

# THE UNSUNG STRUGGLE

RESISTANCE TO FRANCO 1939 - 1951

## THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON FRANCO FROM THE AIR - 1948

The course of Spanish History might well have been changed on Sunday 12th September 1948 on the second day of the fishing boat regatta being fought out at San Sebastian before the eyes of General Franco. A group of Anarchists in exile had laid their plans that the chief of state should die in the waters of La Concha bay beneath a hail of incendiary and shrapnel bombs dropped from a light aircraft.....

*This is the first in a series from our archives on the history of the Spanish Resistance, 1939-51 to be published by the KSL. This pamphlet is written by Antonio Tellez (author of "Sabater" and "Facerias")*

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**K.S.L.**

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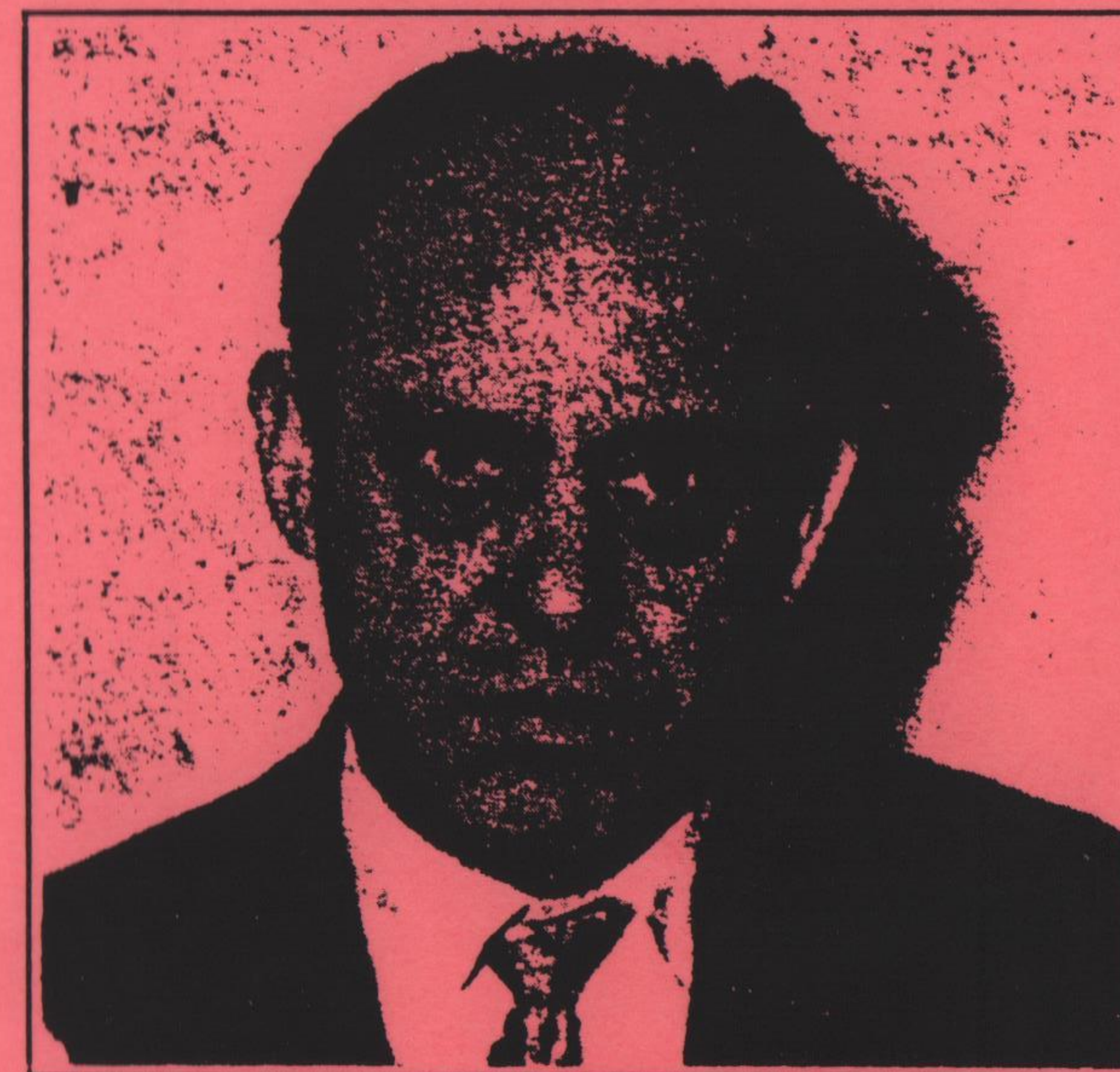
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LAUREANO CERRADA SANTOS

## THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON FRANCO FROM THE AIR - 1948

by **ANTONIO TELLEZ**

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**RESISTANCE TO FRANCO 1939 - 1951**

PREFACE

## *The Unsung Struggle*

*Spanish Anarchist-Syndicalist Resistance to Franco 1939-51*

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In a book published in Paris while Franco was still alive (1)

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**PREFACE**

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The earliest confused inklings of this spectacular scheme were disclosed by the French newspapers in February 1951 when the anarchist aircraft which was to have bombed the Caudillo was uncovered.

In a book published in Paris while Franco was still alive (1) Antonio Tellez included a chapter entitled "The mystery plane" which retailed details then available about the plan, but identifying those involved only by their initials. Subsequently the journalist Eliseo Bayo, intrigued by the story, interviewed the organiser of the assassination bid, one Laureano Cerrada Santos, in Paris. Cerrada was the subject of an article in the Gaceta Ilustrada (17th October 1976), one of a series later issued in book form (2).

By the early 1980s only two of those actually and directly involved in the plan to eliminate the Spanish head of state survived. For the pilot, Primitivo Perez Gomez, died a few years ago in a Parisian hospital, while Cerrada himself was gunned down in Paris on Monday 18th October 1976 (3) at the age of 74. In another book by



Tellez (4) whilst relating certain events which occurred in Lyons (France) in January 1951 (events which led to the eventual discovery of the aforementioned light aircraft), Antonio Ortiz was named as one of the protagonists of Cerrada's scheme and the initials of the other were given. His full name is Jose Perez Ibanez (nicknamed El Valencia). In the essay which follows and on the basis of the statements obtained from Ortiz and Perez, the full details of their extraordinary scheme are disclosed (5).

**Notes:**

(1) Antonio Tellez: *La guerilla urbana, Facerias* (this has been translated into English but unpublished. It is still available in Spanish and Italian).

(2) Eliseo Bayo: *Los atentados contra Franco* (ed. Plaza y Janes, Barcelona 1976)

(3) Bayo conducted a painstaking on-the-spot investigation into Cerrada's murder and his findings were revealed in the *Gaceta Ilustrada* (31st October and 7th November 1976). He even revealed the name of the supposed murderer, a Spaniard by the name of Ramon Benicho Canuda, alias Ramon Leriles, aged 52. However, the police came to different conclusions, for having interrogated Benicho., they released him.

(4) Antonio Tellez: *Sabate, la guerilla urbana en Espana* (Ed Plaza y Janes, Barcelona, 1978) Translated by Stuart Christie (Rupert Hart Davis 1st edn); Cienfuegos Press (2nd edn); Elephant Editions (3rd edition).

(5) When this article had already been completed but not published (owing to certain problems with the Spanish magazine for which it was intended) Antonio Tellez was informed by Ortiz that he had been visited by Eliseo Bayo for the purpose of interviewing him. Ortiz had been correspondng with Tellez for a number of years. Bayo published a fresh article in issue No. 175 of *Interviu* (20-26 September 1979) entitled "Attempts on Franco's Life, An extraordinary witness emerges",

## The Background

When the Spanish generals joined the Right Wing coalition to launch an attack on the Republic (to which they had sworn allegiance) it was met, not by determined resistance of the Republic itself, but by the workers who saw more clearly than the bourgeois politicians that, even though the fascist leader would be dictator Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera had been early eliminated, Franco would bring about fascism. Had the Republic armed them, they would have won in a week. As it was, an "unarmed rabble" defeated their own national Army in every main city.

They responded to the Rebellion with the Revolution. The anarcho-syndicalist forces (CNT FAI) were backed by the majority of workers, but it had been felt by most anti-fascists they should join the UHP (United Proletarian Brothers) including socialists and communists. The latter had already formed the Popular Front. The myth, peddled to the last, was that a democratic alliance against fascism would gain the support of the democracies (by which was understood Britain, France, the USA and the Soviet Union! In the event the only genuine support came from Mexico).

When Russia did intervene, for what it was worth, the Communists (insignificant at the outset of the war) became the strongest party. Many bourgeoisie, fearful of being regarded as fascists, joined them as an alibi, and a new generation, too, because the fascists constantly stated they were fighting "the Reds" (as the Communists in turn insisted the internal enemy they were trying to eliminate was not the whole of the workers movement but the virtually non-existent "Trotskyites").

As the Republic gathered strength (against its own people) it introduced militarisation and the suppression of the Revolution began, under Communist generals such as Lister and "El Campesino". First the independent Marxist Party (POUM), as a rival to the CP, was wiped out under this, then the battle against collectivisation began within the Republic.

Many Anarchists disagreed with the policy of compromise, and felt the Organisation had yielded too much ground and should fight against the growing Communist influence which came from



outside the working class . They formed groups such as the Friends of Durruti.

The last act in the drama was a civil war in which the republicans, realising they had been double-crossed by the communists, joined forces with anarchists in a last-ditch fight to prevent the continued slaughter, designed to continue without hope of success for the sake of Russian foreign policy.

Because of this last-moment split, Franco was able to avoid a peace treaty, and genocide began inside Spain. A huge exodus crossed into France, where they were treated like foreign invaders by the democracy they had been told was their ally. When the World War broke out, to avoid continued internment of themselves or their families, many men joined either the French or British forces.

During the War the Spanish refugees were rounded up for slave labour by the Nazis but formed the resistance in the South, called the Maquis. It was they who liberated Paris in 1944. Incredibly under the Nazis they had not only fought as partisans with France but formed their locals, having a degree of trust among themselves others could not match.

The Organisation was thus able, immediately after the War, to re-group in exile as the Libertarian Spanish Movement (MLE). The CNT had never been bureaucratically controlled (even when virtually all Catalonia was collectivised, the CNT had only one full-time paid secretary) , but many had entered the Government bureaucracy during the Civil War and felt their subsequent standing in the CNT was "frozen" until it could hold fresh elections. Others, such as Federica Montseny, led by virtue of the prestige they enjoyed.

The groupings such as Friends of Durruti, Los Aguilchos and so on tended to re-group in the Libertarian Youth (JJ.LL) , many until late middle age, to avoid schism,.

Within Spain itself the reconstruction of CNT locals was quite separate from the exile movement and there were many differences especially in regard to armed actions against Franco.

This led to people like Sabater, and those associated with him being somewhat coldly regarded by some who should have supported them. It also explains why the MLE, though regarding

itself as custodian of the revolutionary traditions, should have balked at present actions. (Equally, Vernon Richards, while in "Lessons of the Spanish Revolution" a critic of every single aspect of the CNT during the civil war, in his house organ "Freedom" , which ignored every post-war action of the Spanish Anarchists, except for the rare, invariably scornful, comment as to the folly of fighting at all, granted reluctantly "there may have been some sort of resistance").

Now the World War was over, freedom fighters (carrying on in precisely the same way as before, during and after the civil war) became labelled "bandits". It did of course compromise those in France who had made themselves responsible for the existence of the exile movement. On the other hand, French (and British) opinion had become more anti-fascist during the war, and open support for fascism, or suppression of anti-fascism, might have been electorally unpopular.

Some non-Spanish were involved in the anti-Fascist resistance, including French, Italians, Argentines and one Briton, Stuart Christie. He met in prison Miguel Garcia Garcia (serving a 20 year sentence of which he served every day) inviting him to London. From there Garcia carried on a campaign to aid the last of the guerrillas of Spain, and to join the last of the groupings of the Civil War dissidents (Friends of Durruti etc) with the International First of May movement.

Looking at such caricatures as Prof. Hobsbawm's description of Sabater (classified under Bandits), one is reminded of the German Communists' approach to the Spanish war. They had, only three years previously, possessed a Red United Fighting Front army trained secretly in Russia which, back in the Weimar Republic, paraded the streets with pride, without needing the massive police protection the Nazis did. One day President Hindenburg and the Catholic Centre opened the door to Hitler, he became legal dictator and zip! The next day the Communist leaders were hiding in cellars or being beaten up in concentration camps and not a shot had been fired in anger. A disciplined force, deprived of leadership, disappeared. The German Communist leaders went or were arrested, some to appear on the Spanish scene as generals, to scorn



the naivety of the Spanish anarchists, uncontrollable and rushing into battle regardless, at the indiscipline of which they and the Communist academics like Franz Borkenau and Eric Hobsbawm could hardly restrain their mirth. It wasn't the Spanish in particular to whom they felt superior, it was the workers.

Certainly the civil war, world-war and post-war fighters this series is determined to rescue from oblivion were laidback as well as determined, as this narrative shows. One high-ranking British police officer said, when investigating their activities, they were "amateurs". Exactly so. Nobody paid them. They were ordinary workers, not professional soldiers or professional revolutionists. Where have those terrible twins ever got us?

**Albert Meltzer**  
London  
1992

## Chapter One The Resolution

Issue No. 50 of "CNT" (on 21st March 1946) , the organ of the Movimiento Libertario Espanol (the name taken by the CNT in France) carried, in a position of great prominence an article by Federica Montseny Mane entitled, "Men of the CNT and the MLE... Pedro Mateu", in the course of which she outlined that labour hero's life of self-sacrifice.

The name of Pedro Mateu Gumido, born in Valls (Tarragona) on 23rd April 1897, became world famous when, in March 1921, he took part in a revenge killing whose victim was Spanish Premier Eduardo Dato. Dato was murdered in a last-ditch effort to protest at the endless murders of militants of the anarcho-syndicalist National Confederation of Labour (CNT) in Catalonia (1). This campaign of murder was conducted with impunity, first of all by the hired guns in the pay of the police inspector Manuel Bravo Portillo (2) and the German adventurer Fritz Golman (alias Baron Koenig) and later on by the gunmen of the Sindicato Libre (Free Union, a scab organisation) under the aegis of Barcelona's civil governor, Severiano Martinez Anido and the Inspector General of Public Order, Miguel Arlegui y Bayones.

Here are a couple of extracts from Montseny's article in CNT.

"Pedro Mateu, today, an exile as are we all and like all of us with chapters of fresh persecution and heroism to show for his years in France and for pursuing from French soil the struggle first engaged on Spanish, is a member of the Libertarian Movement - CNT in France. After a gap of several years, we ran across him again at the Paris Congress of Local Federations (1st December 1945) which he was attending as representative of the local federation of Cordes (Tarn).

"Pedro Mateu is one of those men who shun the limelight but turn up ever alert and full of energy in time of need. One of those taciturn types who say little but do much, One of those men who are forgotten or unknown yet one of those who live and ever shall live for the people's movements and the beliefs that sustain them."

The article appeared at a time when a vacancy had arisen on the



National Committee. The Co-ordinating Secretary, Angel Marin Pastor, had travelled into Spain on organisation business and had been arrested in Barcelona in October 1945. Whilst he managed to escape from prison on 15th December 1945, he only returned to France on 17th March 1946. He arrived back in Toulouse to be dropped from the National Committee. Whereupon the organisation was sounded out on the issue of who was to replace him. After Federica's article, the answer was a foregone conclusion and Pedro Mateu Cusido was appointed by a majority vote.

A national plenum of regionals held in August 1946 confirmed Pedro Mateu's appointment to the post of Co-ordinating Secretary on the National Committee.

The Second Congress of the MLE-CNT in France met in Toulouse from 20th to 29th October 1947, and Mateu was returned by an overwhelming vote in the elections to the National Committee. Some 274 local federations representing 11,655 members voted for him: his nearest rival was Juan Puig Elias, with 6,007 votes (3). Only Jose Peirats Valls who was selected secretary-general polled more votes than Mateu, and then only by 37 votes. Some 11,702 votes were cast for Peirats by some 238 local federations. The Congress was attended by delegates from some 470 local federations representing a total of 18,774 members... the largest single grouping among the Spanish exiles.

Item number 16 on the agenda of the Second Congress was: "Ways and means of intensifying the struggle against Franco and the Falange to the point where they are crushed and a tremendous boost given to the Spanish revolution." The resolution finally passed on this read:

"The way in which we can intensify the struggle against Franco and the Falange and reactionaries generally, to the point where they are crushed and the way to give a boost to the Spanish revolution is for each and every militant to lend his personal, direct and correctly marshalled assistance to the common cause, with the utmost spirit of self-sacrifice.

"The means by which we may contribute to the goal we set ourselves are contact with the people and the workers, creation of the proper climate, and encouragement of mutinous and rebellious groups everywhere, boosting of resistance and direct action,

and sabotage, and by perfecting the organisation of the fight, dealing effective blows to the enemy on every front and to these we should add whatever methods we may apply, provided that the Movement and its Defence Commission deem them compatible with our honour."

Laureano Cerrada's plan to assassinate Franco was thus perfectly in tune with both the spirit and the letter of the resolution on action against Franco ultimately approved by the Spanish Libertarian Movement in Exile.

## Chapter Two Mateu and the Assassination of Eduardo Dato

On the evening of 8th March 1927, emerging from a senate sitting, the Spanish Premier, Eduardo Dato e Iradier, instructed his chauffeur to drive him home. It was going on for 9 p.m.

As it passed the Plaza de la Cibeles, alongside the Palace of Communications, a motorcycle with sidecar containing three armed men slipped into position just behind the Prime Minister's official vehicle. As they arrived at the Plaza de la Independencia, quite near Dato's home which was on the corner of the Calle Lagasca and the Calle Alcala, the motorcycle edged forward until it was parallel with the right hand side of the Premier's limousine. There was a burst of handgun fire and then the motorcycle and sidecar raced off at top speed along the Calle Serrano.

Adjutant Juan Jose Fernandez, who had been sitting alongside the driver, suffered slight head wounds while in the back seat the blood-saturated figure of Dato lay slumped. The chauffeur, unscathed, made for the first aid post at No.1, Calle Salustiano Olozaga (the present Calle de los Heroes del 10 de Agosto) (4) in the Buenavista district quite near to the scene of the attack, but Dato was dead on arrival. One of the bullets had entered the occiput exiting through the front of the head, killing him outright.



A second bullet had entered through the mastoid area on the left hand side exiting via the cheekbone while a third had pierced the body at the level of the seventh rib. There were upwards of twenty bullet holes in the car, not counting those bullets which had shattered the windshield.

Eduardo Dato was buried in the Pantheon of Illustrious Men in the basilica of Atocha, where three other premiers were interred. They were General Juan Prim y Prats, killed on 27th December 1870 by a number of men on foot who opened fire on his coach in the Calle del Turco (now the Calle Marques de Cubas) in Madrid; Antonio Canovas del Castillo, killed on 8th August 1897 in the spa of Santa Agueda (Guipuzcoa) by the Italian anarchist Michele Angiolillo (9) and Jose Canalejos y Mendez, killed by the Aragonese Manuel Pardina Serrato (6) in the Puerto del Sol in Madrid on 12th November 1912

Subsequent inquiries led police on 11th March 1921 to a cottage at No. 77 Calle Arturo Soria in the Ciudad Lineal, on a farm which had apparently put up for a night the native of Sabadell, Matteo Morral (7) who, on 31st May 1906, threw a bomb at the royal carriage as Alfonso XIII and his wife Victoria Eugenia of Battenberg were making their way back to the palace after their wedding. The royal couple emerged from the attack unscathed, but Morral's bomb claimed the lives of 23 people, from some of the soldiery and the spectators. A further hundred or more were injured.

Inside the cottage, police discovered the motorcycle, bearing false number plates. It was an "Indian" with sidecar. They also found five handguns of different makes, a huge quantity of ammunition and several ammunition clips. Acting on a lead, they discovered that the cottage's tenant was a certain Francisco Mateos who lived at No. 164 Calle de Alcala under the name Jose Pallardo. On Sunday 12th March, a trap laid there caught Pedro Mateu Cusido, aged 24. His accomplice had been Ramon Casanellas Lluch and Leopoldo Noble. It was left to the Barcelona police to disclose the latter's true identity as Luis Nicolau Fort.

Casanellas managed to get away to the USSR (his subsequent fate being unknown). But Nicolau Fort was arrested in Berlin, along with his wife Maria Luisa Concepcion, and in 13th February 1922, the Spanish authorities having applied for their extradition, the

couple were handed over to them. Nicolau wound up in the Model Prison where Mateu was already incarcerated. His wife, having spent some time in the female prison in the Calle Quinones, was released when it was established that she had nothing to do with the killing of Dato.

Several people were arrested as accessories. They were Mauro Bajatierra and Ignacio Delgado, on charges of having supplied the weapons; Jose Miranda, on the grounds that he had offered shelter to the accused; Adolfo Diaz, for supplying Nicolau with the passports he used in his escape attempt, and Tomas La Llave,, owner of the farm on which the motorcycle was discovered, . The accused were defended by Paulino Cid, Jose Serrano Batanero, Eduardo Barriobero Herran, Luis Noizader, and Angel Galarza Gago.

The trial began at 4.30 p.m. on 1st October 1923, by which time Spain was under the rule of the military dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera y Orbaneja. Sentence was passed on 11th October; Mateu and Nicolau were sentenced to be executed while the other accused received prison terms. On 23rd January 1924, the death sentences were commuted to life imprisonment.

Mateu and Nicolau were released on 23th April 1931, the very day after the Republic was proclaimed. Ramon Casanellas died in a motorcycle accident near Barcelona on 27th October 1933; as far as anyone can tell, Nicolau was killed during the civil war. Pedro Mateu survived, living in France.

### Chapter Three

## The Idea of an Attack on Franco

From what Cerrada said, the idea for an airborne attempt on Franco's life came originally from Pedro Mateu and the MLE-CNT's Conspiratorial Commission.

Cerrada stated: "There was some ambiguous talk about the



possibility of purchasing an aircraft as a means of 'doing something important'. They were also on the look out for a pilot capable of carrying out a delicate mission of the utmost importance. But the organisers would tell me nothing. Everything was shrouded in the utmost secrecy and whenever I tackled Mateu he became evasive and mentioned something about lack of finance. In the space of a year they were no further on, having done no more than meet once a fortnight for coffee and talk about revolution,"

Cerrada had access to the money needed for the purchase and, of course, the men needed to implement the plan. He set about devising his plan without delay.

Laureano Cerrada Santos was born in Miedes de Atienza (Guadalajara) in 1903. He joined the CNT very young and was an active militant of the anarcho-syndicalist union. He worked for the Spanish National Railway Network (RENFE) and, once civil war broke out, gave ample proof of vast organisational talents.

In exile, having been active in the underground during the German occupation, he held positions of responsibility in the CNT and in the FAI.

On 6th June 1944, Allied troops landed on the Normandy coast and on 15th August the operation was repeated on the Mediterranean coast on the St Tropez peninsula. The Germans began to withdraw from the Pyrenean area on 19th August, Paris was liberated on 24th August. Laureano Cerrada Santos emerged as secretary-general of the first CNT Committee of the Northern area (Paris and Normandy). The CNT's press organ for the area, *Solidaridad Obrera*, began to come off the presses on 24th September (8).

The Spanish guerrilla fighters of the so-called "National Union" under Communist Party control, having helped liberate the south of France, launched an attack across the Pyrenees and infiltrated into Spain on 17th October 1944, intending to establish a bridgehead in the Aran Valley from which to launch the "reconquest of Spain".

Among the units that had landed at St Tropez was the Number One Shock Battalion organised in North Africa. One of its members was Antonio Ortiz Ramires (9), the very same Antonio Ortiz who, during the civil war in Spain, had set out for the front at the head

of the second anarcho-syndicalist column in July 1936 and had a distinguished record on the Aragon front. Having liberated Toulon, the Number One Shock Battalion pushed northwards via Montelimar, Valence, Grenoble, Lyons, Dijon and Vesoul. When the Spanish guerrillas launched their attack across the Pyrenees, the Number One Shock Battalion was enjoying a brief rest in a village near Lure (Haute Saone).

The unit's founder, Colonel Fernand Gambiez who had in fact sampled Spanish prison life in Figueras and Miranda del Ebro whilst escaping from France in order to carry on the fight against the Nazis, brought Ortiz the news of the guerrillas' attack and encouraged him to go fight alongside his "own people".

"What are you waiting for? What good are you doing here now?"

"Let me have a leave pass."

"You've got it. But where to?"

"To Paris."

"Paris, you say? But it's on the border that ..."

"I know all that, but they're communists down there. First I want to sound things out. Then I'll be back to take a lorryload of gear."

"Fine!" exclaimed Gambiez. "We'll all go!"

Ortiz found Cerrada in Paris in the CNT's offices at No. 6, Rue de la Douane (now the Rue Leon Jouhaux). The pair had known each other for a long time. In 1931 Cerrada had been watchman at a RENFE halt in the Calle de Aragon near the Monumental Bull Ring in Barcelona where he had been sent as a reprisal for his active participation in a rail strike. Ortiz was also about this time involved with strike activities of the Wood Syndicate and Cerrada was storing "gear" for them which they would claim whenever they needed it.

What Ortiz discovered about the party political activities of the Spanish communists in France and about the vaunted "National Union" led him to return, sorely disappointed, to his battalion (10), there to continue the fight against the Germans until he was wounded and subsequently discharged on 5th August 1945.

Returning to Paris, he was urged by Cerrada to stay and help him out for Cerrada wanted to set up a combat organisation of carefully selected volunteers which would be able to act "freely" against the Franco regime without compromising the official CNT organisa-



tion which was caught up in the legalities of the situation and obliged to obey the restrictive French legislation. For his part, Ortiz believed that a training school and training camp for the fighting men was simply vital and this complemented Cerrada's schemes.

At the time Cerrada was, mistakenly, confident that the Organisation would give him its blessing and that he would be able to put his plans into effect. If the plan materialised, Ortiz was ready to bring it his help and the benefits of his vast experience but as "negotiations" dragged on, he realised that "palace business moves very slowly" and chose to go off to Bordeaux and get down to business. A little later, along with Jose Perez Ibanez (El Valencia) (11), a distinguished anarcho-syndicalist fighter and veteran of the "Los Aguiluchos" column organised by Juan Garcia Oliver (12) and later of the 25th Division commanded by Antonio Ortiz himself, he set up a sawmill in Saverdun (Ariege).

Cerrada was still secretary of the regional committee. He had been re-elected to that position at a Plenum of Comarcals of the XIth Region held in Paris on 7th January 1945 and at which 97 local federations with a total membership of 5740 were represented. Another Plenum held on 8th September 1945 saw him surrender the secretaryship to Jose Blanco (13) whilst he took over responsibility for the position of "Co-ordinating" Secretary (a euphemism for the secretary whose task it was to co-ordinate subversive activities). In October 1946 at another regional plenum, he submitted his resignation and devoted himself exclusively to the Seccion Fomento, a body whose essential task was to recover the scattered resources which had once belonged to the Organisation.

## Chapter Four Preparations for the Attentat

In August 1948 Ortiz received a message from Cerrada asking him to visit him in Toulouse. They met at No. 4, rue Belfort, the headquarters of the National Committee of the MLE-CNT in France. Along with Jose Maria Larrinaga Astarrosa (14), Cerrada was by

then on the Liaison Commission of the FAI and was beginning to be subjected to pressure from the committee of the Libertarian Movement who disagreed with his methods and wanted to have him hand over the resources he had at his disposal and to call a halt to his activities, which they regarded as highly "unconventional."

"Look, Ortiz," said Cerrada. "If these people had it in them to do something, I would not hesitate an instant before placing it all at their disposal, but all they want to do is to kill the goose... after having gorged themselves on the golden eggs..."

At this point Cerrada placed on the table some plans and photograph of San Sebastian, and told Ortiz that Franco would be in the city for the annual regatta in September. He informed him, too, that he had a good pilot on hand (introduced by Pedro Mateu) and more than enough money to purchase an aircraft. He showed Ortiz a catalogue of tourist aircraft from SNCAN (Societe Nationale de Constructions Aeronautiques Nord-Aviation) from which he had made his choice.

"But it's a push-bike!" exclaimed Ortiz when he saw the specifications of the model Cerrada was thinking of buying.

The four-seater aircraft had a wingspan of 10.22 metres with a total length of 7.22 metres and stood 2.76 metres high. Unloaded weight, 652 kilos, its technical name was a "Nord 1202/II Norecryn II" and it had a range of 900 kilometres and a top speed of some 250 kilometres per hour.

"In the skies over San Sebastian," said Ortiz, "There will undoubtedly be fighter planes. What information do you have regarding years past?"

According to Cerrada there were quite a lot of small planes in the air over La Concha bay during the regatta and his would be able to mingle, unnoticed, with the rest. The model he had chosen was the one most likely to allow him to bring off the attempt on Franco's life successfully.

Ortiz was very insistent on the need to check out this crucial information and he also recommended that Cerrada check on the location of the airfields nearest to San Sebastian so that they could work out the best way to "mingle" without raising the alarm. They scrutinised the details of the scheme and arranged to meet in Paris, three days later, to try out the aircraft they had agreed upon.



In Paris, Cerrada introduced Ortiz to Primitivo Perez Gomez, who was born in Los Santos (Salamanca) on 23rd June 1917, and had been a fighter pilot during the civil war. He was a young, good-natured fellow deeply enamoured of flying and anything to do with it.

The first steps towards the purchase of their "push-bike" had already been taken and the would-be owners were expected at an airfield near Paris where the plane would be put through its paces for their benefit. The owners' agents were very solicitous and after the customary formalities they headed for the runway.

Primitivo took a seat alongside SNCAN's own test pilot, Ferdinand Dupere, whilst Ortiz sat behind with a Catalan comrade by the name of Soler, who was a mechanic. After a few pertinent remarks about the function of the various instruments, the pilot started up the engine and, as the plane taxied along the runway, went into a few details. He accelerated the engine (a Regnier 4LO, 135 h.p., 2,280 rpm) and the plane took off. The pilot lifted the undercarriage, the two main wheels folded outwards whilst the nose wheel folded back. The plane was very modern, for it had only gone into regular production that very year. It climbed at a speed of 300 metres per minute and had a ceiling of 5000 metres.

They did a few circuits of the airfield and, as the pilot was beginning the descent, Primitivo asked him to go around again at top speed and then make a steep descent and land in as little time as possible. Normally, the Norecrin, at a speed of 85-90 kilometres per hour, needed a landing space of 170 metres.

"That is forbidden," said the Frenchman.

But Primitivo insisted and the pilot finally gave in to please him. He opened the throttle to a speed of 300 kilometres an hour and in a matter of seconds the plane touched down making a noise like a thousand saucepans clashing together. The propellor blades had almost brushed the runway and disintegrated. But they had landed in just 160 metres.

"Nom de Dieu! What about that?" exclaimed the pilot, holding his head in his hands. A jeep and an ambulance were racing towards them. They calmed the pilot by telling him that everything was fine and they would take the plane. The same thought was in all their minds just then. Their "push-bike" could, if need be, land in a beanfield.

## Chapter Five "D-DAY Minus"

That evening they met Cerrada, told him the outcome of the trials, and urged him to go ahead with the purchase. Then the conversation moved naturally to the execution of the attempt on Franco's life and Primitivo and Ortiz were debating the details when Cerrada put in: "No, no, Ortiz. You can't go!"

"May I know why not?"

"We may need you later."

"What, I'm not go to go then? Maybe you have someone available with some knowledge of this flying business?"

"Actually, no," answered Cerrada.

"Then let's hear no more about it and let's get on with it... Because I am going!"

Ortiz went back to his job in Saverdun to wait for them to let him know. His friend Jose Perez (El Valencia) was the silent type and had not said a word. Finally, he could stand it no longer and when he was done with Ortiz, he burst out:

"And I'm going, too!"

"Where?" asked Ortiz teasingly.

"With you! I won't let you go with anyone else. Do you take me for some kind of idiot? I'm going.. I'm not going to be left behind here - or perhaps you don't trust me after all these years and everything we've been through?"

Ortiz tried to get out of it by making a few evasive remarks. He reminded Perez he had a wife and a young daughter but El Valencia was sticking to his guns. Finally, in an allusion to an old Spanish proverb, he told him:

"Mistrust doesn't come into it, but the fact is you've never gone up in a balloon."

"Does that matter?" answered Perez, almost shouting. "If I have to go up, go up I shall and even if I have to take up camel-riding..."

So Ortiz had to accept, in principle, that his friend would be coming along, but he warned him that he would have to make his maiden flight first.



A few days later word arrived from Cerrada. Time was short for the regatta was all but upon them.

All concerned met in Paris. Cerrada carried a small case containing 1,600,000 francs with which to clinch the sale. Also present were Georges Fontenis, secretary of the FAF (French Anarchist Federation) and managing editor of *Le Libertaire*, who was to be their agent in a purchase which could only be made by a French citizen, and Jose Villanueva Lecumberri (15), a close friend and confidant of Cerrada, plus Antonio Ortiz and Jose Perez (El Valencia). Cerrada knew Perez well and when he saw him, he merely said, "How are you, Valencia?" And then he added, "Are you the one that's going along with Antonio? So much the better, keep it all in the family."

For the past two days Fontenis had been teasing Cerrada, saying that he would only agree to buy the plane if he undertook to take a test flight with him. And so, on this day, when the sale was to be finalised, Fontenis insisted, "If you want my signature you'll have to go up in the plane with me."

Cerrada cursed and swore that he had never been in a plane and nothing in the world would make him go up in one. By this time, the group were in one of the approach roads to the airfield and Cerrada was still complaining, "Where did Fontenis get this crazy idea that we should both take a test flight in the plane? Anything but that!"

El Valencia, when all was said and done, was also worried by the fact that he had never flown, but to everyone's surprise he spoke up. "Let's go, Cerrada, better up there than on the ground."

Fontenis, labouring the point, insisted, "Well, what's it to be? Do we go up or do we go home?"

But Cerrada had reached the spot determined "to make the ultimate sacrifice" if need be. After scratching his head, chest and even his legs, he wandered off a few paces with Jose Villanueva, handing him a number of sealed envelopes with a flourish and issuing a list of instructions.

Then he called Ortiz to one side and told him, "Stick with Villanueva and don't let him out of your sight for an instance. Those envelopes I handed him contain all my secrets."

It was clear that Cerrada had taken the precaution of making out a will, "just in case", and a laughing Ortiz encouraged him, saying,

"Rest assured - I'm sure you're going to like it."

Fontenis and Cerrada strode off towards the runway to make their purchase whilst the others made for another airfield a fifteen minute drive away where the official handing-over of the plane was to take place.

Villanueva, El Valencia and Ortiz got into one of the two cars which had arrived and Ortiz made a few wisecracks about the documents Villanueva was carrying and about his own "mission" of keeping him under a constant watch. With a heavy sigh that drew a burst of laughter from his friends, Villanueva exclaimed, "Dear God, don't let anything happen to Cerrada!"

From the field, they could see the Norecrin arriving. After a few manoeuvres it landed quite normally. Fontenis got out, laughing, followed by Cerrada, his face alight like a child's with a new toy. His evident satisfaction, however, did not make him forget the envelopes he had entrusted to Villanueva and he recovered them immediately.

The finishing touches were put to the handover and Primitivo took charge of the aircraft, registration F-BEQB, to fly it to the airfield at Saint Jean d'Angely (Charente Maritime) about thirty kilometres northwest of Cognac (Charente), the club through which he had won his pilot's licence in 1945. Now it was Valencia's turn to show that he had a head for flying.

Jose Perez was worried about how his bowels might perform for he was afraid they would let him down and fail him in the test. He climbed in beside the pilot with a white handkerchief like a sheet and he probably had others in reserve. His face was whiter than the handkerchief.

The weather was fine and there was little turbulence. Little by little the novice regained his colour until the handkerchief was finally thrust deep into his pockets. As the Norecrin touched down in Saint Jean d'Ingely, Valencia's face bore a look of indescribable joy.

Primitivo warned them that, lest they arouse suspicion, they should stop by the pilot's mess for a few drinks and a yarn with the French fliers. So they did and after a few rounds of cognac the atmosphere quickly became easier and for one reason or another the conversation turned to the War. One of the Frenchmen asked



Ortiz if he had been in Rougemont le Chateau, where in fact the Number One Shock Battalion fought a tough engagement on 27th November 1944.

"I drive a light tank there, said the pilot.

"The chap in the tank was wearing a sailor's cap and had quite a lot of pinard (wine) in him," Ortiz answered, fixing him with a stare.

"Nom de dieu! It's you. You're the fellow who was walking alongside?"

"The very same."

The conversation continued for some time, and when it seemed that the effects of the alcohol had worn off, the Frenchman grabbed Ortiz by the arm and, with a very serious look, said, "Brother! Let's step outside for a moment. It's very stuffy in here." Once outside, still holding Ortiz by the arm, he turned and said to him, "Brother!

Forgive me if I'm sticking my nose into something that doesn't concern me. You are Spaniards and you have a plane here - a petit velo - I'm a pilot and I do reconnaissance flights. On several occasions I've been told to get lost in the Pyrenees. Let me assure you that the border is covered by radar and the 'wolves' are always in the air, and they shoot to kill."

Ortiz laughed as he assured him they had not the slightest intention of flying across the Pyrenees, but the Frenchman, growing more and more serious, burst out, "Brother! It's your neck. My conscience is clear and we're quits for Rougemont le Chateau."

They waited in Saint Jean d'Angely for Soler to arrive. He was discreetly to fit the plane with bomb doors, in other words, a gap in the floor on the left side behind the back seat, which would be fitted with a tube a metre across, just the right size for the bombs and a neat job inside. On the outside, a prop in the middle would help support it on the floor and allow them to adjust it to the desired angle for launch. Later, Primitivo would take the plane to Tarbes and thence on to Dax (Lanes) from which their expedition would be setting out.

Some of Cerrada's cronies also turned up along with Soler. And this was an unnecessary risk, for their comings and goings attracted the attention of an airfield official who chased them off, and then took steps to check the departures of the plane and the

identity of its crew. To divert them as Soler got on with his work, Primitivo, who lived nearby, took them on a short tour of Cognac and its countryside.

Once the plane had been "fixed", Ortiz and El Valencia presented their documents at the airfield office before leaving for Tarbes in the aircraft piloted by Primitivo. The two passengers left the capital of the department of Hautes Pyrenees by train for Dax, for a look at the airfield from which the "bomber", arriving the next day, would be setting out. "D-Day", the second Sunday in September, was fast approaching.

A comrade, one Agusti, sought out Ortiz and took him to Mont de Marsan where he was to check out the gear". In the attic of a house he was able to admire thirty aircraft bombs of four kilos each, plus four ten-pound incendiaries, all of which had been stolen from a dump at Orleans (Loire) during the German occupation. There was also a machine gun, The bombs were in perfect condition, with safety fuses. Ortiz examined the detonators of half a dozen of them; they were all in perfect working to order.

Saturday finally came around: D-Day minus one. They had all checked into a guesthouse in Dax and Cerrada was waiting for telephone calls. Two comrades, Luis R and Jose Martia L had been entrusted with co-ordinating things on the Spanish side and it was they who phoned at the last moment from San Sebastian to say that the regatta was to go ahead as arranged and that Franco would preside.

The guesthouse owners were puzzled by the solemn attitude of their guests and they seemed upset to see them so preoccupied. They fed them and gave them a few bottles of wine, played some music and doubtless in an effort to be agreeable to them, played the record "Adios, pampa mia." Some dancing followed and it was quite late when everybody went off to bed.



## Chapter Six The Aborted Attempt

On Sunday 12th September they rose at 8 a.m. Primitivo was as cool as could be. El Valencia's face wore its usual serious expression, Ortiz was having difficulty disguising his excitement, whilst Cerrada was complaining of his feet, because he had been dancing with the owner's wife the night before. They announced that they were going for a stroll around the town, and would hardly be home before nightfall. Then they made straight for the airfield. The sky was overcast. The runway of the Dax field was a stretch of ground with a line of trees at each end and was anything but over-generous in terms of length.

Primitivo taxied the plane to the far corner of the runway, as far away as possible from prying eyes. The truck carrying the "gear" arrived. The first thing they did was to fill the fuel tanks to the brim: 92 kilos in all, inclusive of oil.

The truck's driver, El Pelat, was rather nervous at first but later he calmed down. They had to be in the skies over San Sebastian at 1 p.m. They passed the bombs to Ortiz, who positioned them on the floor by the back seats. Ortiz loaded four incendiary bombs and twenty shrapnel bombs, for the optimum capacity of the plane, not counting the 75 kilos allocated for the pilot's weight, was 231 kilos. It was not a hard sum: Ortiz plus El Valencia, 150 kilos, the bombs 140 kilos, making a total of 290 kilos, not counting other bits and pieces. The total loaded weight had not to exceed 1,050 kilos and the figures mentioned gave a surplus of sixty kilos. The machine gun stayed in the truck, for there was just no way to handle it inside an enclosed cockpit with plastic windshields.

Cerrada warned that they would have to cover the plane's registration and other markings with sticky paper, as planned, but they were already behind schedule and had no time to do so. In any event the plane would not be coming back to France. At the end of its mission it would put down at a pre-arranged spot in Navarre where it would be destroyed and its crew picked up and taken to safety by a resistance commando group.

El Valencia sat alongside the pilot, with a camera with which photographs of the coup would be taken, plus some packages of handbills signed by the "Los Elegidos International Groups". These were to be scattered over San Sebastian after the bombing run. Ortiz, carrying powerful binoculars, sat right behind Primitivo. Primitivo swung the plane's tail towards the line of trees and began to rev up the engine. The aircraft began to trundle along the apron, then struggled into the air. Carrying a normal burden, a Norecrin needed a runway of 250 metres. The line of trees was hurtling towards them and was right in front of their noses., But they swept upwards, brushing the topmost branches.

After gaining some altitude, the pilot headed for Biarritz and the open sea. Ortiz was acting as navigator. The plane banked and followed the compass needle. El Valencia was sitting with arms folded as if sitting in a theatre seat. Ortiz asked the pilot to read off their speed and altitude. They were flying at a height of a thousand metres at a cruising speed of 220 kilometres per hour, heading for the open sea. In twenty minutes they would bank to the left. The sky was still overcast. Visibility was very poor and having no radio, the plane was cut off from the outside world.

"Look, Ortiz! There she is!" cried Primitivo.

In the distance they could just discern the vague outline of the coast. The nose of the plane was in line with Monte Igueldo. Primitivo cut their speed and lost height until he was just 300 metres off the ground hoping to mingle with the other light aircraft which would be overflying La Concha bay.

"Valencial!" cried Ortiz. "Give me a hand!"

The safety straps holding fast the bombs had begun to come loose and El Valencia, who was quite short, had to indulge in some tricky acrobatics before he could clamber into the back seat.

As the plane lost height the clouds parted and the sea became open to view. They could make out two warships. Judging by the size, they must have been minesweepers and they were circling out to sea as if on anti-submarine duty, They could make out the bay, protected by the island of Santa Clara, where the port of San Sebastian lay. Both entrances to La Concha Bay were sealed by lines of boats and in front of them, two motor launches which appeared to be carrying guns.



It all happened very fast. El Valencia, thanks to his acrobatics, was halfway into the rear of the plane.

"Let's go to it!" cried the pilot, his gaze fixed on the coast.

All of a sudden, just as they were passing over the peak of Monte Igueldo, the clouds parted and a seaplane appeared bearing down on the Norecrin at the same altitude. Primitivo veered to the right as if intending to overfly the coast, whilst the seaplane veered leftwards, circling over the interior of a Concha Bay on a protective course. Meanwhile, El Valencia had managed at last to clamber into the back seat.

Small craft from Fuenterrabia and Pedrena, taking part in a sea race, were out in the middle of La Concha bay, racing towards Monte Igueldo, almost neck and neck. A short distance to their rear came a large motor-boat which followed them as if it were carrying the regatta referees. Franco and his wife, along with various ministers and VIPs, were doubtless watching the yacht races from the Commandancia de Marina.

And there, right at the back, was an impressive dais at the Club Nautico, full of VIPs from Madrid and the provinces.

Without overflying the bay, the Norecrin cruised along the coast slowly two or three times in both directions, always flying parallel to the watchful seaplane which was doing the same. Sweeping in a semicircle along La Concha bay. Above the Norecrin flew four fighters, two by two, at different altitudes and in different positions, while from below, the anti-aircraft turrets on the ships followed the movements of the light aircraft.

All of a sudden another two fighters appeared and there was not another private aircraft in sight.

"What do we do?" asked El Valencia.

Primitivo banked again and suggested that they climb as high as their plane would permit and jettison their bombs from there.

"But where will they fall?" Ortiz asked himself, while it occurred to him that, if the pilot so desired, the plane could become a flying torpedo.

Two fighters buzzed them, signalling with their wings for Primitivo to follow them. Without a moment's hesitation Primitivo dived towards the sea at 300 kilometres per hour and pulled up just a couple of feet from the waves and made for France.

## Chapter Seven The Aftermath

Once over French waters, Jose Perez and Antonio Ortiz dumped the incendiary bombs into the sea to avert the risk of their exploding as they landed. They fastened the bomb rack holding the other bombs and began to descend over Biarritz.

Cerrada and the other comrades were waiting for them on the airfield at Dax. Luis R had already informed them of the failure to accomplish the mission,

"What happened?" asked a worried and disappointed Cerrada, but one look at the faces of the plane's passengers and he needed no further explanation.

Everybody rushed to unload the bombs but while they were preoccupied with that operation, they noticed the airfield controller approaching in his jeep. Ortiz set out to meet him, lest he come too close to the aircraft, as he had been watching the operation from a distance and could now see them unloading something which left no room for doubt. Slapping Ortiz on the back he cried, "Manque de pot!" (Tough luck), turned on his heels and sped off. The truck took the bombs away as well as the "ground crew". The three fliers put the aircraft in storage for the night and strolled off to their hotel.

There they huddled into a corner, ordered some refreshment, and once their thirsts had been slaked, the pilot set about explaining what had happened. Cerrada asked question after question in an effort to find out with exactitude whether they were giving him the whole story.

Then Ortiz spoke up saying, "Look, Cerrada, if ever anyone really wanted to see Franco getting his head blown off it was me, but one can't leave things to providence. We need to have accurate information. There were none of the light aircraft you said would be overflying to La Concha bay, but we did run across six fighter planes and a Dornier. Cast our mind back to what I said to you when we set off about what that French flier told me at Saint Jean d'Angely..."



Primitivo and El Valencia looked at their colleague in surprise while, not without reason, El Valencia asked:

"How come we weren't told anything?"

"What was the point?" answered Ortiz. "We all knew the risks."

They had something to eat and continued discussing the episode. The three thwarted air-raiders decided to make for Tarbes by plane and head back to Saint Jean d'Angely. Cerrada would see to it that the "gear" was stored away for another day.

At 3 p.m. they flew out of Dax en route for Tarbes. Their flight was uneventful and while Primitivo was filling out the forms with his flight plan, they were informed they had a telephone call. It was Cerrada. He urged them to get the plane back to Dax without delay. They did so, and by nightfall reached the hotel again.

Sitting once again in a corner, Cerrada ordered coffee and cognac for them all, then explained his brainwave. "Before dawn we shall load up the plane so that you can make San Sebastian before first light. The bombs are to be dropped on the Palacia de Ayete where Franco will presumably be sleeping,"

Cerrada's idea came as a relief to his friends and they went on talking about various things.

"How do we fly tomorrow?" Ortiz asked the pilot.

"Low over the sea and clinging to the coast so that they can't pick us upon radar."

They all burst out laughing though none of them considered a hair raising night flight without adequate instrumentation a walkover.

Dinner time came and one of the waitress was very attentive to Ortiz that day. After they had eaten and had coffee, the hotel owners put on some music. Ortiz danced a few tangos with the girl, who grew more and more amorous, clinging ever closer to her partner, Ortiz.

Everybody went off to bed, save for Ortiz. Facing such an uncertain tomorrow, he preferred to spend the few hours of night with the girl, who, in addition to being friendly, was quite pretty. Everybody was up and about at 4 a.m.

At 10 p.m. that night a torrential downpout had begun and it continued without let-up. They made for the airfield by truck only to find on arrival that the runway was awash and that the plane's wheels had sunk unto the mud as far as the axle. They put their

shoulders to the Norecrin in the hope of pushing it on to more solid ground. They had intended to load only ten bombs on board so as to ease take-off but the whole airfield was a quagmire and the rains showed no signs of letting up. They were still waiting there at 10a.m. for the rain to stop.

El Valencia and Ortiz set off that very day to Saverdun. By the next day it was work as usual for them in the sawmill. Cerrada went about his business while Primitivo stayed in Dax until he was able to take off with the plane and land it on the Guyancourt field near Versailles, where it remained until confiscated by the French authorities. (16)

Aside from a protest note sent by Madrid to Paris and complaining about "violation of airspace", the airborne expedition was totally ignored until February 1951. The plane still remained and its pilot had renewed his flier's licence the year before.

From Luis R it was discovered that before the plane was even visible from San Sebastian the radio controller had made a statement something along these lines. "We have information that a light plane is approaching from the direction of the sea. If they are friendly we shall invite them to partake of this jug of wine which we have here for our refreshment."

So it is highly probable that the Norecrin, picked up by radar, was the reason for the launching of the Spanish pursuit planes, and if these were "courteous" towards the intruder it was precisely because the aircraft's registration and the painted-on flag of a neighbouring state were clearly visible on the fuselage. We can only suppose that an "anonymous" light plane would have emerged rather less well from such an adventure. The failure to cover up the plane's identification, due to shortage of time, was undoubtedly the factor that saved its passengers' lives.

In the book quoted earlier, Eliseo Bayo, in a reference to statements made to him by Laureano Cerrada, wrote: "Years afterwards, by which time he (Cerrada) had been expelled from the Organisation, he was to learn something surprising. In defiance of his instructions and in breach of security, one member of the team,



whose identity is well established by now, disappeared from the guest-house for a number of hours. Cerrada, who was asleep in the adjoining room, was quite unaware of his departure. But he had an even greater surprise in store. Only he and the pilot knew the exact words 'el pescador de agua dulce' (the fisher in calm waters). However, when he was arrested in 1957, he heard this from the lips of Inspector Benamour: 'You should really be more careful in your choice of playmates, Fishers in calm waters always come out on top.'

So the team member, whose identity is "well established", was the pilot, but the connection between the indiscretion and the revealing of the codeword seems very tenuous, for when the plane was discovered in 1951, Primitivo was questioned for a long time. So Benamour's "inside knowledge" may have dated from over three years after the event.

When the author questioned Antonio Ortiz about the aforementioned paragraph from Bayo's book, he answered as follows: "Bayo's text is sheer fantasy. Comes from the obsession with always finding a Judas on whom to blame Cerrada's death. In those days Franco was still on a war footing and radar was known... and let's hear no talk about the naivety of the information on the basis of which the operation was planned."

For his part, Jose Perez had this to say:

"Cerrada was simplifying things if he spoke about a team of just three men. True, there were three of us actually in the plane but the pilot had been introduced to Cerrada by Pedro Mateu. Then there were the comrades who helped out with the purchase of the plane and all the ones who visited us at Saint Jean d'Angely; in the truck which transported the "gear" there were three or four comrades who followed us everywhere; plus the comrade in Mont de Marsan who stored the bombs in his home; the mechanic who fixed up the aircraft; and then only moments before loading up the plane we met with eight or ten comrades in a cafe; our people in Spain were likewise au fait with our plans. As were all those I have left out. Be that as it may, I regard the Judas theory as sheer fantasy."

What cannot be doubted in the least is that, had there been an informer, the plane would never have made it back to France, for in the last analysis the pursuit planes would have shot it down over

the sea quite easily and it is quite obvious that was never their intention.

Attacks upon Cerrada and other comrades from within the organisation revolved always about the question of the seeming incompatibility of obligatory CLANDESTINE activity and simultaneous LEGAL functioning, a dilemma which the exiles were never able, or willing, to resolve. These differences escalated to the point when, in January 1950, Cerrada was expelled from the Libertarian Movement in Exile. By this time his luck was beginning to run out on him. On 10th May 1949, in a printshop set up in a garage at No.4 Passage Goix in Paris's XIXth district, police arrested six Anarchists engaged in forgery. They seized a veritable arsenal ranging from revolvers to anti-tank mines. The printing press was one of Cerrada's "projects" but was not in his name, so he could not be charged.

In connection with the arrests, the Liaison Committee(17) of the CNT's Parisian Regional Federation issued a circular to members, dated 10th September 1949, in which it was stated:

"Some time ago, a number of comrades were arrested, as a result of which there was a danger of the Organisation finding itself implicated in the matter which led to the arrests. All of the committees took steps to ensure that this, which could have turned nasty for the Organisation, did not come to pass.

"Now, in the wake of our efforts to avoid the above, we found comrade Jose Villanueva still making representations on behalf of the arrested comrades (something we find highly laudable and are not criticising). However, setting sentiment to one side, it is our view that, as a member of the Committee he ought not to have been involved in something which we, for the good of the Organisation, were concerned to dissociate from our organisational activities. For this reason, we were impelled to ask for his resignation, which he agreed to do, perhaps in the realisation that our request was well founded."

At the time the place was discovered at the civil airfield at Guyancourt, Cerrada was in prison at Evreux (Normandy) after the discovery a month before at Gaillon (Eure) of an underground press on which he was forging plates.

In 1957 he was arrested again while carrying ten million phoney



pesetas. On 27th May 1970, by which time Cerrada was 67 years old, he was again arrested at No. 19 Rue Emile Landrin in Boulogne Billancourt, a Paris suburb (18). The police uncovered a printing works where he was forging French identity papers and driving licences. He was released in August 1970.

In 1976, the journalist Eliseo Bayo managed to persuade him to publish his memoirs, but a few weeks later, the man who said that "Franco's most crushing victory was his dying in bed", and that for the Spanish dictator "20th November 1975 was a more distinguished victory than the victory of 1st April 1939", was murdered in a Paris street.

Bayo has this to say of Cerrada's opinion of personal attacks:

"The analysis is elementary. Personal attentats are effective to a degree determined by the powers wielded by the victim. To take the life of a constitutional king through conspiracy and not through revolution is to change nothing, except for his heir. But if someone had eliminated, say, Adolf Hitler in 1939, which of us can say that his death would not have been of benefit to Europe? When we tried to liquidate Franco back in 1948, we were persuaded that in doing so we would be changing the course of Spanish history utterly. At that point Franco had not yet managed to legitimize his system."

#### NOTES;

(1) Between 1919 and 1922 upwards of 30 CNT members were murdered in this dastardly campaign ordered by the Madrid government and the authorities and capitalists of Catalonia.

(2) Bravo Portillo was gunned down at 1.30 p.m. on 5th September 1919 in the Calle de Corcega.

(3) Juan Puig Elias was born in Barcelona in 30th July 1898. He was a rationalist schoolteacher and disciple of Francisco Ferrer i Guardia. During the civil war he was on the CENU - Council for the New Unified School and was under-secretary for Public Education. For a four year period in France (1945-48) he held posts on the MLE's National Committee. In 1952, he moved to Brazil where he died in Puerto Alegre on 5th September 1972.

(4) At the end of July 1980, some 27 Madrid thoroughfares reverted to the names by which they were known prior to 1931. The Calle de Heroes

de 10 de Agosto is one of these.

(5) Angiolillo was executed by the garotte in the prison square of Vergara (Guipuzcoa) on 27th August 1897.

(6) Pardina (for some reason he used to spell his name most times as Pardinias) committed suicide after his attentat.

(7) Morrala, a 26year old, managed to escape but was recognised on 2nd June in Tarrejon de Ardox, fifteen kilometres from Madrid, whereupon he fired a shot into his breast to avoid capture, and died from the wound.

(8) Cerrada also issued a printed monthly Cultura Ferroviaria, the internal bulletin of the National Federation of the Railway Industry. The four page newsheet was 15.5 x 21.5 cms.

(9) Antonio Ortiz was born in Barcelona on 13th April 1907.

(10) For the story of this unit, see Raymond Muelle, Le Premier Bataillon de Choc (Presses de la Cite, Paris 1977).

(11) In his memoirs, El eco de los pasos (Iberica de Ediciones y Publicaciones, Barcelona 1978) Juan Garcia Oliver mistakenly names El Valencia as Antonio Martinez.

(13) Jose Blanco was a veteran militant who had risen to prominence during the stormiest days of Spanish revolutionary syndicalism (1920-33). In December 1947 he joined the Organisation in Spain itself. Early in June 1948 he was arrested in Madrid and a court martial in September 1949 sentenced him to thirty years in prison. He died in prison.

(14) Jose Maria Larrinaga, who was an active participant in the preparation of the attentat, died in his native Bilbao in 1979.

(15) Jose Villanueva Lecumberri (born 13th January 1895 in Mieres, Asturias) died in Paris in January 1977.

(16) The French press (specifically, Le Figaro) said on 13th February 1951, "The police are looking for a second craft belonging to the organisation. It is known that it exists but that it must be located in North Africa."

(17) After the Second Intercontinental Conference of the MLE in exile, held in Toulouse from 6th February 1949 on, the Interdepartmental or Regional committees took the names Liaison Commissions.

(18) The journalist Antonio Sergio Berrocal, apropos of this arrest, published a lengthy illustrated article on Cerrada in No. 717 of Gaceta Ilustrada (5th July 1970)



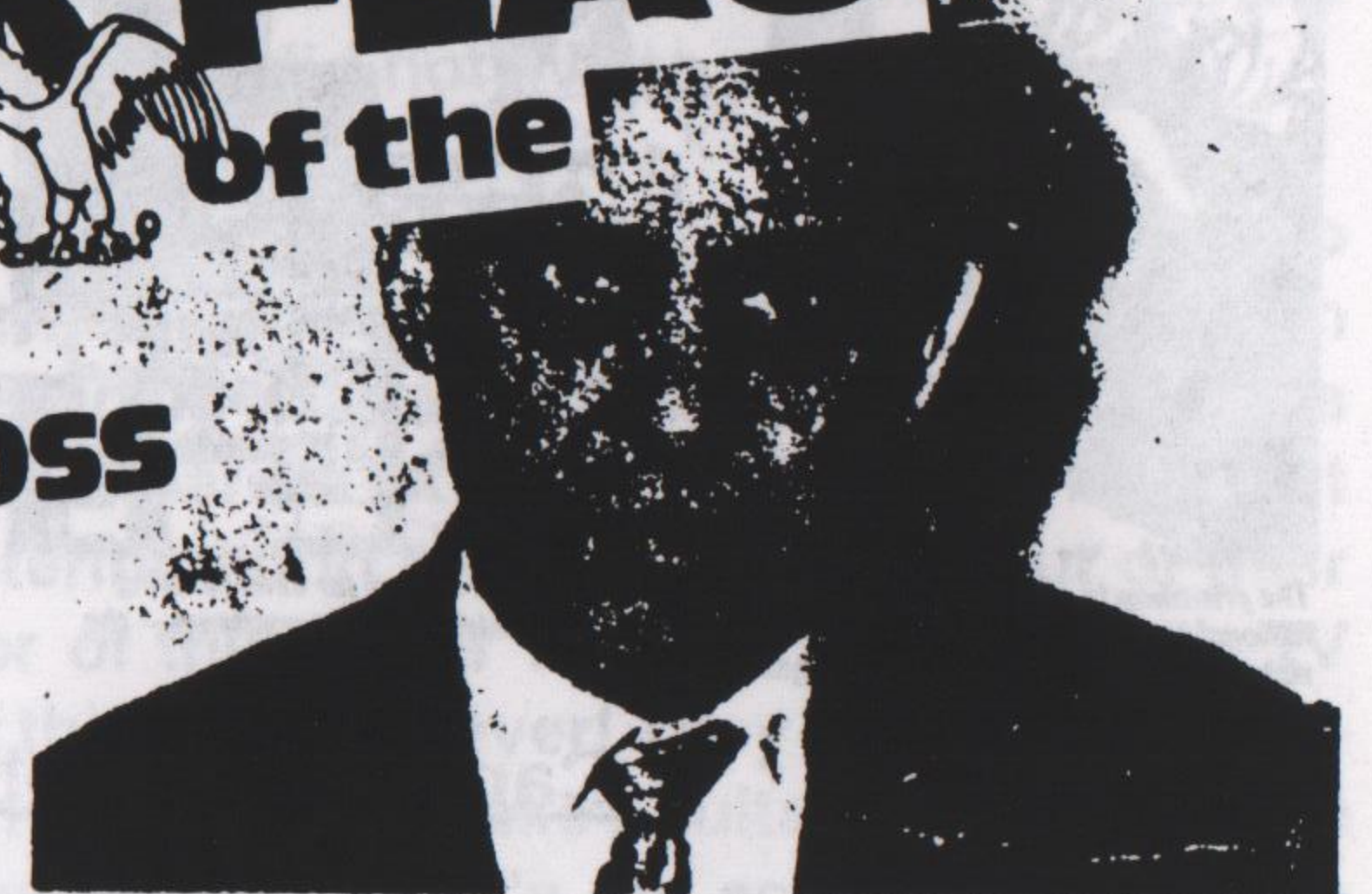
# The Death of Cerrada

(From "BLACK FLAG" Vol IV, No.13, 1977)

## MURDERED!

Coming out of a bar in theboulevard Belleville in a working class suburb of Paris last October, comrade Laureano Cerrada Santos, one of the last of the old guard anarchist activists, was ambushed and murdered by a police agent who had managed to penetrate the ranks of the Spanish Resistance. Cerrada had discovered the activities of this despicable character who was acting for the Spanish secret police in France (working in close association with the French police) and was preparing to publish details, when this hero of fascism discovered he was known, and shot dead our veteran comrade, an unarmed man of 74.

**BLACK FLAG**  
organ of the  
**ANARCHIST**  
**BLACK CROSS**



## MURDERED!

Cerrada's death is a double blow to the anarchist movement because, apart from his drive and energy, he was also a skilled forger whose talents were dedicated to the struggle against tyranny and the State.

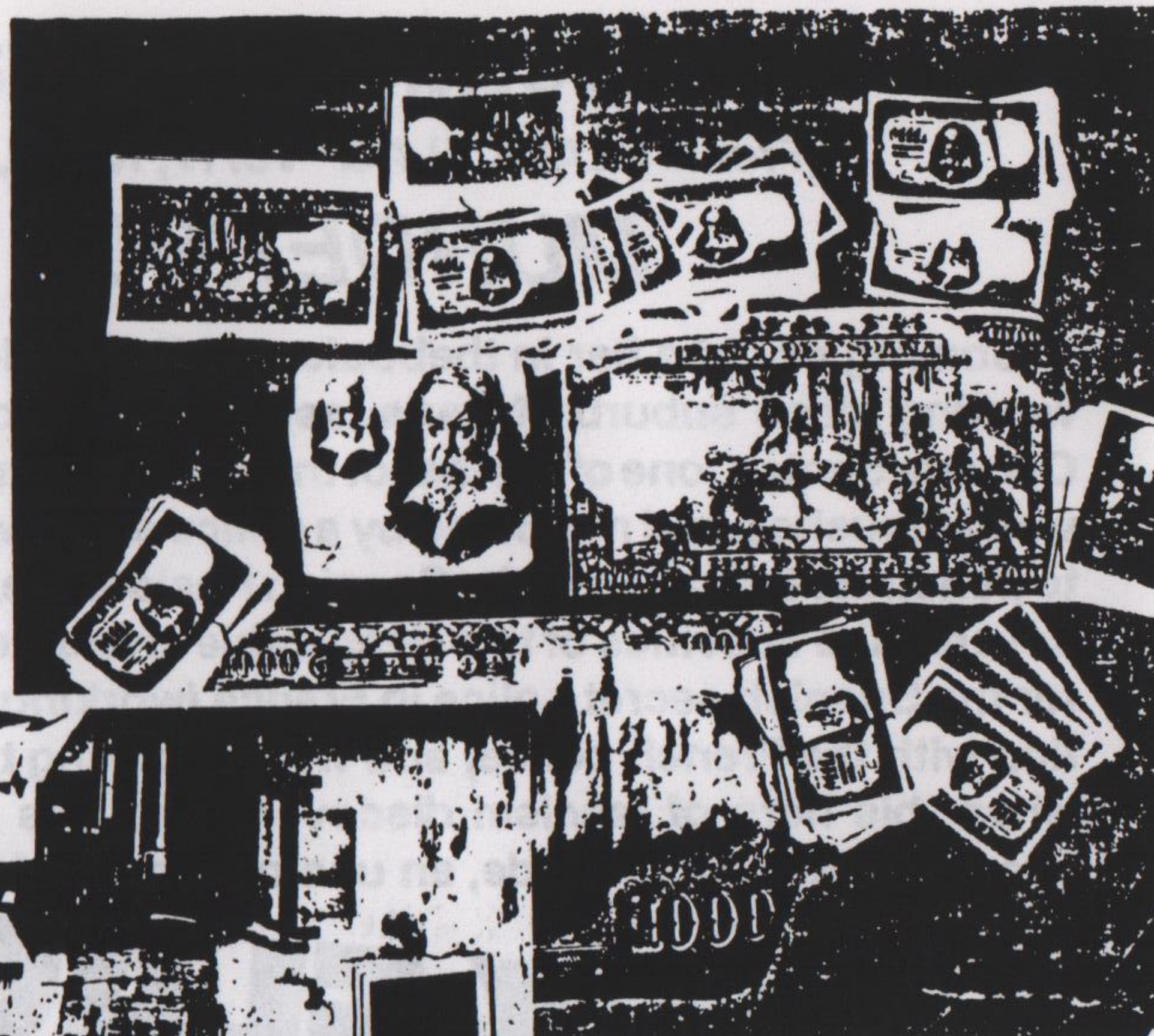
Laureano Cerrada Santos was one of the few remaining survivors of a generation who were prepared to - and countless numbers of

Vol. IV No.13 1977 15p



## THE UNSUNG STRUGGLE

A selection of Cerrada's work as exhibited by the French police



The printshop in which Cerrada printed hundreds of official carnets for Jews (altering national identification) on the general principle of the Spanish anarchist resistance - the rich paid, the poor (and resistance fighters) didn't.

### Caption to photos

A selection of Cerrada's work as exhibited by the French police. The printshop in which Cerrada printed hundreds of official carnets for Jews in France (altering racial identification) and documents for Spanish resistance fighters, on the principle of the anarchist resistance "the rich pay, but the poor and resistance fighters don't." Miguel Garcia has revealed in "Franco's Prisoner" that members of the Spanish Resistance (including Cerrada and Garcia) were taught these skills by British Intelligence agents operating in war-time, in return for aid given to Allied military escapees.

## THE UNSUNG STRUGGLE

them did - risk their lives in the struggle for social justice. He had been one of the founders of the railway union of the CNT, a disciple of Francisco Ferrer and a comrade of the legendary "Sugar Baby" (Salvador Segui) the fighting secretary of the anarcho-syndicalist union movement, He fought, it goes without saying, in the civil war, and afterwards joined the resistance which spread through France where he was one of the most dangerous to the Francoist regime.

He upset many 'puritans' in the movement during the period of Resistance because of his forgery on a widespread scale and a huge black market operation, It was felt that forgery gave the anarchist movement a bad name, but it did help keep the movement and the Resistance alive, and the fascist State maintained its pervasive influence in part by the control it had over rationing. Among the attempts against Franco's life in which Laureano participated was the abortive attack on him while in the company of Hitler, and also another in San Sebastian in 1948.

He held his anarchist ideas to the end, one of the many who held back the march of tyranny and did not live to see the dawn.

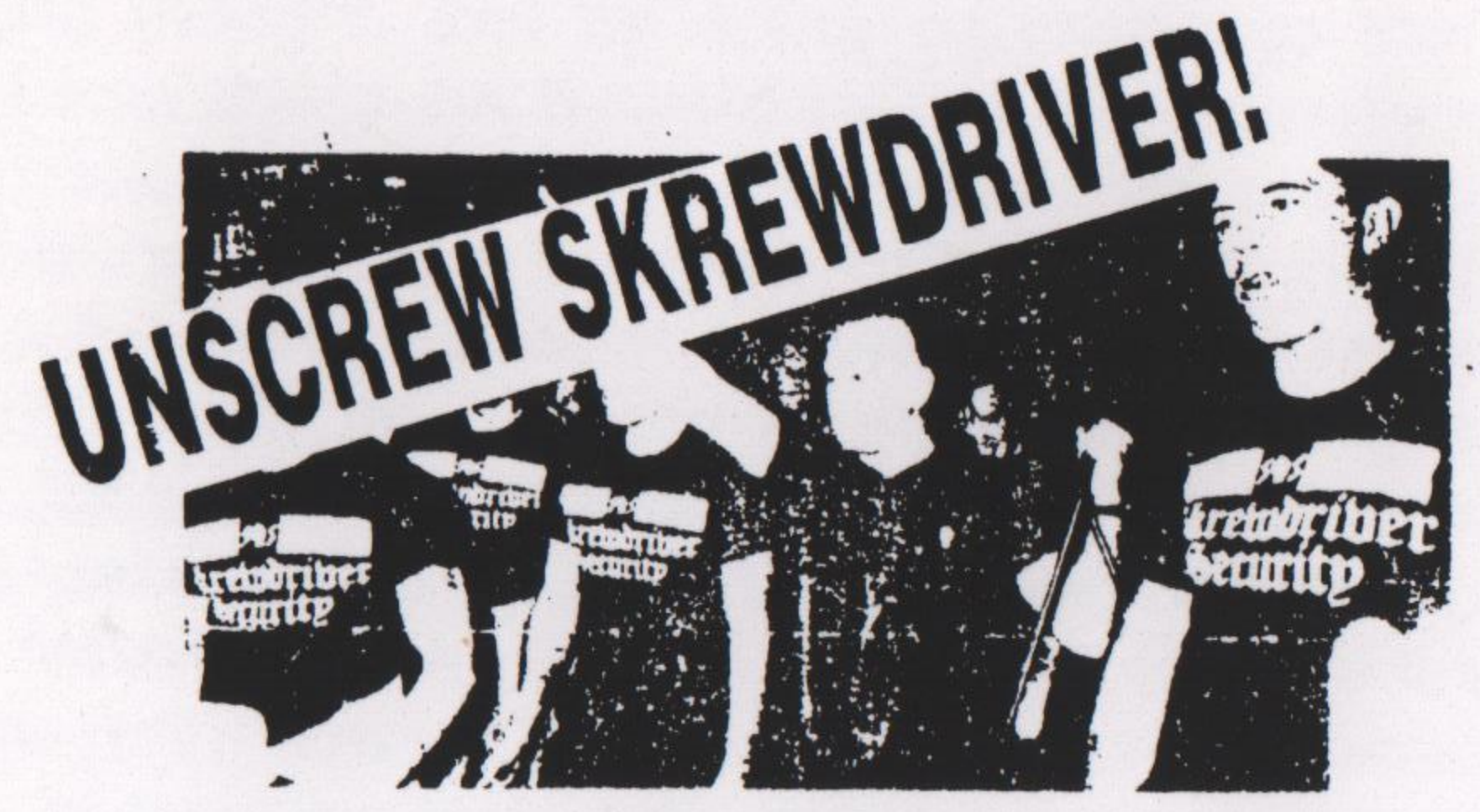
What of his assassin? He is named as 52 year old Ramon Benicho Canuda, alias Ramon Leriles, nicknamed 'el Leriles'. He has been smuggled out by the French police, into Canada. Does Canada then, admit terrorists? We heard a lot from the Canadian Cabinet last year about their determination to keep terrorists out of their country when the editor of this paper was to be flown for a TV interview with CBC, Not this kind however! They can be congratulated on their new citizen who should make a suitable recruit for the Mounties - if they can be quite sure he's not acting for someone else's Intelligence. (Note: This was an inspired guess. In fact, Leriles was subsequently named in Toronto as working for a foreign power in Canada, but disappeared).

How the fascist gangs of Spain and the secret police of three countries must have enjoyed their Xmas when they heard the 'notorious public enemy' Cerrada was killed! Their triumph is a tribute to our comrade who was going to retire to write his memoirs which in turn would have been a major inspiration to all who fight for freedom. Laureano Cerrada Santos - we salute your memory!



He had... justice. He had... a disciple... "Sugar Baby"...  
...the period of... and a... gave the move-...  
...back the march of tyranny...  
...What of his assassin? He...  
...Canada, also Ramon...  
...emerged out by the...  
...from, admit terrorists? ...  
...last year about their...  
...country when the editor...  
...interview with CBC. Not...  
...lated on their new...  
...Mounties - if they can...  
...size a intelligence...  
...Lafes was subsequently...  
...the left in Canada...  
...and how the fascist...  
...Comrades that have...  
...historic public enemy...  
...the...  
...which it will...  
...for freedom. Laureano...  
...escapes.

This pamphlet is dedicated to all those anti - fascists who turned up at Waterloo Station, London, on the 12th of September 1992, 44 years to the day after Cerrada's inspired attempt on Franco's life, and gave the fascists a hammering, the only language they understand.



Assemble:  
Saturday 12th September 1992 at 4.30pm  
Waterloo BR

### The struggle continues

*"Personal attentats are effective to a degree determined by the powers wielded by the victim. To take the life of a constitutional king through conspiracy and not through revolution is to change nothing, except for his heir. But if someone had eliminated, say, Adolf Hitler in 1939, which of us can say that his death would not have been of benefit to Europe? When we tried to liquidate Franco back in 1948, we were persuaded that in doing so we would be changing the course of Spanish history utterly....." Laureano Cerrada Santos*



This pamphlet is dedicated to all those anti-fascists who turned up at Waterloo Station, London, on the 12th of September 1932, 44 years to the day after Comrade's inspired attempt on Franco's life, and gave the fascists a hammering, the only language they understand.



Assembly  
Saturday 12th September 1932 at 4.30pm  
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The struggle continues

"Personal attacks are effective to a degree determined by the powers wielded by the victim. To take the life of a constitutional king through conspiracy and not through revolution is to change nothing, except for his heir. But if someone had eliminated, say, Adolf Hitler in 1938, which of us can say that his death would not have been of benefit to Europe? When we tried to liquidate Franco back in 1948, we were persuaded that in doing so we would be changing the course of Spanish history utterly...." Lawrence Canada Santos

Postscript

KATE SHARPLEY LIBRARY AND ANARCHIST ARCHIVE

This pamphlet is the first in a series on the Spanish Resistance 1939-51. It forms an integral part of the Pages from Anarchist History series of the Kate Sharpley Library. The Library and Archive exists to preserve and illuminate aspects of anarchist history and thought, and by doing so challenge the "official" history of anarchism put forward by people allegedly within but almost invariably outside our movement. We are available for consultation and host a massive collection of anarchist pamphlets, books, newspapers, magazines and documentation from all over the world, to be open to subscribers at a date to be arranged. We are named after an anarchist militant who was active in the anti-war struggle of 1914-18. She doesn't appear in any of the "official" histories yet as George Cores wrote (in the first booklet we reproduced), "most of the work which was done was due to the activities of working men and women, most of whom did not appear as orators or as writers in printed papers." The truth of this is further illustrated by the story here told.

A copy of our news letter is available by sending a s.s.e. to our address. We welcome any interested correspondence.

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*Postscript*

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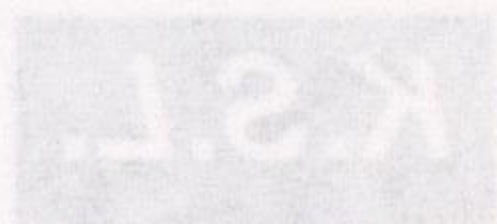
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