

Salvador Puig Antich and
the MIL (Movimiento
Ibérico de Liberación)
Edited by Anna Key,
translated by Paul Sharkey

Salvador Puig Antich was a revolutionary
murdered by the state in Barcelona in the last
years of the Franco regime. This volume looks
at the struggle of the MIL, both in the context
of the times, and the light of current attempts
to 'rehabilitate' him as a martyr for capitalist
'democracy'.



Contents

- The MIL (Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación): a short introduction
- Puig Antich and the MIL – Julien Dreux
- Some thoughts thirty years on from the Murder of Salvador Puig Antich –
C. Sanz
- Leaflet left behind at some MIL hold-ups
- The 1973 Congress: Self-Dissolution of the Politico-Military Organisation
known as the MIL
- Class War in Barcelona – Jean Barrot (aka Gilles Dauve)
- Who was Salvador Puig Antich?
- Salvador Puig Antich – Ferran Aisa
- Puig Antich in the maze – Mateo Rello
- The War Goes On... – Local Federation of Anarchist Groups (Barcelona)
- Puig Antich, 30 Years On – Javier Ortiz
- The Great Swindle: 'This is not the tale of Salvador Puig Antich'

Kate Sharpley Library

BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX, UK

PMB 820, 2425 Channing Way, Berkeley CA 94704, USA

www.katesharpleylibrary.net

ISBN-13: 9781873605448

Anarchist sources #8

1125
K

Salvador Puig Antich
and the MIL (Movimiento
Ibérico de Liberación)



Edited by Anna Key,
Translated by Paul Sharkey

Salvador Puig Antich and the MIL (Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación)

Edited by Anna Key, translated by Paul Sharkey

First published by the Kate Sharpley Library, 2008.

© Kate Sharpley Library 2008. Copyright prevents reproduction for profit.

ISBN-13: 9781873605448 – Anarchist sources #8

Kate Sharpley Library

BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX, UK

PMB 820, 2425 Channing Way, Berkeley CA 94704, USA

www.katesharpleylibrary.net

A regular bulletin and a list of our publications are available from us. Please contact us for more details. 04-08

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Salvador Puig Antich and the MIL (Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación). – (Anarchist sources series ; 8)

1. Puig Antich, Salvador, d. 1974 2. Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación 3. Anarchism – Spain – History

I. Key, Anna

335.8'3'0946'09045

ISBN-13: 9781873605448

What is Anarchism?

Anarchism is a political theory which opposes the State and capitalism. It says that people with economic power (capitalists) and those with political power (politicians of all stripes left, right or centre) use that power for their own benefit, and not (like they claim) for the benefit of society. Anarchism says that neither exploitation nor government is natural or necessary, and that a society based on freedom, mutual aid and equal shares of the good things in life would work better than this one.

Anarchism is also a political movement. Anarchists take part in day-to-day struggles (against poverty, oppression of any kind, war etc) and also promote the idea of comprehensive social change. Based on bitter experience, they warn that new 'revolutionary' bosses are no improvement: 'ends' and 'means' (what you want and how you get it) are closely connected.

The MIL (Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación): a short introduction

Did the MIL exist?

Certainly: they had a rubber stamp and a logo. They had a congress (August 1973). But they hated 'political rackets'. Their congress was only held to dissolve the organisation (not that that meant giving up and going home: from then on they were the 'ex-MIL'). They wanted organisation simply to mean preparation for action ('the organisation of tasks') rather than a permanent body which would take care of liberating the workers, or Iberia... The MIL was more like a collection of affinity groups than anything else.¹

What was the MIL?

The MIL contained various political attitudes: anarchist, left communist, situationist, sixties counter-culture. Their roots lay partly in the upsurge of working class resistance in 1960s Spain; in the influence of the worker-student revolt in Paris, May 1968; the experience of the anarchist guerrilla fighters; and critiques of Leninism and life in the Soviet bloc.

Anarchists...

The MIL did not just look back to the anarchist Spanish revolution of July 1936, but also to May 1937 when the grassroots militants and 'uncontrollables' of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT (Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo/ National Confederation of Labour) had tried to hold back the Communist counter-revolution, against the advice of CNT 'collaborationists'. They named their publishing house in honour of the May days.

They also honoured the long tradition of anarchist guerrillas, exemplified by 'el Quico' Sabaté, of fighting the Franco regime (and Hitler's, too). They continued the symbolic attacks of the First Of May Group, which had harried authoritarian regimes through the sixties. Their influence was also seen in the adoption of a significant-but-disposable name.

...and communists

The MIL was also influenced by left communism, the uncompromising anti-state, anti-union, anti-party, anti-Leninist idea which was critical of capitalist 'democracy' and Russian 'socialism' alike. Left communists also tend to be critical of permanent organisations. While they don't always agree with anarchists, left communists (unlike Leninists) don't have a track record for shooting them! All these trends joined in a class struggle politics, attacking capitalism and the Franco regime, not in the name of 'democracy', but revolution.

Action

Just as the workers and students of May 1968 had taken over factories and universities to discuss and begin the revolutionary transformation of daily life, the MIL robbed banks. Just to list which they hit and how much they expropriated would miss the significance of what they did with it: publishing streams of (illegal) revolutionary literature and donations to strike funds. Their attitude is summed up in the title of one of their publications (1971):

What are we offering? Nothing!

What do we want? Everything!

They were not offering to lead or liberate anyone (freedom has to be taken), nor campaigning for a less repressive and more democratic variant of capitalism.

Were the MIL terrorists?

Even anarchists sometimes use 'terrorism' loosely, meaning political violence rather than only attacks on civilians designed to spread fear (usually the style of nationalists, fascists and fundamentalists). The MIL were not terrorists and were less about 'armed struggle' (in the sense of taking on the forces of the state) than 'armed propaganda'. Of course, under Franco's dictatorship *all* political opposition was criminalised, which reduced the stability of the system and, crucially, its ability to 'modernise'.

Salvador Puig Antich (and after)

He was born in Barcelona in 1948 and met some of his future MIL comrades while taking night classes. After being active in the Comisiones Obreras, in 1971 he joined the group which would become the MIL, acting as the driver for their bank expropriations.

On 25 November 1973 he was arrested with Oriol Solé Sugranyes in a police ambush, and tried to shoot his way out. A police officer was shot dead; as likely by police bullets as by the ones Puig Antich fired. On 20 December ETA assassinated Admiral Carrero Blanco, Franco's political heir, which prevented Francoism continuing after the dictator's death. The response from Franco was a wave of repression and executions, including that of Puig Antich on 2 March 1974. Spanish targets around the globe were attacked in response. In May 1974 Spanish banker Angel Baltasar Suárez was kidnapped by GARI (Grupos de Acción Revolucionaria Internacionalista, Internationalist Revolutionary Action Groups) demanding no more executions of political prisoners. He was released unharmed. Possibly as a result of this Oriol Solé Sugranyes and Josep Lluís Pons Llobet (both ex-MIL) avoided the death penalty.² In April 1976 both were part of a mass breakout of political prisoners from

Segovia jail. On 6 April, Oriol Solé was shot by the Guardia Civil after surrendering near the French border.

The politics of memory

It is no surprise that politicians, journalists and the like should attempt to claim Puig Antich, not as a revolutionary but as a 'martyr for democracy' and opponent of Francoism; to legitimate the transition to democratic capitalism and bury the revolutionary opposition to it. This is another part of the fight for history, and if we're not surprised, we reserve the right to be disgusted.

We remember Puig Antich and Solé Sugranyes not as superheroes but as comrades of ours. We remember those who fell because we want to remember all those who struggle for a free world. Debates about organisation will carry on. Tactics in the fight for freedom will change and evolve. But the central challenge of the MIL remains fresh:

What are we offering? Nothing!

What do we want? Everything!

Notes

- 1 Affinity group: one held together by both personal friendship and shared political commitment.
- 2 Two members of ETA and three of the Marxist FRAP (Frente Revolucionario Antifascista Patriótico, Patriotic Antifascist Revolutionary Front) were shot by firing squad on 27 September 1975.

Sources

- Edward Heath made me angry* by Stuart Christie. Hastings : Christiebooks, 2004.
'The GARI and the last of Franco' by Albert Meltzer in *Black Flag* 196 (Jan 1990), p.4
I couldn't paint golden angels by Albert Meltzer. Edinburgh : AK Press, 1996.
The International Revolutionary Solidarity Movement : 1st of May Group, edited by Albert Meltzer. Sanday, Orkney : Cienfuegos, 1976.
El MIL y Puig Antich by Antonio Téllez. Barcelona : Virus, 1994.

Further Reading

- Histoire désordonnée du MIL : Barcelone, 1967-1974* by André Cortade. Paris : Echappée, 2005.
Mouvement Ibérique de Libération : mémoires de rebelles by Jean-Claude Duhourcq and Antoine Madrigal. Toulouse : Editions CRAS, 2007.

El MIL, una historia política by Sergi Rosés Cordovilla. Barcelona : Alikornio Ediciones, 2002.

Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación, Salvador Puig Antich y los grupos de Acción Revolucionaria Internacionalista : teoría y práctica, 1969-1976 by Telesforo Tajuelo. Paris : Ruedo Ibérico, 1977.

La torna de la torna : Salvador Puig Antich i el MIL by Carlota Tolosa. Barcelona : Empúries, 1985.

The development of a new politics : the Autonomous Workers' Groups (los Grupos Obreros Autónomos) in Barcelona during the last years of Francoism, 1968-1975. By Maggie Torres in *International journal of Iberian studies*, vol.11, part 1 pp14-25 (1998).

Websites

www.paremoslapeliculasalvador.tk

www.mil-gac.info

Puig Antich and the MIL

Ten years ago, despite an international outcry, Franco had Salvador Puig Antich, member of the Iberian Liberation Movement [MIL], executed. Several movements claimed he had died in their cause: the left wing hailed him as 'anti-Francoist', the Catalanists as a 'young Catalan', the libertarians as an 'anarchist'. But what *was* the MIL exactly?

Left wingers in Barcelona refused to follow the suggestions of the MIL Solidarity Committee that there should be a mass demonstration in support of Puig Antich on the eve of his execution. Instead they contented themselves with placing a wreath on his tomb two days later, praising him as a militant anti-Francoist. On the other hand, the Spanish police had for long written off the MIL as 'common bank-robbers'. The MIL were in fact hunted down by the criminal section of the Spanish police. So were they gangsters or revolutionaries, Puig Antich and his friends?

The Workers Movement In Barcelona

In 1970, three distinct groups established contact and began to set up a small network:

- A certain 'Workers' Group' [EO], members of the clandestine (communist) unions who were opposed to 'Stalinist manipulation by their own bureaucrats' and also had no wish to form an authoritarian vanguard in any other left-wing movement.
- A 'Theoretical Group' [ET], which published a clandestine pamphlet called the *Worker's Movement in Barcelona* in 1970.
- An Outside Group [EE], based in Toulouse, who reprinted the above mentioned pamphlet in offset. (A 'deluxe' version!) There was a mass strike among the employees of Harry Walker, owner of a steel foundry, in late 1970/early 71. This brought the three groups together and led, after the strike, to the formation of the Autonomous Workers Groups (AWG) [Grupos Obreros Autonomos, GOA].

The GOA began by producing (in Toulouse) a series of leaflets, one of them entitled 'Boycott Union Elections' (referring to Franco's artificial unions). This latter cause some split in the GOA because those in the 'Worker's Group' believed that some kind of tactical voting was necessary in those elections, an idea which the 'Theoretical Group' disagreed with. The latter now began to produce and sign their own pamphlets as the Iberian Liberation Movement. In June 72 the MIL declared that it had formed a guerrilla group, working in tandem with its own propaganda section. The guerrillas called themselves the Autonomous Combat Groups: ACG [Grupos Autónomos de Combate: GAC].

Expropriation

On the night of August the 15th, 1972 the GAC broke into a printing materials factory in Toulouse and nicked machinery to the value of 76,000 francs (7,500 quid). This action was interesting because the machinery stolen, discovered by the police on the 9th of September (along with arms caches and bundles of banknotes), and then returned to its owners, was nicked again on the 13th of Dec. The affair led to the arrest of Salvador Puig Antich, Oriol Sole Sugranyes and Jean Claude Torres. In March 1973 they were all condemned to between 6 and 12 months imprisonment.

Meanwhile in early 1973, there was a series of hold-ups in Barcelona. Over a period of a few months thirty of these had been attributed to a mysterious 'Sten-gun band', (robberies totalling 24 Million pesetas). Every banking business got two police guards and the Press concentrated on condemning the 6 savages responsible, while avidly printing their communiques.

The GAC also involved themselves in more provocative political actions. They fired guns off outside a bank which was housed underneath the Barcelona HQ of the *Brigado-Politico Social* (Franco's Special Branch). They also made mistakes – holding up a bank (Jan 27 1973) which had already been robbed 8 days earlier; and shooting a bank clerk who tried to press the alarm button during a raid on March 2nd of the same year.

Nonetheless, after that month of March, the MIL had to cope with several divisions in its own ranks due to the increasing division between the theorists and the activists. The old 'Theoretical Group' hadn't published anything new for a while, and when the first issue of the new MIL magazine (C.I.A.: [*Conspiración Internacional Anarquista, International Anarchist Conspiracy*]) appeared, it became clear that the Armed Combat Groups [GAC] had control over most of the areas involved in the production of the magazine: printing, smuggling, false papers, finance. It became clear that the theorists would not defend the actions undertaken by the GAC. A Congress was held in March, which reached no concrete solution to these disagreements. By September, the theorists and the 'military' wing of the MIL had split completely. The 'Guerrillas' reorganised themselves by themselves. But on the 29th June a certain incident made some of them vulnerable to the authorities.

After having met Francesc Paituvi and a woman called Pilar in a Barcelona bar, Salvador Puig Antich left that bar with them but left his bag there. By the time he returned, the barman had already phoned the police. The latter thus found: a pistol, a telegram from Toulouse, 85,000 pesetas, a PO box number, a rent book, and (the jackpot) a bundle of false papers containing photographs of certain members of the GAC. One of the police recognised one of these members as being a member of his own family! However the recognised man, Josep Pons Llobet, was arrested three months later, and in different circumstances.

The Beginning Of The End

Once again, a GAC member staged a deliberately provocative raid. To 'celebrate' a bank raid done on September 15 1972 in Bellver de Cerdanya (Spain) he returned there with two companions and robbed the same bank on September 15 1973. They got away with 580,000 pesetas, but the alarm system had been updated and the police were on the scene fast. Two of the gang, including Josep Pons Llobet, were arrested on the 17th. The third, Jordi Sole, escaped to Belgium.

On the 18th, the police arrested Pons Llobet's companion, Maria Fernandez. Over the next four days they arrested other GAC members; one of them, Santiago Amigo, who was ill and more susceptible to interrogation, confessed that he had an important rendezvous with two other GAC members on the 25th. The police arrested those two, Francesc Paituvi and Salvador Puig Antich, but not until two scuffles had taken place. After the first, in which shots were fired, police disarmed them, but Salvador Antich produced a second gun and there was more fighting: Deputy Inspector Anguas Barragan was mortally wounded. Puig Antich, who was wounded in the head and shoulder-blade, went to hospital.

The Inspector's death remains a mystery. The doctors in the hospital to which he was rushed claim he was hit five times by bullets. The police immediately took the corpse for a summary post mortem in a local station, and declared that the Inspector had been shot only three times and that all the bullets were from Puig Antich's gun. Puig Antich was sentenced to death, charged with the bank raid on March 2nd, in which the clerk had been shot, and with the murder of the police inspector.

Solidarity And Repression

Only in Barcelona, not anywhere else in the Spanish State, was a solidarity committee for the MIL prisoners set up. The members of the committee consisted largely of MIL 'survivors' and the other libertarian groups were suspicious of it, seeing it as an attempt by the MIL simply to recruit new members and organise new actions. Most anarchists in Spain were involved in rebuilding the CNT, and they had no wish to share the publicity of the MIL solidarity committee. While the committee was finding it so difficult to mobilise support, ETA carried out their successful assassination attempt on Franco's right hand man, Admiral Carrero Blanco. That finished any chances Puig Antich might have had of having his death sentence commuted. There were demonstrations all over Catalonia for his release, graffiti was plastered over Francoist war memorials, banks and police stations, and two members of the MIL were arrested in Paris trying to hijack an *Iberia* plane. Meanwhile heads of State and various organisations around the world protested his imminent execution. Franco was

enraged by Blanco's death, however, and gave the order on the first of March, at ten o'clock in the evening. Puig Antich was garrotted the next day.

Julien Dreux (adapted and translated from *AGORA* magazine)

Postscript: Was The MIL Anarchist?

Puig Antich ended his prison letters: 'Salud y Anarquía' and all MIL tracts confirmed that the group believed in 'libertarian communism'. Certainly the police had no doubts. They might have called the MIL 'bank-robbers' when they were chasing them, but when they were caught they became 'a major anarchist urban guerrilla movement' and elsewhere, a 'Catalan anarchist group'. While I was translating the above I became aware that the writer clearly thought of the MIL as a sort of dilettante organisation, an opinion shared by some CNTers. In fact Puig Antich belonged to a new radical wave which was surfacing in Barcelona, and which was trying to do without the more traditional organisations. The writer of the above doesn't point out that Puig Antich was active as a Catalanist as well as an Anarchist – in fact he combined the two beliefs, believing that a loose federation allowing full cultural independence to all the 'nations' within Spain, was the answer. In this he followed Kropotkin and also the ideas of Pi y Margall. Just as ETA had combined Basque nationalism with Marxism, so Puig Antich wished to combine Catalan nationalism with Anarchism. A cousin of mine was in jail with Puig Antich the weeks before he was garrotted. Puig Antich taught him Catalan there... my friend told me, when I spoke to him in 1978, that Puig Antich was extraordinarily brave, in that he never allowed the authorities the pleasure of seeing him in despair, on the contrary... He was serious about his beliefs. No dilettantism there...

The Translator. [not PS]

From *Black Flag Supplement* no.1, issued with *Black Flag* no.136 15 July 1985

Some thoughts thirty years on from the Murder of Salvador Puig Antich

Thirty years have passed since the murder by garrotte vil of Salvador Puig Antich, the last person executed by that horrific medieval method, on 2 March 1974 in the Modelo Prison in Barcelona, to the indifference of a large segment much of Catalan society.

Many of those unaware of the execution at the time have since staked a claim to Salvador as an anti-Francoist, a romantic revolutionary, a hero, even as a martyr. The society of the spectacle against which he fought also tries to reclaim him. Which of us has not seen him represented as a commodity or media product for sale. We know that the system swallows everything up.

Meanwhile, most people have no idea why he fought, nor of what the group of which he was a member, ie. the MIL, stood for. It was a group difficult to categorise for it was an atypical, original group, out of the ordinary and a real innovation on the political scene of the early 1970s.

To set out the history of the MIL is to set out the story of Puig Antich as well, for their lives, whilst not parallel do converge. Salvador's life, as has been stated before, is fraught with contradictions. For a start, it is no easy thing these days to explain that he was a law-abiding person and that those who sat in judgement on him and who executed him were the law-breakers. That is the very opposite of the usual descriptions on offer. Secondly, it needs to be said once and for all that Puig Antich was a run-of-the-mill, regular guy like any one of us and that what befell him could have befallen any one of us, so the designation "hero" is out of place. Thirdly, he was a political orphan in that there were no parents, no siblings, no political family to resist his execution – only a few friends and comrades, as well as small anarchist groups that stood by him and fought on his behalf.

That said, it must be clear that we reject all those who would now pin medals on him or stake a claim to him from positions or groupings that, in his time of crisis, did the very opposite.

Did the MIL really exist?

The MIL did not exist insofar as it had no birth date. It was never formally launched nor did it have any foundation congress. It always rejected organisation in any shape and merely accepted organisation as "organisation of tasks". Its members always rejected the party and the union as authoritarian and its slogan was that there had to be an end of leader-ist practices.

As for its ideology, that is a rather complicated matter. One would first have to break new ground and examine the situation of the workers' movement in Barcelona and its environs in the late 1960s. The dissent emerging within the Workers'

Commissions, the pre-eminent union at that point, was triggered by the fact that the communists (the PSUC in Catalonia) were trying to bring them under control and politicise them. This process led to the disintegration of the workers' movement into autonomous groups completely opposed to trade union bureaucracy and political control and supportive of workers' self-organisation. One such faction was Plataformas, a conglomeration of various councilist groups and out of Plataformas emerged the GOA (Autonomous Workers' Groups) found in at the inception of the MIL.

The influence working upon the various members of the group were also diverse. On one side, there were the theorists, especially Santi Soler Amigo and Ignacio Sole Sungranyes, the so-called Theoretical Team (ET). Their roots had been in Accion Comunista (AC), an anti-authoritarian revolutionary Marxist faction that tended to oppose parties and support a degree of mass spontaneity. They were influenced by councilism (they supported workers' councils) and the critique of day to day existence.

Other influences came from the Situationist area and of course from May '68 in France. With regard to the flirtation with councilism, it should be pointed out that they had a novel view of councilism, especially with regard to the "three antis-" – anti-bureaucracy, anti-parliamentary and anti-trade unionism. Despite the contacts that they maintained with the Frenchman Barrot, they broke with the classical councilist line and the ET defined councilism in terms whereby the ultimate decision-maker was the assembly rather than intellectual or trade union leaders and furthermore held that that assembly would emerge spontaneously in every workplace as an operational practice. The December 1971 strike at the Harry Walker plant was a baptism of fire during which this theory was put to the test.

Just as part of the MIL had its roots in the revolutionary radical left, so there was another strand drawn from among the children of exiled Spaniards. Jean-Claude Torres and Jean-Marc Rouillan belonged to the EE (Team Abroad). To the group they brought their own libertarian ideology, an anarchism critical of and alienated from the older CNT structures and closer to the postulates of May 1937 or of anarchists like Camillo Berneri or guerrillas such as Quico Sabaté or Facerias.

This whole ideological baggage, blended with a degree of nationalism emanating especially from the Sole Sugranyes brothers, triggered internal contradictions and arguments and led to a degree of ideological confusion. According to the case made in Telesforo Tajuelo's book "in its texts, if we analyse them, we will find no homogeneity, but we will find a sensational theoretical imbroglio with each member have his own particular ideological outlook." That being the case, the MIL ended up repudiating all ideology and this too became a novel feature of the group.

In short, the MIL was shaped by three groups: the EO (Worker Team), drawn from labour circles but whose guidelines were never clear-cut and swung between

revolutionary syndicalism and councilism and anti-unionism; the ET, an innovative councilist body, even if its members were not workers and were almost always remote from the workers; and the EE, inspired and influenced by anarchist activism and who received aid from old CNT militants in Toulouse. It was the EE that dragged them into armed activism.

The Theoretical Front and the Practical Front

Their aim was never to overthrow Francoism in order to introduce a democratic arrangement, but it was to combat the bourgeois state and capital by means of self-organisation of the working class – in short, to put paid to wage slavery. Which is why, much against their will, they were described as "anti-capitalist revolutionaries".

We say "against their will" because they always shied away from description, even with regard to organisation, where their watchword was "organisation was nothing more than the organisation of tasks". They were also supportive of anti-militantism, ie. "for a group open to persons drawn together by their affinities alone".

Any attempt to categorise the MIL – whether on the basis of its modus operandi or the shade of its ideology falls apart – comes to grief. And since it was a group opposed to 'groupusculation', its documentary record contains not a single set of minutes of a meeting, no accords or declarations except those made at its Self-Dissolution Congress and published in its review CIA (International Anarchist Conspiracy), No 2, in the summer of 1973.

When it comes to the lurch towards armed violence, we have to draw a clear distinction between the MIL who practised what they called "armed agitation", shunning attacks against the person, and "armed struggle". In order to clarify this matter it ought to be stated first that the MIL looked upon itself simply as a support group for workers' movement struggles and its activities in this regard were focused on expropriation of funds (bank robberies) and, on the other hand, towards the recovery of gear (thefts of printing machinery). In the first instance the idea was to help labour strikes out financially and in the latter so that they might distribute books and pamphlets to workers free of charge.

And here we come to the MIL's big plan, possibly its biggest: its library. Numerous texts were ready and prepared, especially by the ET, and ready for publication. The idea was to conduct a trawl through revolutionary ideas and thinking unknown in Spain at the time. In order to make clear how they stood with regard to the critique they were making of previous experiences, they chose the very telling name "May 1937" for their publishing imprint.

Together with the plan for the "library", one of their great ambitions was to marry theory and practice and not for nothing have they been called "theorists of practice". In this regard certain writers suggest that this practical activity links up with or

revived Spanish anarchist revolutionary practice, especially as the hold-ups had a merely exemplary value as far as they were concerned. I should also like to point out that it is important to place on record the historical influence that anarchism has always had in Barcelona. Not for nothing was Barcelona regarded as capital of anarchism.

The arrest in September 1973 of a number of MIL members right after the self-dissolution congress is another matter relating, on the one hand, to Francoist repression and the killing of Salvador, and, on the other, to the solidarity and salvation committees, which have come in for searching examination. In my belief rather little is known about armed groups such as the OLLA and the GARI, whether carrying on the MIL fight or not. Finally and maybe most importantly, what we need is a libertarian and revolutionary dissection of the so-called "transition" in Spain.

It has been said that the MIL made a theoretical mistake in taking the line that democrats too are part and parcel of capital and must be fought, and I cannot say if it is on the basis of that MIL premise that we should be re-examining our failures and discomfitures during the transition and the extent to which we have been led to where we are now by internal and external factors. We ought also to get down to analysing projects as long forgotten as those that the MIL put forward. They say that we only exist insofar as we remember. In the case of Puig Antich and of course Oriol Sole Sugranyes, we have always remembered them. Their fight against capital is unfinished and still outstanding. Let us not forget that.

C. Sanz

Leaflet left behind at some MIL hold-ups

THIS EXPROPRIATION, TOGETHER WITH THE PRECEDING ONES, IS DESIGNED TO SUPPORT THE PROLETARIAT'S FIGHT AGAINST THE BOURGEOISIE AND THE CAPITALIST STATE, TO WHICH END REVOLUTIONARIES APPROPRIATE FOR THEIR STRUGGLE THE MONEY STOLEN FROM THE WORKING CLASS BY CAPITALISTS.

THE DAY TO DAY STRUGGLE OF THE PROLETARIAT AGAINST EXPLOITATION OBLIGES ALL REVOLUTIONARY FIGHTING GROUPS TO MOUNT THE REQUISITE ACTIONS TO ENSURE THAT THAT STRUGGLE ACHIEVES ITS REVOLUTIONARY OBJECTIVES.

AS LONG AS THE CAPITALISTS' REPRESSION BATTENS ON THE WORKING CLASS, THE PROLETARIAT AND ALL REVOLUTIONARIES WILL CARRY ON ATTACKING CAPITAL AND ITS LACKEYS WHEREVER THEY MAY BE.

The 1973 Congress

"The dissolution statement of the MIL has been misunderstood, maybe even by those who drafted it. The assertion that the use of violence is incumbent upon *every revolutionary* does not mean, if the phrase be construed in its communist sense, that every revolutionary must make maximum use of it, but rather that it does not require a standing organisation specialising in that purpose... Contrary to all who have not ceased making use of the MIL, it is time to take its declaration of self-dissolution seriously: *martyrs, initials, our very own name, are part and parcel of the old world.*"

Jean Barrot, in *Violence et solidarité révolutionnaires* (1974, p. 15)

Self-Dissolution of the Politico-Military Organisation known as the MIL

In the wake of the failure of the international revolution of 1848 and on the basis of the ideologisation or its theory, it was anticipated that by the end of the century the reproduction of the capitalist system would become impossible.

In accordance with said theory, the sovereign organs of the class struggle and of socialist revolution were two in number:

- the reformist trade unions;
- the reformist parties in command of said unions and implementing in their name a practical policy of participation in bourgeois parliaments.

But in reality reformism (unions and parties alike) served only to bolster the survival or the system. By the start of this century it was apparent that Capital was reproducing itself (contrary to the forecasts of the workers' Movement's theorists) and that as a result:

- *reformism was utterly incapable of eliminating the system of Capital by means of the dynamics of the problem of its reproduction alone* (the capitalist system in crisis: in Belgium in 1904, in Russia in 1905, in Belgium in 1906, the German Left's theorisation of the wildcat strike, the outbreak of the imperialist 1914-1918 war, Russia in 1917, Germany in 1918-1919, Hungary in 1919, Italy in 1920, fascism, the 1929 crisis, etc.);
- *it thus became plain that neither parliamentary parties nor reformist trade unions were the organs of social revolution, but were instead the organs merely of Capital's counter-revolution* (Germany in 1919, Hungary in 1919, Russia in 1921, etc.)

The socialist revolution is merely retarded by parliamentary parties and reformist trade unions, and in addition an anti-reformist practice is required (with or without

reproduction of Capital), that is, a practice that advocates *anti-parliamentarism* and class *organisation* (revolutionary syndicalism, barricades, terrorism, workers' councils, etc.)

After the latest consequences of the Worldwide Crisis (fascism, the Crash of 1929, the inter-imperialist 1939-1945 war, the post-war reconstruction, thereby facilitating a fresh reconstruction of Capital in such critical moments until such time as the next crisis in the reproduction of capital arose, etc.), after limits were set to the goals of *anti-imperialist struggle* or merely those of the *antifascist struggle*, the question arose again not just of the urgent necessity of anti-parliamentarism and of class organisation, but of thereby making the transition from merely anti-fascist goals to the goals of the Communist Movement, which, when its tide is high is the goal of Worldwide Revolution.

So we can say that from the latter half of the 1960s, the world revolution has been impending. Let us look at this revolutionary resurgence:

- May '68 in France and important sweeping strikes in Italy: in '69, when the trade unions were bypassed;
- in Belgium, the miners in Limburg in '69 turned with violence upon the trade unions during a strike that had no precedent;
- the strike wave in Poland in '71-'72, when Communist Party bureaucrats were tried and strung up;
- Paris '71: important strikes at Renault and expropriations in the Latin Quarter;
- Riots in many prisons in the USA, Italy and France in '72-'73, and the strikes by miners and dockers in defiance of the mighty British trade unions and widespread revolts in the ghettos in the USA, in Japan, etc.

During this period, countless wildcat strikes erupted in Europe and America and extended to all parts of the globe. The signs (absenteeism from work, sabotage of production, etc.) of the proletariat's reappearance on the scene of class violence are, worldwide, considerable.

In Spain, wildcat strikes and demonstrations of latent rebellion have made themselves felt with full force. Since the physical and moral destruction of the Spanish proletariat by world capitalism in the civil war (1936-1939), workers' combativity has not attained such heights:

- '62-'65: creation of the Workers' Commissions [CC.OO: Comisiones Obreras] on the basis of wildcat strikes in the mines of Asturias, the attack upon the police station in Mieres, the transport and metalworkers' strike in Barcelona, etc;

- '66-'68: entryism of all the traditional parties and organisations into the Workers' Commissions, as well as attempts to proceed from there to make entry into the CNS and to establish a reformist line inside the CC.OO:
- '68-'70: France's May events and Italy's *hot autumn* along with all their groupuscular spin-offs plunging the Spanish workers' movement into ideological confusion, thereby carving off a slice of it. Bureaucratic squabbling inside the CC.OO., grouplets splitting asunder, etc.
- '70-'73: great proletarian battles all over Spain: Erandio, Granada, Harry-Walker, SEAT, El Ferrol, Vigo, Vallès, Sant Adrià de Besòs, Navarre, etc., where, in some shape or another, all hierarchical control of the struggle was repudiated, as demonstrated in the burning of leaflets, expulsion of grouplet militants from workers' assemblies and widespread violence, etc.

The MIL is a product of the history of the class struggle played out over recent years. Its emergence goes hand in glove with the great proletarian battles that shattered the mythologies of the bureaucrats (be they reformists or from the grouplets) who sought to tailor that battle to their *partisan* programme. It arose as a *specific group* in support of the struggles and fractions of the most radical workers' movement in Barcelona. At all times it was cognisant of the need to support the proletarian struggle and its support as a specific group is material, agitational and propagandistic in deed and word.

In April 1970 the MIL came out with an open critique of all reformist and leftist lines (*El Movimiento Obrero en Barcelona*). That same year it devised a work critical of Leninism (*Revolución hasta el Fin*). Its critique of *dirigisme* [literally, 'directionism'], groupuscular activity, authoritarianism, etc., induced at that point a break with rank and file organisations which sought to take over struggles and experiences which had been joint undertakings (such as the Harry-Walker strike) and thereby establish a group identity (*groupuscularise*). On the basis of its political isolation and for the sake of its politico-military survival, the MIL came to enter into political compromises with military groups: with the nationalists, say, who were at that point the only ones ready to move on to armed struggle. Such compromises, made necessary by the group's isolation, led to its losing sight of its earlier outlook. No communist practice is possible in the absence of systematic struggle against the traditional workers' movement and its allies. Conversely, there can be no effective action against them unless there is a clear appreciation of their counter-revolutionary function. To date, all revolutionary strategies have tried to exploit the various difficulties which the bourgeoisie has encountered in its management of Capital. Whenever they have toppled weak bourgeois, they have organised capitalism. If the bourgeoisies were strong, they have been condemned to misery. And today it is the proletariat that

rejects these strategies and imposes its-own: the *destruction of capitalism, and negation of itself as a class*. Today, the working class is attacking Capital in all its manifestations of exploitation: regimentation, authoritarianism, exploitation, etc. The only feasible form of action is revolutionary violence in deed and word.

Its most advanced factions are organised to tackle concrete revolutionary tasks in factory and in neighbourhoods alike: against the CNS, against the bureaucratised, reformist CC.OO., against the PCE and the most varied grouplets, regarding them as being on a par with the current administrators of Capital (the bourgeoisie). Consolidation of the working class's revolutionary struggle is self-organisation in the workplace by means of factory and neighbourhood committees, and, through co-ordination and propagation of the struggle, applying the class struggle line, the communist line. The MIL's practice is thus part and parcel of the expansion of the Communist Movement. And it proposes to attack all manner of mystifications.

The existing society has its Laws, its Justice, its Guardians, its Judges, its Courts, its Prisons, its Offences, its *norms*. In opposition to it there arises a series of political organs (parties and trade unions, reformism and leftism...) which pretend to counter this situation when in point of fact they merely underpin the existing society. Justice on the streets is nothing more than exposure of and attacks upon all of the existing society's mystifications (parties, trade unions, reformism, leftism, laws, justice, guardians, judges, courts, prisons, offences, which is to say, its *norms*).

Repudiation of such conformity in practical action implies *de facto* the establishment of associations of revolutionaries, individual and collective.

An association of revolutionaries is one that carries a comprehensive critique of the world through to its ultimate extension. By comprehensive critique we mean a global critique targeting all geographical areas where the various forms of the power of socio-economic divisions are ensconced, as well as one applied to every aspect of life.

It aims, not just that today's world should be self-managed by the masses, but rather at its ongoing transformation, the complete decolonisation of everyday life, a radical critique of political economy, destruction and supersession of commodity and waged labour. Such an association rejects any reproduction within its own ranks of the hierarchical features of the dominant world. Criticism of revolutionary ideologies is nothing more than the unmasking of the new experts in or the new theories hanging over the proletariat's head.

Leftism is only the far left of capital's programme. Its revolutionary morality, its voluntarism, its militancy are nothing but the by-products of this situation. They are designed to control and direct the working class's struggle. Thus any action which does not offer a critique and utter rejection of capitalism remains within its

parameters and is recuperated by it. These days, talk of workerism and militancy and implementation of that amounts to an attempt to avert progress towards Communism. To speak of armed action and preparing for insurrection is the same. These days, there is no validity to talk of a politico-military organisation; such organisations are part and parcel of the political racket. Consequently, the MIL is dissolving itself as a politico-military organisation and its members are making preparations to grapple with taking the social movement further down the communist road.

Definitive conclusions of the MIL Congress
August 1973

P.S.

Terrorism and sabotage are weapons currently available to every single revolutionary. Terrorism by word and deed. Attacking capital and its faithful watchdogs (be they from the right or from the left) – that is the current vocation of the AUTONOMOUS COMBAT GROUPS which have broken with the whole of the old workers' movement and are promoting specific action criteria. The organisation is the organisation of tasks; which is why the rank and file groups come together for action. On which basis, organisation, politics, militancy, moralism, martyrs, initials and our very own name have become part of the old world.

Thus, every individual will – as we have said – shoulder his personal responsibilities in the revolutionary struggle. It is not a case of individuals disbanding themselves. It is the politico-military organisation, MIL, which is disbanding; this is the passage into history which ensures that we leave behind, once and for all, the pre-history of the class struggle.

From *El MIL y Puig Antich*, Antonio Téllez.

Class War in Barcelona

On the 16th of September 1973, the police caught two Spanish revolutionaries after the attack against a bank near the French border. A wave of arrests in Barcelona followed. During one of them, on the 24th of September, a member of the "guardia civil" was killed, while the culprit of the murder was seriously wounded. The Spanish police and the press want people to believe that it was a bunch of gangsters. There are at least 12 with charges against them, three of whom face the death penalty.

In reality the attack on the bank was part of a series of armed actions, which started a few years ago by various amorphous autonomous groups in the area of Barcelona. The purpose of these actions was to collect money for the support of revolutionary activities in the workers' movement. Anyway, some of the groups

signed their actions as "Autonomous Groups of Struggle" (Grupos Autonomos de Combat), the common signature indicating the common content of their actions, although they do not in fact consist of a unified and structured organisation. These actions did not have a political purpose, in the sense that politics consists of exerting influence on others, coordinating and organising, or forming a recognised power that seeks a position in society. The bank robberies did not transform the bank robbers into vendettas of the spectacle, they did not aspire to capture the imagination, but merely provided the material means for action in a country where a large quantity of them is often needed. (For example, illegality often makes the publication and circulation of texts difficult and costly). Whoever blames them for their actions is even further back than Proudhon, who knew that property = theft. Of course theft does not destroy property. But it is a means – limited but useful in many cases – for the organisation of the struggle against the world of property. It is totally useless to express a priori judgements "in favour" or "against" methods whose use is a matter of circumstances, thus in the final analysis a matter of social conditions. These actions cannot be made irrespective of time and place. It is not by chance that in the beginning of the century the Russian revolutionaries resorted to similar actions in a society swept by brutal repression, in a State which – as the Spanish one today – did not hesitate to drown unarmed workers in blood. [...]

In parallel with the terrorist actions, the workers' movement of Barcelona developed an effective network of connections, especially with the proletarian libraries and with the active engagement in the autonomous workers' struggles. We would have to remind that after the double defeat of the proletariat (which was crushed after the coordinated attacks of fascism and of anti-fascism), there appeared in 1962-65 certain "Workers Committees", as a direct result of the wave of spontaneous strikes which started from the mines in the Asturias. In 1966-68 all the traditional parties and organisations infiltrated the Workers' Committees (in fact the CP infiltrated in the state union C.N.S.), took control of their leadership and transformed them into reformist organisations. In between 1968 and 1970, the impact of the French and Italian movement, in relation to the Spanish situation, caused within the Workers' Committees a series of ideological struggles, splits, and, in general, developments in the direction of the extreme-left. After, in 1970-73, there is a rise of workers' struggles which refuse the bureaucratic and hierarchical controls (burning of leaflets, kicking political members out of workers' meetings, etc). It is this phenomenon that the State is trying to attack, by equalising all those charged and those in prison, trying at the same time to destroy and to slander them (one aim facilitates the latter). It aims at the destruction of one of the expressions of the autonomous action of the Spanish proletariat.

Decisively opposed to all forms of reformism and of democratic anti-fascism, these groups and circles had as an aim the communist program of abolishing wage labour and of exchange. It is characteristic that they translated and distributed a series of French texts, like Jean Barrot's study of the Russian Revolution, the introduction of the book "La Bande a Baader", an article of "Negation", and Beriou's text about Ireland from Temps Modernes. Moreover, they showed a zealous interest in reading Pannekoek and Bordiga, without however following one or the other.

In the course of these actions, some of those who had resorted to armed robberies decided to abandon such activities. The robberies had of course proven useful at the beginning of the movement (without however claiming that they had created it), but in the next phase they were becoming increasingly pointless and dangerous. We ignore today why and how the comrades who were arrested on the 16th September organised another robbery; we therefore refrain from forming an opinion on the matter until more information is available. It is however certain that the State aims with this chance of diminishing the seeds of the totality of those activities 1) by presenting armed struggle actions as gangsterism, but mostly 2) by equalising the most radical elements of the workers' movement who had no relation with these actions with the actual culprits. We have to do whatever is possible to make the truth shine on these two points, without mixing them up. [...]

The movement is forced to resort to violence, and in the organisation of this violence, in order to meet certain needs. Of course in this sector, total improvisation leads to failure. But also a constant and specialised organisational form will not have better results. The "preparation" for the use of violence is not the task of groups organised with exactly that purpose: it is a matter of social connections and means that exist within the proletariat and through it. [...] There is no need for the creation of "specialised" military units with a label and with an organisation aimed at the use of violence. Every single action can be accomplished with the collaboration of individuals and groups and should be judged in accordance to its content. The use of a label indicates an organisation of armed struggle which has violence itself as its aim and not a social activity related to real needs. The guevaric logic of guerrilla warfare refers exactly to the creation of a military pole in the absence of a social movement. When a group considers itself the nucleus of a future "revolutionary" army, it acts outside of the proletariat (i.e. against it), thus tending to transform itself into a micro-power, a kind of preliminary State which aims at replacing the old state mechanism.

In Spain there is a direct connection between revolutionary activity and "military" infrastructure, since every activity comes into conflict from the very beginning with the military violence of the State (repression of strikes, of gatherings/demonstrations, of the distribution of texts, etc). But what sort of infrastructure? In our opinion this

infrastructure should be the instrument that allows for the realisation of the rest of the activities, because they play the decisive role. When for example a brochure is printed, the problem is for it to circulate, not to maintain a "military" structure which might be necessary for getting it in the country from abroad. The revolutionary organisation organises the various specific duties that make up its reason of existence, not itself. Its aim is not to hijack struggles in order to count them as its accomplishments: on the contrary, it makes sure that its activity theoretically and materially belongs to all, and that it helps the initiatives which do not stem from itself and are beyond its control. Political organisations do the exact opposite. It should be added that the former way of organisation proves to be more effective against repression.

Of course there can be groups of struggle, but only as means for the class struggle. The purpose is the most effective possible expression of the subversive perspectives within the social struggles – as well as the armed struggle, potentially – and not the existence of well-organised and ready-for-all military groups. In the latter case, groups that were formed outside the proletariat will remain external to it. The organisation of organisation, on the one hand, and the organisation of specific activities on the other, result into totally different relations within the social movement and the working class.

The practice of the Spanish revolutionaries did not aim either at the formation of a military mechanism nor to terrorism against individuals or buildings which represent the existing order of things, but the accomplishment of a limited material function. But every activity reproduces conditions of existence which tend to perpetuate it beyond the limits of its function. The less powerful is the social movement, the more the means are transformed into objectives. Thus the organisation of armed activities in conditions of illegality tends to create a vicious circle: new financial needs, reasons for new robberies, etc. The only way for one to escape this dynamic is to have a clear conception of the aims of the movement. It is much more important to create groups of workers and to perform robberies if they think that it is useful, than to organise a military mechanism. The decisive criterion is neither the centralisation or autonomy of the group: the importance lies in the content of its activities. If it proclaims itself as a constant and specialised mechanism, it loses all contact with real social relations. There is the proletariat that struggles and there are individuals who organise themselves and might potentially decide to commit a robbery; not a military organisation from which stem all the rest as logical consequences. When it is necessary the social movement resorts to violence. And then, those who do not use it, explain it and justify it theoretically.

The danger would be to recreate, under the pretext of practical necessities, a new type of a professional revolutionary, who is separate from the proletariat, not by

inserting consciousness to it, but by fulfilling a duty that the proletariat, "left to its own powers" is unable to fulfil. We would thus revive "leninism", by substituting a violent act of the proletariat (to which we belong) by the activity of groups (whether centralised or autonomous, it matters not) composed by specialists of violence. The history of the movement shows that the groups of struggle that are organised outside of the proletariat tend to, regardless of their initial positive sides, autonomise themselves from the class struggle, by recruiting people very different from revolutionary proletarians and acting on their own behalf: for money, for self-projection or simply for their survival. This is what happened to the Bolsheviks. The understanding of this phenomenon is a necessary precondition for a radical critique of leninism. [...]

In non-revolutionary periods, radical groups may have as a task – among others and when it is needed – an organised violent practice. But they cannot act as an armed faction or a military part of the proletariat. These revolutionaries remain proletarians like the others, who at a moment – which might last years – are led to enter the armed struggle, something which results in a certain degree of illegality. The danger is for them to consider themselves a separate and autonomous group, destined to use violence indefinitely. If they proclaim themselves and they act as specialists of violence, they will have a monopoly over it and they will detach themselves from the real social needs that exist in the subversive movement. Indeed they will not even to express their own needs. In relation to the rest of the proletariat, they will be transformed into a new power which seeks its recognition, as a mechanism which is initially military and then political.

The term "terrorism" could be used in a wide sense as the use of terror: in this sense capital is always terroristic. In the narrow sense, as a particular practice or some times strategy, it is the application of violence in the vulnerable parts of society. When it is not a constituent element of a social movement it leads to a violence detached from social relations. In countries where there is a harsh repression and in which the working class is atomised, there is a dynamic of terrorism in the cities that soon appears as the conflict between two mechanisms: of course victory belongs to the State. In the same way as workers often consider political struggles as a world beyond them, they often observe the conflict between the State and the terrorists, counting the victims. In the best of cases they feel a moral solidarity. We can in fact wonder if this conflict doesn't actually help in maintaining the social problem as secondary. [...]

Capital desires the self-destruction of radical minorities. It forces certain revolutionaries to feel that they can no longer stand it: a way of neutralising them is to force them to take up arms against it. We are not referring to actions of provocation (which happen more often than is thought), but to social pressure. In such a case we cannot

say that certain comrades were forced to act in this way and that's all. For a function of the social movement, as well as of the revolutionary groups, is to organise the resistance against these pressures. Of course theory does not fix everything. The understanding of a thing does not mean that a correspondent practice will follow. But theory is a part of practice and we cannot ignore that. Those who condone or refuse to criticise any violent act, fall into the trap of capital. An overall solidarity never excludes critique.

There are two illusions. It is thought that violence, because it is more directly related with reality, transforms it more than, for example, texts. But violence, in the same way as texts, can be used as a substitute of another practice. To be revolutionary means to subvert the existent. Baader initially wanted to awaken the German proletariat, but he found himself isolated, not numerically but socially. At this point we have to deal with the other illusion, concerning the violence of the "masses". The criterion is never numerical. A small minority can accomplish positive violent actions, if it is part of a social movement (something that applies to non-violent acts as well). Subversive action does not need to find refuge within the masses nor does it try to impress them with particular actions. By definition, those who oppose "minority violence" to the "violence of the masses", use the term masses while referring to the mechanisms that organise them, the big parties and the trade unions.

The more contradictory society becomes, the more it separates and atomises people, the more it intensifies the need for a community. Violence is revolutionary and it contributes to the formation of the human community only when it attacks the foundations of existing society. When it merely maintains illusions of pseudo-community, it is counter-revolutionary and it leads either to the destruction of subversive groups or to their transformation into extra power structures. [...]

Solidarity has no meaning outside of a practice: for that reason the usual campaigns "against repression" are nothing but the actions of "rackets", to use a fashionable term. The individual can only offer his sympathy and the organisations that specialise in solidarity gather these individuals without doing anything. Solidarity suffices itself with organising solidarity. It is in fact highly reactionary when it condemns "scandals", at the moment when the supposed scandalous fact is a simple result of a cause which is conveniently placed outside the scope of critique. They thus end up denouncing or re-arranging the most obvious facts of social repression, while at the same time they save or modernise the whole.

Properly speaking the revolutionary movement does not organise any particular support. Its members – individuals or groups – support each other naturally through their activities and give each other the necessary help. The problem of "support" is only existent for those outside of the revolutionary movement. The subversive

movement supports only those who need help through deepening its action, both in the field of relations and contacts and in the field of theory.

It goes without saying that when we fight for the accused to have a "political" trial we do not demand any sort of privilege for the "political" prisoners as opposed to the "criminal" prisoners. We might identify in the latter's gangsterism capital's extreme tendency to live with frauds and to create businesses without capital, and in turn show that the accused of Barcelona are not gangsters. Yet this is far from demanding any form of superiority of the "political" prisoners as against the "criminal" ones. As if any person who can reproduce a couple of Marx quotes has an advantage over others. "Political" prisoners are not superior from the others. We do not demand this quality to be recognised in the name of a principle, but as a tactical means for decreasing their penalties.

Jean Barrot (aka Gilles Dauve), 1973.

Translated from a pamphlet of the group Mouvement Communiste, published in *Undercurrent* 8. Then *Undercurrent* found out that the original Greek translation (which they used) was slightly modified, 'according to the original editor's political views'. These are extracts from the revised translation made by *Undercurrent*: the full text is at: www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/lobby/3909/undercurrent/class.htm

Who was Salvador Puig Antich?

He was born into a large Barcelona family living in the Calle Pas de l'Ensenyanca and by the time he was a pupil at the Maragall Institute he was a member of the Baccalaureate Students' Committee, which is where he met some of the future members of the MIL like Xavier Garriga Paituvi and Ignasi Sole Sugranyes during 1969.

He did his military service on Ibiza and was assigned to the medical corps, for which reason he used "metgde" (Catalan for doctor) as one of his aliases: another alias was "Gustavo". In November 1971 he joined the MIL through Garriga's good offices and at that point gave up studying.

For two years Puig Antich was an active participant in bank robberies, acting most often as getaway driver. He also played a significant role as mediator during the final stages of the MIL, as shown in surviving documents credited to him.

After the MIL's self-dissolution, the arrests began. On 25 September 1971 Salvador went with Garriga to keep a rendezvous with Santi Soler, but Soler had been arrested and the police were waiting for them. After a bit of a tussle at the junction of the Calle Girona and the Calle Consell de Cent, several shots were fired, hitting Salvador and killing a police officer: almost certainly the shots came from his colleagues in the Barcelona Politico-Social Brigade.

Salvador stood trial for the killing before a Court Martial on January 1974 and was condemned to death. On 1 March 1974 the Francoist cabinet acknowledged and endorsed the sentence along with the death sentence passed on the stateless Heinz Chez. On 2 March Salvador was executed by garrote vil in the Modelo Prison in Barcelona. It was to be the last time that macabre and medieval method of execution was used.

On account of his tragic death, Salvador's life has been misrepresented by the media which sometimes portray him as a hero and try to sell him like just another commodity. He has been similarly used, albeit in a different way, by a number of political organisations that champion the very thing he fought against.

Solidaridad Obrera 12 March 2004

Salvador Puig Antich

2 March 2004 sees the 30th anniversary of the execution by garrote vil of the Mil militant Salvador Puig Antich (Barcelona 1948-1974). From a working class family in Barcelona, he was the third of six siblings.

From the age on 16 onwards he reconciled working in an office with night classes at the Maragall Institute where he struck up a friendship with Xavier Garriga and the brothers Oriol and Ignasi Sole Sugranyes, all of them future comrades in the MIL. Like most young people at the time, Salvador was very fond of French music and liked listening to George Brassens and Jacques Brel. He liked to quote a few lines from Leo Ferré: "I'm going to turn the sadness of the wind into a song". He played the guitar and wrote songs himself. He was also a great reader, reading philosophy and poetry. His favourite authors included Proust, Camus, Freud and the Marxist and libertarian classics.

In the wake of May 68 in France the struggle got underway. His initial activity was in the local Workers' Commissions and he served on the Student Commission at the Maragall Institute. After doing his army service in Ibiza, he joined a new organisation, the MIL. Behind those initials there was no party, no trade union, not even a movement: it was merely a clearing-house for analyses, actions and propaganda. It appears that the name was borrowed from a song by Moustaki: "We are two, we are three/ We are a thousand (mille)..."

The MIL, a direct descendant of the revolutionary workers' movement of the 1960s as well as of the internal crises within the Workers' Commissions, was one of the most novel bodies of its day. In its publications, the MIL was to attack not just Francoism but capital and it would accuse the leftwing and far left parties of being pillars of the system. For propaganda purposes they also had the CIA (International Anarchist Conspiracy) and Mayo-37 editions. MIL's armed agitation consisted of

bank robberies. Puig Antich joined the armed wing, taking part in these raids as a driver. Like fish in water, Puig Antich and his comrades moved on to underground struggle and made frequent trips to the south of France where they linked up with old CNT militants. In August that year they gathered in France in order to hold the Mil's self-dissolution congress. The following month, after a raid on a branch of La Caixa in Bellver de Cerdanya, the crackdown on MIL militants began. The first to be arrested were Oriol Sole Sugranyes and Pons Llobet, followed by Santi Soler who was used by the police as bait in order to get their hands on Xavier Garriga and Salvador Puig Antich. They were arrested in the doorway of 70, Calle Gerona. In the ensuing struggle, shots were fired. Puig Antich was badly wounded and a police officer, Anguas Barragan, was killed. During the interval between Salvador's arrest (on 25 September) and his standing trial, ETA assassinated Carrero Blanco. The Francoist regime was hell bent on revenge. Puig Antich would be sentenced to death and to a thirty year prison term. No mercy was shown the young Catalan. Franco would have his revenge and refused him clemency. In spite of the solidarity campaign and international actions and pressures the Francoist government gave the go-ahead and on 2 March 1974 25 year old Salvador Puig Antich was executed in the Modelo Prison. In Tarragona that very day the Pole Heinz Chez was also executed by the garrote vil.

Thirty years on, with democracy re-established, justice has still to be done in the case of Puig Antich and in the cases of so many other worker and revolutionary militants who fought during Francoist rule and gave their lives for freedom. Salvador Puig Antich is yet another instance of this democratic slothfulness. Puig Antich, the romantic anarchist, was to defend his anti-capitalist views to the very end, as he wrote to his brother: "...and now, in this moment of truth, my belief in what I fought for is stronger than ever..."

Ferran Aisa

Solidaridad Obrera 12 March 2004

Puig Antich in the maze

32 years on from his death, the figure of Salvador Puig Antich is still trapped in a complicated maze. A maze that is an impediment to a proper recovery of his memory – and of what the MIL really stood for – and his public rehabilitation. And whilst there are some politicians who would prefer him to remain a tame shadow of his real self, one that can be invoked in an orderly way, there is also no shortage of media projects trying to revive the myth along similar lines; this seems to be case with the soon-to-be-released movie *Salvador*, if the criticisms coming from former MIL activists like Pons Llobet and Vargás-Golarons are to be believed.

One way or another, saddling a group as ideologically complex as the MIL with a simplistic label such as “anti-Francoist” amounts to a lie. Strictly speaking the MIL was not so much anti-Francoist as anti-capitalist; with their councillorist approach, its activists in fact rejected political or trade unionism vanguardism in any form and their struggle was geared to supporting the workers’ movement, the autonomy of which was their main article of faith. That said, it is hard to swallow representations of the MIL that depict as it was not nor ever wished to be: better still, as something that it fact it fought against. And with this salt rubbed into the wound: much of the “left” that flirts with the inheritance of the group these days wrote Puig Antich off at the time as a terrorist and left him to go it alone.

Added to this maze of tendentious and interested manipulation of the MIL story, there is the legal front. The sisters of the Catalan anarchist are making a fresh attempt to secure a review of the court martial that sat on their brother’s case. Politically, the wind does not seem to be blowing in the direction of requests to have Francoist court martials reviewed – revision being in any case a very restricted resort in Spanish law generally. In April 2005, the Attorney General expressed his intention to bar any comprehensive review of such trials. Given the personal interests of deputy premier María Teresa Fernández de la Vega, it is anticipated that an attempt will be made to settle the issue through legislation acknowledging the victims of the 1936 (civil) war – on both sides? – and of the dictatorship, a generic law that would circumvent some very invidious situations. Hence the likelihood is that review applications for such as the Delgado-Granados case, which is driven by the CGT, or the recent decree handed down by the Military Chamber of the Supreme Court – chaired by Ángel Calderón [...] – which, on 26 January 2006, turned down an application for a review of the court martial in 1962 of the anarchist Francisco Sánchez Ruano. Sánchez Ruano was sentenced to a 28 year prison term (of which he served 11) for the victimless attack on the Valley of the Fallen monument on 12 August 1962. In fact that attack was mounted by another two anarchists, Antonio Martín and Paul Desnais.

In the Puig Antich case, added to these pre-existing difficulties there are the hurdles erected by Ángel Calderón, with the support of other segments of the judiciary. But before we deal with these matters, we should say a little about the sisters’ fresh application.

An uphill struggle

This is not the first time that Puig Antich’s sisters have applied for a review of the court martial that condemned him to death. The Supreme Court dismissed their first application – a pioneering attempt in the field at the time – on 27 June 1994: the

current application, being handled by lawyers Sebastián Martínez Ramos and Olga de la Cruz, is largely based on the hope that a forensic reconstruction of the exchange of gunfire during which sub-inspector Francisco Anguas died, backed by a statement from doctor Ramón Barjau who was called in the earlier application case (Barjau was able to examine the policeman’s body at the time of admission to the Clinical Hospital in Barcelona and contradicts the findings of the autopsy conducted on the body) may cut some ice. For the first time too, evidence has been sought from the MIL activist arrested along with Puig Antich, Francesc Xavier Garriga Paituvi. Although Garriga Paituvi was not present for the gunfight, he was forced under torture to sign a false statement claiming that Puig Antich opened fire on Anguas (in fact, the basis of the application is its exposure of the accumulation of lies and manipulations – of which more details later – throughout the entire trial).

We talked to Sebastián Martínez Ramos to discover the details of the review application and of the trial that resulted in Salvador’s having been sentenced to death over three decades ago. Martínez Ramos insists that from the outset it would be a mistake to lump all of the Francoist court martials together. Cases such as the Puig Antich case, for all the media spin deployed against it, are not so inconvenient or nuisances even today. According to the lawyer, however, there is a real legal and historical taboo against the thousands of courts martial held in the post-civil war period when a court martial was a weapon systematically and deliberately used like just another weapon in the arsenal of repression, and just a brazen example of going through the motions of a trial.

Returning to the case of the Catalan anarchist, Martínez Ramos puts it in context by reiterating what Salvador himself stated when in prison: “ETA has done for me.” The reference was to the ETA assassination of Carrero Blanco on 20 December 1973, to which the regime responded with a show of strength and exemplary severity. That is the only explanation for the dizzying speed of a trial (it took barely five months, beginning to end) which in any event came under the remit of the civil courts and not the military – Anguas was a police officer not a serving soldier – and the charge was phony: the charge was terrorism, which requires premeditation, whereas what this was was a homicide of more questionable provenance.

Thus everything was in place for Francoism to make Salvador pay for a number of outstanding scores. [...]

So far we have referred to the many irregularities that turned the Puig Antich trial into a sham guaranteeing a pre-determined verdict and which are the basis of the case for a review today. If we want to appreciate the extent to which things were other than as they were presented at the court martial, we need an outline of those events in 1973. Although many of these details are already familiar, the materials facilitated by Martínez Ramos have proved crucial in ordering and assessing what happened.

Back then to 25 September 1973. The police had earlier arrested Santi Soler Amigó, whom they used as bait in a trap set for Francesc Xavier Garriga Paituvi. Soler and Garriga had arranged to meet at the junction of the Calle Girona and the Calle Consell de Cent where a Special Squad of the police had set an ambush into which Puig Antich, who happened to be with Garriga, also walked. The Special Squad was under the command of Inspector Santiago Bocigas Vallejo and included three more officers, Enrique Muñoz Martín, Timoteo Fernández Santorum and Francisco Rodríguez Álvarez; also along were sub-inspectors Francisco Anguas Barragán and Luis Miguel Algar Barrón. At 18.00 hours, Garriga and Puig Antich arrived and were promptly arrested. Apparently, Enrique Muñoz apprehended Soler whilst Francisco Rodríguez and Luis Miguel Algar overpowered Garriga: the other three officers – Bocigas, Santorum and Anguas – grabbed Salvador Puig Antich and here the first contradiction crops up: Inspector Bocigas contends that at this point they tripped and felled Puig Antich whilst beating him about the head with the butts of their guns; for his part, Puig Antich was to argue at his trial that a tussle broke out in the vestibule of No 70, Calle Girona. Be that as it may, Garriga and Puig Antich were bundled into that doorway by the police and it was there that the gunshots were fired and where Francisco Anguas met his death.

To this day it is a mystery how the exchange of gunfire came about, who fired and how many times, as well as the number of shots that struck Anguas, and from which guns those shots were fired, for it seems clear that Puig Antich was not the only person to fire at the sub-inspector.

The vestibule of 70, Calle Girona

The vestibule of No 70, Calle Girona is a tiny space just 3.25 by 4.5 metres. This is where the tussle took place between seven men (the concierge scrambled out of the way as she saw the police and their prisoners tumble inside), six of them armed. So, once inside the vestibule, Garriga and Salvador tackled their captors and there was general confusion. We know that Rodríguez and Anguas tried to overpower Garriga Paituvi who managed to break loose and dart outside only to be recaptured on the street: as for Salvador, even before he was bundled into the vestibule they had wrested from him the pistol he was carrying in his coat pocket and, once inside, he began to take a hail of blows from gun butts that was to create considerable mental disturbance. Despite the raining blows, Salvador managed to draw a second handgun and, as he was to testify during his court martial, fired “one or two shots, aimed at no one, for I was losing consciousness”. At which point Santorum fired at Puig Antich, hitting him in the jaw and left shoulder. From there on the shooting continued in what was – to quote the police report – a fierce shoot-out that cost Anguas his life. Again Bocigas’s statement brings a contradiction: whereas the trial stated that Puig Antich

fired several shots, although which was never specified, an earlier report referred to a single shot fired at point-blank range. As if to complicate things even more, further contradictions cropped up when the police made statements about their positioning and performance in the vestibule.

But were Puig Antich’s gunshots actually the ones that struck the police officer? Back in 1974 a ballistic analysis was impossible: of all the bullets from the exchange of gunshots, the only two produced for the judges were the two removed from Puig Antich: the fact is that they did not seem to accord them any importance because they refused the ballistic evidence and reconstruction of events for which the defence was pressing (as well as a psychiatric assessment that would establish the extent to which Puig Antich was answerable for his actions when he fired, due to the blows rained on his head).

In his report on the forensic reconstruction as cited in the current review application, Jose Luis Pedregosa states that “The nine possible traces of gunshots found at the scene (five in Anguas’s body, two in Puig Antich’s and two – visible to this day – in the walls could not have come from a single clip. Three of them were travelling upwards, two in a downwards direction and four cannot be established (some of the marks on the bodies and the walls could have come from the same bullet). It follows from the above that the story of gunfire exchanged in mid-tussle between four people brandishing handguns renders the trajectories in all likelihood contingent and erratic in terms of their provenance and target.” After analysing the movements of those involved in the vicinity and the likely trajectories, Pedregosa is inclined to believe that “the first shot (shot C) striking Anguas’s abdomen travelling in a downwards direction that made him bend over forwards, enabling the other two bullets to travel in an upwards direction, one of them at point blank range.”

For his part, the family’s counsel concludes today on the basis of the autopsy findings that “only one of the wounds listed displayed powder burns (indicating that the shot was fired at short range, whereas the others were fired from greater distance) and that whereas two of the trajectories being upwards and one in a downwards direction – as explained by the coroner Dr Gabriel Sánchez Maldonado, in the minutes of the court martial – , which simply cannot be squared with there having been a single shooter aiming and firing at Señor Anguas from a single position, a uniform distance and height” (see text of review petition, p. 24).

The autopsy carried out on Anguas deserves separate consideration – it was, as we have seen, not supported by any ballistic evidence at the court martial which could confirm or rebut these hypotheses. And the fact is that autopsy was to be yet another factor in the trap set for Salvador so that they could convict him and has little to add in the way of clarifying how the shoot-out proceeded.

When Anguas's corpse reached the casualty ward at the Clinical Hospital, it was examined by three paramedics and by physicians Ramón Barjau, Pedro Munné and Joaquín Latorre. Despite defence requests, none of them was called as a witness to testify during the trial as to what they saw on the officer's body. For that very reason, on account of what they saw, the body was not subjected to the usual procedures. So much so that it was not delivered to the Forensic Institute where the autopsy would of course have been conducted; instead, it was redirected to the police station at Barcelona University. And it was in fact in the police station there and under the supervision of a physician attached to the police rather than of a coroner that an autopsy was carried out and a report produced, the findings of which are frankly at odds with what was seen by the staff and nurses earlier at the Clinic.

In fact one of the main hindrances to the case for a review of the Puig Antich trial is the statement made by Ramón Bajau, one of the physicians to have examined Anguas's body when it was brought into the Clinical Hospital. On the basis of a cursory, frontal examination, Bajau got the impression of a body riddled with gunshot wounds. How many, though? He cannot quite remember now but there were definitely two wounds to the thigh. However, the autopsy records only three injuries to the body and places all three in the thorax (and remember that Puig Antich himself claimed to have fired "one or two shots" and that the leader of the police detail, Bocigas, was initially talking about a single shot).

The trial would reach its end on 8 January 1974 when the military judges cut through all the confusion and sentenced Salvador Puig Antich to death. But did he in fact kill Anguas? With some pieces of evidence discounted and a spin put on the rest, we will assuredly never know the answer. Likewise, it is plain that it was a political decision by Francoism that sealed Salvador Puig Antich's fate by garrote in the Modelo Prison in Barcelona on 2 March 1974.

Mateo Rello

Solidaridad Obrera (Barcelona) 22 April 2006

THE WAR GOES ON...

FAI-IFA

So, you Platonic philosophers, you would emancipate a people exploited by such methods? [...] The revolutionary Congress declares that the bourgeoisie ought not to be regarded as like other beings, declares it to be beyond the Pale of peoples. Thus, suffering humanity should defend itself against such pernicious creatures by trampling underfoot any who would raise their heads in order to bite, and show no compassion at the sound of the whimpering that attends its extinction.

Manifesto of the Disinherited (Cadiz 1848)

Nothing will save you. Our struggle in the countryside and in the cities will put paid to the entire bourgeois estate. A purifying fire will cleanse the secular carrion which has overpowered and brutalised peoples.

Verbo Rojo (David Antona) writing in Madrid's *CNT* on 7 January 1933

Salvador PUIG ANTICH, strangled by garrote vil on the morning of 2 March 1974 in the courtyard of the Modelo Prison in Barcelona, was a scapegoat whom the capitalists dispatched an executioner to murder, an executioner who travelled from the far side of the Spanish State, after a month and a half's suspense, time during which the State mulled over and over the value of such a spectacular measure. In the end it did what it logically had to do... IT HAS DECLARED REVOLUTIONARIES DENIED THE RIGHT TO SURVIVE WITHIN THE PROCESS OF CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT... obviously, when the enemy of the State is the People's friend, the State must exterminate its enemy. That is nothing more than a new chapter in the Class War raging violently since 19 July 1936.

[...] And so PUIG ANTICH has been done to death. Remember that the cops did their best to do away with him at the time of arrest... and thousands of libertarians have lost their lives for the same reasons ever since THIS revolutionary class war became widespread in 1936. After the physical annihilation of the workers who had fought to defend their collectives and their essays in undiluted Communism, came the Calvary of thousands of exiles through the concentration camps of democratic, Popular Front France, through the Nazi-fascist whirlwind with its death camps and labour camps where the CNT's revolutionary masses lost their lives (perishing under a regimen of the most primitive slavery), at the same time as the internationalist fight put up through the European resistance by numerous comrades who died with their weapons in their hands, after the first stirrings of Iberian workers in the 1940s which were defended by the libertarian guerrillas and coordinated by the CNT-FAI, with the most combative sections of anarchist youth being sentenced to die, mown down in the

streets and in the hills in the '40s and '50s, after the interminable prison sentences passed in the '60s on a fresh crop of the libertarian communist movement, as well as the slaughter of an entire libertarian combat group at the start of 1960- Sabaté and his friends. After the police frame-up of Granados and Delgado, who were murdered in 1963 by garrote vil (as was comrade Puig) and the criminal gunning down of another anarchist armed group, Ramón Vila Capdevila and his comrades... after a protracted silence punctuated by an avalanche of arrests of Libertarian Youth members (Edo, Alicia, Urbano...) until another upswing in the shape of the present RESURGENCE opened with a series of arrests among student circles in Madrid, the Acratas, the action groups (in 1968), an FUR (*Queremos la Universidad*), the editorial team from the review *Panorama-CNT* (in Madrid), the Valencian group of the FIJL (outstanding among them, on account of his being held in intolerable prison conditions, Floreal Rodriguez), the 18 year sentence passed on Francesc Tubau Subira, the youngster from Ampurda, the chicanery against Julio Millan...

In the 1970s, the repression against Iberian anarchism has reached figures that bear comparison with those of the 1940s. Thus, dozens of comrades have been rounded up at demonstrations and in clashes with police: we have the arrests and harassment visited upon Terra Libre Valencia), on three occasions upon the teams from Autogestión Obrera (Madrid), after Andrés Ruiz (Barcelona) and Navarro (L'Hospitalet del Llobregat), David Urbano again (Barcelona), the ex-members of MIL, some thirty youths from Zaragoza (the pursuit of the Acción Directa groups) and in recent weeks the wave of tough repression unleashed against various libertarian organisations in Catalonia even among individualists and sympathisers of a thousand different outlooks. The police communiqué talks of TWENTY TWO comrades, but we reckon that there must have been many more than that, and that this is NOTHING MORE THAN A FRESH POLICE MACHINATION, after the fashion of the State tension in Italy (we now find the Sixth Brigade's Special Social Investigation Anarchist-hunting Squad, one of whom Salvador Puig was fortunate enough to EXECUTE with his gun) aping their Italian colleagues and, should that fail, picking up the telephone and asking for Inspector Bond in London, the inventor of anti-anarchist methods in England). We ask comrades the world over to step up their campaign ON BEHALF OF SALVADOR PUG ANTICH in the light of the recent events in Barcelona, linking the trial of Valpreda and his comrades with that of Marini, the forthcoming court martial of Oriol SOLE SUGRANYES, upon whom they are going to pass another death sentence (the garrote vil having been deployed against us) and the judicial mockeries mounted against Enrique CONDE and Nuria BALLART, as well as against the Italian student who has been languishing in prison for three months now and all the comrades still behind bars. [...]

Let the cry rise from every side THEY HAVE KILLED PUIG ANTICH: WE MUST SAVE ORIOL SOLE! as a thousand workers chanted in the streets of Badalona only a few days ago.

In spite of the incessant arrests, in spite of the implacable persecution visited upon our libertarian circles, LET US FORGE AHEAD, for we have nothing to lose, whereas the Spanish and Portuguese States are in crisis. THE WAR CARRIES ON... THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION OF '36 IS STILL IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION. WE HAVE TO GET TO A WORLDWIDE REVOLUTIONARY EXPLOSION THROUGH OUR EVERYDAY STRUGGLES, ALONGSIDE THE CNT, ALONGSIDE ALL REVOLUTIONARIES AND FOR LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM.

The Local Federation of Anarchist Groups (Barcelona) March 1974

First published *KSL: Bulletin of the Kate Sharpley Library*, 16, September 1998.

Puig Antich, 30 Years On

I was up and about early that morning. I had not slept well. It was freezing cold in Paris. I turned on the radio and listened to the news. Still nothing.

The news reached me later, by which time I was stuck in traffic on a ring road. My worst fears had been confirmed: "Catalan anarchist Salvador Puig Antich" – the announcer on France-Inter read out – "was executed at dawn today in Barcelona. Franco refused clemency. Also executed was the Polish national Heinz Chez, sentenced to death for the killing of a Civil Guard. Both were executed by garrote vil." Tears welled up in my eyes. – Rotten bastards" – I muttered.

It was not the Francoists that I was thinking of. Not just them, at any rate. My thoughts flew to a few months before. I was remembering a meeting held right there in Paris. Several of us far left militants had sought a meeting with the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Spain. (PCE) It was granted. Santiago Alvarez, the general secretary of the Galician Communist Party, and Napoleon Olasolo, an old acquaintance from the Communist Party of Euskadi attended. We suggested to them that they coordinate efforts to mount a robust campaign to prevent the execution of Puig Antich. Santiago Alvarez treated us to a lengthy oration showing according to him, how "objective domestic and international conditions" would prevent Franco from proceeding with the execution. As a result, since the execution was "objectively" an impossibility, no need to get unduly exercised about opposing it.

But what if objective conditions let us down? – I pressed him. He looked at me with a paternal grin reflecting the vast superiority afforded him by lengthy experience

as an old campaigner over the naïve impulsiveness of this 25 year old youngster who dared to question the scientific character of his analysis. In short, they rejected our proposal.

We did what we could, but we did not have the capacity to whip up across Europe a state of outrage that would really bother the Franco regime. The PCE had that capacity. There was no mobilisation. The execution went ahead. 2 March 1974.

Yet again, objective conditions had gone awry. Their fault, no doubt.

Javier Ortiz

From *CNT* (Madrid) April 2004. First published *KSL: Bulletin of the Kate Sharpley Library*, #46-7, (July 2006)

The Great Swindle: 'This is not the tale of Salvador Puig Antich'

The movie *Salvador* about the one-time member of the MIL or Thousand (1,000)*, Salvador Puig Antich, executed by garrotte on 2 March 1974 in the Model Prison in Barcelona will shortly be showing in cinemas around the country [Spain].

In these days when there is so much talk about the recovery of historical memory, we are faced here with a brazen manipulation of the very memory which they purport to want to resuscitate through the making and screening of the movie, to which there has been a strange build-up over recent years.

In fact a short while ago we got an appetiser on TV3 in the form of its first program about the Transition. It was dedicated to Salvador Puig Antich and to the MIL. Now comes the main course.

We could scarcely have expected any other outcome, given that the movie is based on a book written by TV3's current director, Francesc Escribano. Though certainly very well written, *Cuento atrás* [Countdown] is a perfect example of the art of manipulation and lying. This slick, commercial melodrama offers us no explanation of Salvador Puig Antich's actual battle, the reasons why he fought and perished, what he believed in, the process whereby he became radicalised politically and his commitment to the struggle alongside what was then the most radically anti-capitalist strand of the workers' movement. Or his close ties to that movement and its confrontation with the *dirigiste* [statist] and reformist approach of the PSUC-controlled Workers' Commissions. Not a word is said about the socio-political context that spawned the MIL and likewise its attempts at a revolutionary break with it or, of course, the complicity of the Catalan 'democratic' elements rallied around the 'Asamblea de Catalunya' and its great potential for mobilising the people. The PSUC systematically refused right up until that fateful night to lift a finger to mobilise the populace to save Salvador. They were on the brink of a pact with the Francoists. And

thus had to be seen combating these anti-capitalist worker and popular factions whose struggle was geared towards a transformation of society.

Well, as I say, we could scarcely be surprised by the results of this movie. It is all neat and tidy so as to cover up or misrepresent facts that they have no intention of disclosing, facts bearing on the sham transition and the familiar tragic consequences then and now attendant upon this approach [accepting the myth of the 'democratic' transition] by the working class and people of which all are aware. Hardly surprising that they should cover their shame and try to gloss over their guilty consciences.

Mediapro is Europe's second largest audio-visual multinational: a factory churning out most TV products, ads, movies and the like: it wields great control over the media, revising and adapting recent history as suits the authorities and keeping mum about past and present struggles. Mediapro is well in with the 'democratic' institutions – the Generalitat and TV3 – and Manuel Hueriga is a specialist in soap operas and the ideal choice for this revisionist and history-manufacturing project. It defies belief that this guy argues that one of the aims of his movie is to denounce the death penalty, when the death penalty was abolished in Spain back in 1978 and after Berlanga and the like produced superb films on the matter years back.

This is not the tale of Salvador Puig Antich

We are served up a slick, commercial soap opera – a rear tear-jerker of a movie. A laughable fictional melodrama, run-of-the-mill stuff. A slick action movie that blinds us to the real history of Salvador and so many others and above all to the whys and wherefores and targets of their struggles. We are shielded from the circumstances, political activity and purposes behind the expropriations and the political and revolutionary awakening that stretches over a lengthy career of struggle. How was the MIL born and for what purpose? Its connections with the workers' movement's most radical struggles. There is no reference to those struggles not even to the final one, in the wake of the execution, when the biggest factories in Barcelona and district shut down and thousands of workers demonstrated, with hundreds arrested on the Ramblas.

We are shown Salvador as some sort of a playboy and his comrades as a gang of ne'er-do-wells with political overtones.

The unbelievable chief warder Jesús Irurre

There is one thing that inspires disbelief and outrage in all of us who have sampled and experienced repression in the Model Prison – the character of prison warder Jesús Irurre.

In the scene where Salvador is being executed, up starts the aforesaid warder to erupt, not once, but twice: 'Sonofabitch! That murdering Franco! Bastard!' And yet,

folks, nothing happens to him; he carries on with his career as a prison warder! We have eye-witness testimony as to the sort of repression seen from him in the Model Prison from 1973 to 1978 from several inmates who endured the bullying, humiliation and harassment normally inflicted by him during the night as he wielded his baton. Yet Escribano depicts him in his book as 'a great convert to democracy' and, despite the objections raised, Manuel Huerga's script contains this 'reassuring scene' which plainly fits the theory or sham morality behind his movie like a glove: the Franco regime is on its way out, crumbling under its own weight and even the gaoler is a MIL supporter and against the regime. This sparkling thesis is outweighed by the historical record. This politically-motivated falsehood, insinuating that in the early '70s what was needed was politics and not what we were doing, presents us as unhelpful nutcases. And Salvador, poor lad, a good lad, is our bamboozled and misguided victim. Our way was not the right way. Plainly the message here is: It is OK to do away with those who stand up to the system of exploitation and capitalist domination. No need to be quite that radical. There are, obviously, other political ways of working, the ones we have now and these are not changing and have not changed. The message going out to the young is unmistakable.

In this movie, not only are insignificant anecdotes accorded an inflated prominence and importance, but the true history of anti-capitalist subversion and of day to day lives altered through autonomous practice is covered up. This movie is manipulative and tinkers with the real history which was insulting and terrifying to all of us who, male and female, who fought and lived through those years.

I CALL FOR A BOYCOTT AND EMPHATIC DENUNCIATION OF THIS MOVIE'S MISAPPROPRIATION AND MISREPRESENTATION OF THE HISTORICAL RECORD!

One former member of the MIL, or 1,000, one former comrade of Salvador's, just one among the many.

www.sindominio.net/marxa-maquis

*MIL (Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación = Iberian Liberation Movement). The word 'mil' also translates as 'thousand'.

First published *KSL: Bulletin of the Kate Sharpley Library*, #46-7, (July 2006)

The Kate Sharpley Library

The Kate Sharpley Library (KSL) is one of the foremost anarchist archives in the world. We want to preserve and promote the study of anarchist history. The KSL was named in honour of Kate Sharpley, a First World War anarchist and anti-war activist, one of the countless "unknown" members of our movement.

The Kate Sharpley Library was founded by comrades connected with the 121 Bookshop in South London (including the late Albert Meltzer) as a collection on all topics of interest to anarchists.¹ Over the years the library has evolved: it is now firmly focused on the anarchist movement and its history.

In 1991 the library moved out of London, to Northamptonshire and in 1999 moved to California. From the very beginning, the KSL has depended on voluntary workers and the financial support of supporters and subscribers (alongside what we make from selling duplicate titles and publishing).

We publish a quarterly bulletin, which contains historical reprints, recent research and news and reviews. As well as publishing pamphlets on a wide range of aspects of anarchist history, we are soon to publish a translation of Abel Paz's *The Iron Column*.

We are now close to having our first full time volunteer working on the collection. This is very exciting, and gives us the chance to better organise and use the material we hold. However, new projects mean new costs (besides the constantly increasing costs of preservation materials). We appeal to everyone who has an interest in the work we do to make a contribution, however small, to the library's running costs.

KSL Collective, April 2008.

Notes

1, KSL: Bulletin of the Kate Sharpley Library number 40 (September 2004) had some articles on the history of the KSL, including one on the 'early days' (archived at www.katesharpleylibrary.net).

Kate Sharpley Library, BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX

Kate Sharpley Library, PMB 820, 2425 Channing Way, Berkeley CA 94704, USA

www.katesharpleylibrary.net