had agreed to set up a neutral zone.

We recall that in Valencia, in the presence of members of the International Delegation and a dozen other persons, Colonel Casado declared that:

“Generalissimo Franco has promised me that he will not oppose the evacuation. He has signed no document because that would have been an affront to the victor. What promises he has made me, he has honoured.”

Finally, the official report makes no reference to French Deputy Charles Tillon, blockaded in Alicante, of whom nothing has been heard for 4 days, nor of the French Consul in that city, regarding whom the Italian reports speak of “the erstwhile French Consul in Alicante”.

These facts expose the obvious French responsibility for the imprisonment of 4,000 Spanish republicans by General Gambara's Italian troops. No one can refute this, nor can any statement disguise this fact.

The fact is that those men might yet have been rescued...'

Out of respect rather than from any false modesty, we shall leave it to the historians of the future to describe, perhaps as eyewitnesses, the macabre epilogue to the Spanish tragedy. This tragedy was symbolised in Alicante harbour by thousands upon thousands of dashed hopes, by the Numantine gesture of Máximo Franco, whose still-warm body, face serene, cigarette still smoking between his lips, was found by the invaders in a pool of his own blood; by the makeshift look-out, who, in his last second of hope, scanning the empty seas and hearing the tramp of Italian boots along the streets, plummeted from his crow's nest, falling on the quayside below. And in Madrid, which by some cruel quirk had become the tomb of anti-fascism, we saw the stoical response of Julián Besteiro and Javier Bueno and, in contrast, the classical and virile anarchist style of our own Mauro Bajatierra who, too sick to be evacuated, was ensconced in the pillbox of his own home, where he greeted the besieging pack of jackals, shooting away at them until he breathed his last, right up until the moment that death overwhelmed him.

The End

(Toulouse, 18 September 1953)

NOTES

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