

visations in industry; e.g. they resurrected small bakeries to win the support of their petty bourgeois allies, and in the process created a bread shortage that led to large queues for bread in the working class suburbs whilst restaurants had plenty for the rich. Collectives were not integrated so that there were examples of workers being beaten up for asking for payment of bills. Whilst the CNT pursued an alliance with the UGT it compromised itself as the defender of the workers' collectives. When a pact was finally signed it represented the organisations' bureaucracies — but not the workers' movement.

There was no involvement in planning who should produce what within each factory assembly. Durrutti had prophesied a 'state socialist' economy more or less correctly. The policy of compromise pursued by the CNT therefore implied the negation of the revolution. The right wing tendencies who argued that the state was no longer repressive took hold of the movement through bureaucratic means, just as they were using similar means to run the economy and army. Opposition papers which did not reflect the line of the central CNT leadership were banned. No assemblies of CNT members took place to ratify the decisions that were taken. The national committee was supervised by permanent regional delegates, rather than delegates who had to report always to their own assemblies. In this context the organisation of national Industrial Federations to replace the *sindicatos unicos* reinforced the bureaucracy of the CNT. Similar processes took place in the FAI too. The development of these trends therefore implied a destruction of the revolutionary organisations and their replacement by a bureaucracy of full time officials representing an organisation whose members were silent and censored.

Politically the development of these tendencies compromised the CNT as a revolutionary class organisation.

The political alternative to this betrayal developed in many places.

Camillo Berneri wrote some erudite articles about revolutionary governments exposing both the Leninists and the ministers. In December 1936 he wrote '... There is a smell of Noske in the air. If Madrid were not in flames one would be obliged to recall Kronstadt... The dilemma 'Madrid or Franco' has paralysed Spanish anarchism. Today Barcelona is situated between Burgos, Rome, Berlin, Madrid and Moscow. Besieged... we can still perform miracles. Caught between the Prussians and Versailles, the commune lit a fire which still lights the world. Between Burgos and Madrid there is Barcelona...'

The Mujeres Libres group made a novel demand on the rest of the anarchist movement. They asked that they should be given equal representation with the FAI, FIJL, and CNT.

Many in the militias refused to accept the decrees that mobilised them as part of the popular army.

In March 1937 a federation of collectives attacked by state police organised a defence front between themselves.

The FIJL organised a campaign in defence of the patrol committees who were ordered by the government to surrender their arms.

Perhaps the culmination of this opposition was the alliance formed in the streets in May 1937, when the PSUC attempted to intimidate the workers' organisations. Rank and file CNT members, POUMists, a few Bolshevik-Leninists (Trotskyists), and an illicit CNT group, the Friends of Durrutti united behind the barricades. In May they had condemned the CNT leadership with

this manifesto: '... We are the friends of Durrutti and we have sufficient authority to condemn those individuals who through incapacity and fear have betrayed the working class. Whilst we have more enemies in front of us they gave power to Companys again (the leader of the Generalitat), public order to the reactionary government of Valencia, and the defence commissariat to General Pozas — treason is immense.' They called for a revolutionary junta of workers, peasants and soldiers.

Later they declared: 'G. Olivar, F. Montseny and the leadership of the CNT have permitted the stalinists and assault guards to cruelly assassinate C. Berneri and the young F. Ferrer... since 19 July the anarchist leaders have capitulated many times before the demands of the bourgeoisie and in the name of anti-fascist unity have arrived at openly betraying the working class. Anti-fascist unity has been only subordination to the bourgeoisie — it has entailed the military victories of Franco and the counter-revolution at the rear...'

'To beat Franco we need to beat Companys and Caballero. To beat fascism we need to crush the bourgeoisie and its Stalinist and socialist allies. The capitalist state must be destroyed totally and there must be installed workers' power depending on rank and file workers' committees. Apolitical Anarchism has failed. To beat the bloc of the bourgeoisie and its allies — Stalinists, socialists, CNT leaders — the workers must break clearly with traitors on all sides. Their vanguard, i.e. the revolutionary militants of the friends of Durrutti, POUM, and the youth, must regroup to elaborate a programme of proletarian revolution.'

Beneri was dead. The revolution was dead. Between Burgos and Madrid Barcelona had died isolated, but still struggling.

Libertarian Communist

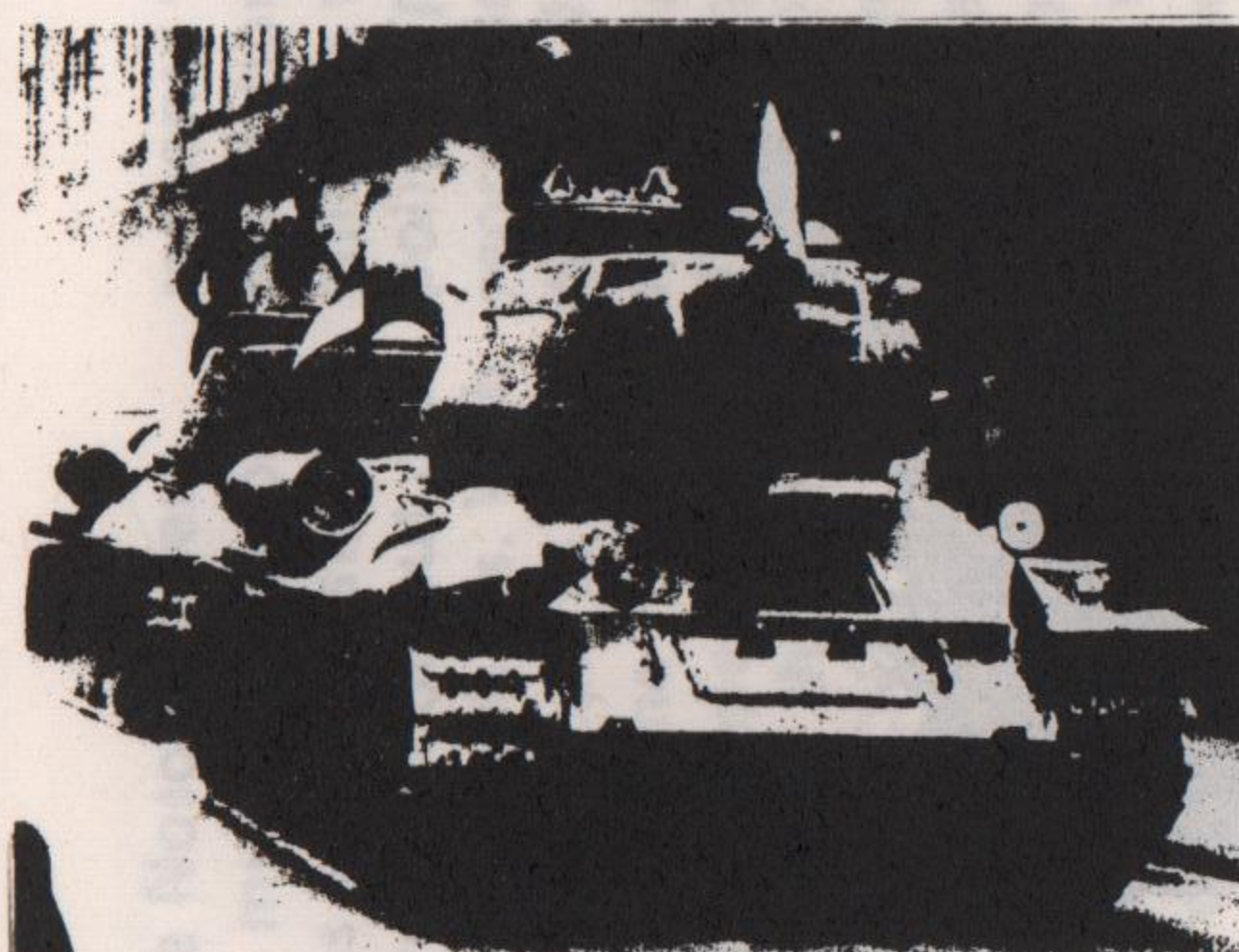
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SPAIN 1936

The Revolution which started on July 19th 1936 took place in a period of Spanish and international political and economic crisis. Spain had suffered badly in the 1931 Wall Street crash and the Depression. Its industries had developed largely in the 1914-1918 war, when there was no competition and the demand from both sides was high. By 1936 unemployment was over 30% in many towns and industries, and estimates of the number unemployed in a total industrial work-force of about 3 million vary between 1/2 million and 1 million. Agriculture was also badly affected, but here the basic problem was a structural one, with 20,000 latifundia owners holding 2/3 of the land. Forms of land ownership varied but outside a belt of Catholic tenant farmers between Leon and Navarre, small holders and peasants were discontented and prepared to seize the land. Seventy per cent of the population was still living on the land, whilst the urban population was split between Madrid and Barcelona with over a million each, and a number of smaller towns. Over the five years up to 1936 the cost of living had risen by over 80%. The international context for the coming revolution was very unfavourable. Mussolini had early on given his support to the right wing in Spain. Hitler was to use the war as an opportunity to train his troops in action. By 1936 Stalin had wiped out all opposition to him in Russia. After imposing a line that characterised the socialists as social-fascists in the period after the rise of Hitler to power in 1933, he had imposed on the Communist International a rapid turn to the right, emphasising the need for alliances not only with other workers' parties but also with 'radical' bourgeois parties. In 1936 in France where a socialist government supported by the Radicals took office, this policy had the effect of the Communist Party calling for a return to work to end the strike wave that had broken out there. The French CP thus blocked the way to independent class organisation which had been developing in the assemblies of the strike committees. In Spain the Communist Party was transformed. It ditched calls for revolution, halted its own youth and union organisations and merged them with the socialists — yesterday's 'fascists' no more.

Spain also had its colonial problem. This was Morocco, which like Ireland for Britain was a training ground for an otherwise sedentary army. In 1934, when Asturias had risen against the conservative CEDA party government, it was these Moroccan troops which were used to destroy the isolated uprising.

Fascism
Spain's working-class had the misfortune to face the rise of fascism alone. Whilst international volunteers did come to their aid, they represented little in terms of mass solidarity. Many were refugees from countries where fascism was already dominant. The volunteers from Britain, France and the USA did not represent the majority of their fellow-workers, who followed events only through the distorting prism of bourgeois and socialist papers. 1936 was not a year like 1918 where socialist organisations throughout the advanced capitalist world were affected by the ending of the war and by the Russian Revolution. Rather the Spanish workers were the last to survive undefeated from that crisis. The simultaneous crisis in France was accompanied neither by the autonomous development of class organisations such as militias and strike committees nor by the development of any of the revolutionary political tendencies into mass organisations. Instead the fragmentation of the workers' movement there increased. Politically there was little to encourage confidence in the parties of the Spanish left. The Socialists (PSOE), the Communists (PCE) and 'left' Communists (POUM), all agreed that the coming revolution was a bourgeois one, a continuation of the 1931 revolution. They believed the revolution should limit its targets to the monarchy, the latifundia owners, the army, the church and Castilian centralism. The popular front of these parties and the 'radicals' centred around the perpetuation of legality. The record of the PSOE was unusually bad even for a reformist socialist party. Under the semi-dictatorship of Prima de Rivera the leader of the PSOE and its union the UGT (General Workers' Union) had served as a State Councillor and had supported mixed commissions of employers and trades unionists to resolve strikes. The CNT had refused this compromise which deprived workers of their autonomy and had been outlawed. This pattern had been repeated in



SPAIN 1936

By 1939 the working-class had been defeated, temporarily, all over Europe. In Spain, Italy, Albania, Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria fascist or militarist governments ruled through repression, preventing working-class organisation. In Russia, where market capitalism had been defeated, Stalin ruled autocratically over a state capitalist economy. In Britain and France and other European democracies the working-class movement had been directed into collaboration with the bourgeoisie to face the threat of Hitler under bourgeois control.

Millions would die fighting over the next few years in a struggle which did not achieve any changes for working people other than the partial destruction of fascism. The working-class movement which in 1910 appeared to be moving towards revolution had been unable to prevent two world wars, the degeneration of the revolution in Russia, and their co-option into popular fronts which if they ultimately defeated Hitler in 1945 did so at the cost of preserving capitalism.

Looking back today it is difficult to imagine in this context the enthusiasm of the Spanish Revolution. History is made after all by people, and their actions are not 'inevitable'. Beyond the Stalinist Communist International, which at its Seventh Congress placed itself firmly in favour of bourgeois Popular Fronts, reflecting illusions about 'socialist' state capitalism in one country, a number of political tendencies of all shades, anarchist and Marxist and the mass of the working-class attempted to build a socialist revolution in Spain.

In the face of the defeat of the Revolution this supplement intends to concentrate on two points which were crucial to the revolutionary movement and remain so because they illustrate the problems that have to be resolved if the movement is to progress. First, the capitulation of the leaders of the CNT and the FAI (the anarcho-sindicalist National Workers' Confederation and the Iberian Anarchist Federation) who prevented the co-ordination of the revolutionary organisations and the destruction of the state; secondly, the development of industrial and economic collectives, which changed the working lives of the millions who participated in them. Before we can examine the political and economic successes and failures of the Revolution we shall try and place these problems in context.

the first years of the Second Republic (1931-1933) and in 1936. However, after the defeat of the left in the 1933 elections, as a result of an abstention campaign by the CNT and the mobilisation of large numbers of peasants for the right by the *caciques* (bosses), the socialist rank and file had begun to move left. The UGT peasant union had re-emerged as a massive force as rural bosses sacked workers in revenge for the gains won before 1933. The 1934 rising in Asturias was characteristic of this shift, but it is important to realise that the UGT leader Caballero refused to support the rising in Madrid. Thus Caballero and the other more right-wing leaders of the UGT were unreliable allies for the revolution.

The positions of the PCE before 1936

followed the twists and turns of Comintern policy; it had few members and little influence. The POUM (Workers' United Marxist Party) was a peculiar mixture. On the left were covert Trotskyists, who criticised the timidity of the leadership and objected to the popular front. The party resulted from the fusion of the Workers and Peasants Bloc (BOC) who had left the PCE because of its turn to the left over 'social fascism' and dissident Trotskyists who refused Trotsky's orders to join the PSOE. The party had won some importance in 1934 backing the Workers' Alliance which had led to the risings in Asturias and Barcelona. The CNT had refused to back this rising except in Asturias because it felt itself too weak and

had also argued that nothing should be expected from alliances with the 'radical' bourgeoisie in Catalonia. The POUM had perhaps 30,000 members in 1936, concentrated in Catalonia, especially in the town of Lerida. The POUM joined the popular front but it criticised it too, saying that it seemed that only the workers made concessions. Whilst the POUM would support all the revolutionary initiatives instinctively throughout the civil war, it placed them in no context. It saw the CNT as the decisive voice of the workers and was prepared to wait for them to push for the revolution. It was not prepared to fight on its own, outside of its implicit relation to the CNT, which it criticised for lacking Marxist politics. Internationally the POUM was linked to the ILP, SAP, PSOP, etc. in the 'London Bureau'.

Outside of these parties were other leftists, Bordigists, dissident Trotskyists, and foreign exiles like the anarchist Berneri. Such people managed only to write some good commentaries on the revolution.

Anarchists

The anarchist movement was split into different tendencies organised largely into four groups, the CNT, the FAI, the youth (FIJL) and the women (*Mujeres Libres*). Since many commentators who should know better persist in talking of 'the anarchists' some of the basic tendencies will be explained here.

Within the CNT there were followers of all the anarchist tendencies except Pestana's Syndicalist Party. Pestana was the leader of the CNT from the murder of Segui until he was expelled in 1931. He had advocated support for the government and participation in the labour commissions. The expulsion of Pestana and his party saw their reformism increase and they eventually joined the popular front.

The minority tendency of the CNT were the *trentistas*. In the 1931 Conference they won majorities for the key proposals for national federations to link workers in each industry (as opposed to *sindicatos unicos* which grouped workers from every factory into a town or city federation) and for a patient strategy towards the government which excluded uprising. It was this point that was the dividing line for the 'extremist' faction of the FAI who gained control after the strikes failed in Barcelona. They argued that the minority were compromising with the Generalitat, while the *trentistas* replied that as they were not ready for the revolution they needed some understanding with the politicians. The FAI were understandably angry when the Generalitat was to see in their faction fight the intervention of the irresponsible wing of the CNT.

In 1934 the *trentistas* did support the joint rising of the Catalanist radicals, socialists and POUM. In the wave of risings that followed the *trentistas'* fears were proved justified. Whilst the Barcelona workers were already suffering from Generalitat repression, which spread to the suburbs and towns around Barcelona where support for the insurrections was strongest, the rural risings were defeated one by one in Andalusia, Aragon, the Levant, Catalonia etc. The FAI dominated revolutionary committees organised many risings, as well as a successful campaign to boycott the elections, but each rising focused on a new region, whilst the previous centre was too weak to make any serious effort. Never did all the regions where anarchism was strongest unite and rise simultaneously.

The FAI itself was split into various tendencies. Evidence for the political differentiation of the tendencies is sparse and sometimes contradictory. Abel Paz's book *Durutti: the People Armed* details most of the controversies the 'Nosotros' group was involved in. Little information other than this and Peirats' *Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution* is available in English. More is available in various memoirs, many unpublished, and works such as C. Lorenzo's *Les Anarchistes Espagnols et le Pouvair*. Besides the Nosotros group which included the Ascaso brothers, Durutti, G. Olivar and R. Sanz, there were other groups around H. Prieto and M. Buenacasa who appear to have developed a moderate line, and the supporters of Diego Abad de Santillan who advocated a planned economy run by the industrial unions in opposition to Federica Montseny's plan for a free federation of communes. Whilst Montseny's view prevailed at the Zaragoza National Conference of the CNT in 1936, the alternative was partially implemented in the self-managed industries after July 1936.

The basis of the FAI up to 1936 was loose affinity groups which worked jointly with the important committees of the CNT.

Affinity groups such as the Nosotros were not political tendencies so much as support groups of friends. Nosotros was consistently radical and emphasised direct action but did not have a line, more a group emphasis. With this situation prevailing it is difficult to fully follow the developments within the FAI. By 1936 it had lost much of the independence that it had had before 1931 from the reformists and the then autonomous CNT. Differences seemed to spread through the FAI once it assumed the leadership of the CNT in 1931. Important differences were maintained by the regional divisions within the CNT. The Asturias consistently followed a policy of co-operation with the UGT. The Aragonese were hard line anarchists, hence the FAI inspired choice that it should be the seat of the National Committee up to 1936, rather than Barcelona which had a history of debate between 'purists' and 'Catalanists'. The National Committee naturally took on the political character of the city in which it resided, and by whose local federation it was elected. Few theoreticians developed within the CNT. Perhaps the most noticeable was V. Orobón Fernández who died in 1934. Orobón went into exile during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera and participated in the international conference organised by supporters of the *Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*, which was written by Russian exiles to draw on their experiences. In 1931 Orobón returned to Spain and participated in the Comedia congress where he supported the move to develop industrial federations. In 1933 he was one of the main speakers for the abstentionist campaign, but worried by the isolation of the CNT he spoke out in favour of a revolutionary alliance with the UGT. He pointed to the example of the unsuccessful revolution in Bavaria in 1919, where socialists, communists, and anarchists (Landauer, Muhsam) had co-operated. His demand for an alliance on the basis of a five point plan influenced the Asturias. The points were:

1. Tactical planning, no co-operation with the bourgeoisie.
2. Socialisation of the means of production, integration of the unemployed into the workforce, production for social wealth, not commodity production.
3. Organs to integrate the economy.
4. Recallable elected executives.
5. The immediate aim of revolutionary workers' democracy.

Unlike the other politicians, the CNT did have a clear idea that the coming revolution would be a proletarian one. At its Congress in 1936 a motion describing libertarian communism had been unanimously passed, by *trentistas* and others alike. The conference ratified reunification with the 50,000-strong minority. The failure of the CNT was its lack of direction, and its lack of preparation to counter the coming military rising. A proposal that militias should be trained was defeated by one favouring the 'more anarchist' idea of guerilla warfare. The

GLOSSARY

Esquerra	"Left". A bourgeois Catalan party.
FIJL	Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth.
Generalitat	The autonomous 'government' of Catalonia.
GPU	Stalinist secret police.
ILP	Independent Labour Party.
IWMA	International Working Men's (sic) Association, anarcho-syndicalist international founded in Berlin in 1923.
PCE	Spanish Communist Party.
PSOE	Spanish Workers' Socialist Party (Second International)
PSOP	French Workers' and Peasants' Socialist Party, a split from the Second International Party.
SAP	German Socialist Workers' Party, a split from the Second International party.
sindicatos unicos	"single unions".
Solidaridad Obrera	"Workers' Solidarity", paper of the CNT in Barcelona.
trentista	"the thirties". CNT moderate faction so named because thirty of them signed a manifesto opposing tactic of unprepared spontaneous revolution advocated by the FAI.

response to military risings was to be the revolutionary general strike. The policy of alliances was also agreed, since 30,000 political prisoners were held by the state and reorganisation was proceeding slowly. By the time of the Congress the CNT had ½million members, by the end of the year 1½m plus. The Congress accepted a transitional programme for industry that included temporary demands as well as revolutionary ones. The programme for the peasants centred on the expropriation of land, but peasants were badly represented at the congress. Sexual relations and some cultural questions were discussed, to the frustration of some delegates who thought such time was wasted. Congress agreed that the 36 hour week should be introduced but had no plan to implement this demand. This led to clashes with the UGT in the building industry, who were prepared to settle for 40 hours. *In practice unity in action had still to be won when the military uprising came.*

By 1936 the Spanish working-class movement had been through many experiences and was fundamentally strong. The CNT was vital, containing the mass of the determined workers. A weakness was the dominance of the reformist UGT in Madrid and the Basque country. Although the danger of a military coup was understood by the Nosotros group, and their view that a revolution was the only way out of the crisis was accepted by the CNT, no mass preparations had been made. A great weakness of the CNT was its lack of internationalism. Little or nothing was done by the CNT to aid revolutionaries in Morocco or France. The lack of help from the latter and the 40,000 trained troops from the former would alter the balance of forces decisively against the revolution, just as the reformists would sap it from within. The whole of the CNT instinctively welcomed the revolution which came on July 19th, but ultimately *their lack of political strategy was to be the factor which disorganised and then destroyed this revolutionary enthusiasm.*

In July 1936 Dolores Ibarruri (the present president of the PCE) declared: 'In our country what is happening is a bourgeois democratic revolution, which in other countries like France, happened a hundred years ago . . . we communists defend a regime of liberty and democracy'. *In fact a revolution of the working class had taken place.* The basic struggle that went on throughout the period of the civil war was a class struggle by the unco-ordinated organisations of the working class, and the recreated strength of the bourgeois state. In this struggle the militias, watch committees, revolutionary committees, rural collectives, political organisations, and socialised industries of the working class were destroyed or degenerated under the pressure of a bourgeois coalition composed of the right wing socialists (followers of Prieto), the PCE and the republican and regional parties. The rest of this pamphlet will attempt firstly to describe in outline the organisations of the working class revolution, and secondly will ask the question 'Why was the revolution stifled, and by whom?'

Rising

On July 19th 1936 in all the major industrial centres of Spain an attempt by the army to destroy the government of the republic was defeated, mainly by the energies of the mass of the workers who disarmed the officers and soldiers who had joined in the conspiracy led by General Franco. Rumours and preparations for the attempted army coup had been obvious to all but the Casares government, which, afraid of the workers more than of the army, refused the demands that arms should be distributed to the people. The seizure of the barracks and the arms that they contained by the workers in all of southern Spain (excepting Cadiz, Seville, Cordoba and Grenada), as well as in Catalonia, Asturias, Santander, and 2/3 of the Basque country — deprived the government of its monopoly of force. The basic strength of the revolution developed through the arming of the people — this took two forms: firstly, the organisation of watch committees and patrols to prevent fascist attacks; secondly, the organisation of the popular militias. Since the greatest concentration of class power and organisation, and the largest amount of information relates to Barcelona and Catalonia, most of the following relates only to this area. Ten days after the revolution there were 18,000 people organised in the militias (The relative strengths were: 13,000 CNT-FAI, 2,000 UGT, POUM 3,000, police etc. 300). The militias differed from ordinary armies in various ways. Their members did not cease

political activity by entering them — they remained formally members of their organisations with the right to contribute to political decisions. Whilst they stayed in the cities the militias did not live in barracks but continued to live at home whenever possible; this meant that they were in much greater contact with other people and could not be separated from the political debates going on there.

Generally speaking they were complete improvisations; little or no preparation had been done. Although the CNT had collected arms from the unsuccessful Barcelona uprising of October 1934 there had been no training of militias, even after the return of the republic in 1936. At the CNT congress a motion proposed by the Nosotros had been defeated. This group had played an important part in defeating the conspiracy. They had planted informers in the barracks to find out what the conspirators planned, and helped to lead the attacks on the barracks — some of them were killed. Later Durutti was to lead one of the columns that left to retake Zaragoza from the rebels. Each column was composed of a number of groups of 500 men which were in turn divided into groups of 100. The latter was directed by an elected 'centurion', and by four representatives of the ¼ sections of each century. There was no rank as such; orders were given and obeyed not because an officer had been appointed to run the unit but because the unit had elected their representative and accepted the need for collective discipline.

There was thus no specific officer corps. Everyone ate, slept and fought together irrespective of their responsibilities. Nor was there any uniform — except that it was common to wear similar clothes with red or black neckties. Given their lack of expertise professional soldiers were used — but had to be supervised. One column of soldiers and revolutionaries leaving Valencia split up, with the soldiers massacring the militias.

The columns that left Barcelona did not achieve their goal. The volunteers' enthusiasm did not make up for a lack of effective armament, or ammunition. Whilst there were some lapses of discipline nothing could alter the basic problem for the militias: after two weeks they had used up most of their ammunition. Although guerillas in one or two small groups continued to be active, the Aragon front was to remain static for much of the war. The supply of arms was never effectively organised by the revolutionaries to ensure that they could move on. After the departure of the majority of the militias for Aragon and Valencia internal security was supervised by Patrols which developed throughout Barcelona. The majority of the members again belonged to the CNT (325 as against 145 — UGT; 185 — Esquerra; 45 — POUM). The patrols were linked to an investigative commission and to Revolutionary Tribunals composed of representatives of the various parties. This new justice was free. All judicial records prior to the 19th July were burned. At the frontiers with France the old guards were also replaced.

Collectives

One of the most interesting features of the Spanish revolution was the reorganisation of the economy attempted both in industry and agriculture. Trotsky acknowledged that the cultural level of the Spanish revolution was way ahead of that of the Russian one. The CNT was after all an anarcho-syndicalist union and considered that the reorganisation of economic life — and its management by the workers themselves — was one of the touchstones of any revolution. One of the grounds for rejecting links with the Communist International which the CNT had provisionally joined was the CNT's refusal to accept that either trade unions should be subordinated to parties, or that the workers should have little or no power to manage the economy through co-ordinated decision making.

It is impossible in a short space to outline even the wealth of experience of self-management in the revolution. Readers can easily obtain G. Leval: *Collectives in the Spanish Revolution*, and S. Dolgoff: *The Anarchist Collectives*. Most of the material here is from F. Mintz: *L'Autogestion dans l'Espagne Revolutionnaire*, which is unavailable in English. Mintz summarises the extent of collectives in agriculture as involving in July 1939 0.4m people in 802 collectives. He estimates that 1.5m people overall were involved in these experiments. The extent of the anarchist movement in the countryside is remarkable because the CNT was by 1936 a largely urban organisation. Aragon, which was protected from the intrusion of the communists by its geo-

graphical position and the presence of the revolutionary militias until late 1937 provides the most developed picture of rural revolution. Whereas Popular Front administrations were organised early on elsewhere, the Council of Aragon was not recognised until December 1936 by the central government; even then half its members were in the CNT, and one in the syndicalist party. Only three quarters of the province was unoccupied by the Francoists.

A CNT organised congress of collectives attracted representatives from 80,000 collectivists (before May 1936 there were only 34,000 CNT members over all of Aragon, Navarre and Rioja.). The 275 collectives were grouped into 23 federations. Of 0.43m inhabitants 69.5% were involved in collectives, running 70% of the land, according to one estimate. Many had done away with money internally — distribution was made either by rationing, by the use of collectives' own credit notes, or totally freely. A few were able despite the war to begin improvements — machinery, irrigation, etc. Generally speaking wages were paid to the family, with wives and children receiving an unequal share. Schools were often set up for the first time. Most collectives voluntarily sent large amounts of food to the front. The basic structure of all the collectives was similar. Those that joined it shared out their land and worked in small groups run by their own representative. Priorities were decided by general assemblies with everyone present.

Some of the collectives were formed near parts of the front where the POUM and PSUC were active too, and independently of the CNT. Relations with the UGT varied; the CNT policy was that the small landowners who joined the UGT to protect themselves against the revolution should only be allowed to work land which they could use themselves. A few of the collectives agreed that a bank should be set up — not an interest earning bank, but a bank for the exchange of commodities between collectives, between town and country, and for international purchases.

Industry

Industrialisation in the towns was less profound than in the countryside where the basic structure of life changed entirely. The necessity to improvise a vast war industry, to produce explosives for the first time in Catalonia, and therefore to work long hours, imposed limitations on the possibility for socialisation of the urban economy. Again only one example can be given — Barcelona; the centre of anarchist Spain. The socialisation of the economy in Barcelona was undertaken spontaneously by the workers. The Catalan regional committee of the CNT had merely ordered a general strike and a resumption of work. Most of the larger businesses — railways, trams, engineering, electricity, etc. were collectivised in the first week of the revolution. One of the first measures was to reintegrate all the unemployed into their former jobs. Wages were often made equal, and increased. Some trades were substantially reorganised — wood and furniture, hairdressers, bakers, etc. with smaller shops being shut down in favour of more modern, economical ones.

One of the important features of the revolution was the attempt to maintain the goodwill of technicians to help run the factory. In some cases they were granted representation on executive bodies where their professional expertise was most needed, but they did not have any greater power over hiring and firing or other day to day matters, which were generally controlled by the two major unions working together (the POUM union seems to have disappeared by 1936).

The economy suffered from two problems: firstly, one in four factories suffered from a lack of raw materials from abroad and from Francoist Spain; and secondly from lack of finance. In September 1936 a regional plenum of 200 unions passed a motion that left it open for unions to collectivise generally; the CNT also made some attempts to set up a labour bank which would be used to co-ordinate exchanges between co-operatives, in August 1937. Another novel feature of the collectives was the development of social and health measures to improve workers' standards of living which were often free. Abortion became legal for the first time. One of the significant features of the Spanish revolution was the development of a women's organisation. *Mujeres Libres* began in Madrid where a women's group began to teach women how to read and write. By 1938 it was a 30,000 strong movement organised throughout republican Spain. While it did not develop specifically

as a feminist organisation, feminist views did develop in it. Emma Goldmann wrote in the December 1936 issue of their paper that whilst class or sexual oppression existed there could be no revolution. The war allowed many women to enter jobs for the first time. Mujeres Libres helped this development along; although many of the jobs were still preserves for men, women were organised for work in transport, sanitation, health, food, etc. The groups also organised creches in factories. Simultaneously Federica Montseny, an FAI member who became Minister of Health, helped to provide birth control and legalised abortion. The organisation of the Mujeres Libres group was a positive step, helping women to become aware of and fight against their oppression; e.g. Pepita Carpena '... at first I was not very enthusiastic, but later I realised that there was a vast work to do among ourselves'.

Although it is difficult to describe there were more general aspects to the revolution. Abel Paz talks of militants who didn't sleep for days. George Orwell notes that everyone called each other tu, and comrade, instead of being formal. Clothes changed. Revolution came from abroad. Papers were printed on the capitalists' presses. Buildings were taken over. Churches and fascists were burnt and killed. Prisoners were freed, even criminals, some of whom went to the front in the Iron column near Valencia. The libertarian youth organised a popular university. The revolution and the counter-revolution that followed affected all areas of life.

Failure

Although a proletarian revolution obviously began, why did it fail? If any reader still doubts the bourgeois character of the PCE, B. Bollotten in *The Grand Camouflage* provides a detailed exposure of their activities. The PCE and its Catalan PSUC played a crucial role in defeating the revolution. They opened their parties to all the opponents of collectivisation and militias and supported the parliamentary forms of government. The PCE was at the centre of a coalition whose nominal head may have been republican, or socialist, but whose strength depended on the flow of Russian arms, to approved police units. These arms were used to revive the police forces which were powerless in July and August. By December 1936 40,000 Carabineros and 28,000 national Republican Guards were created anew, with arms that were needed on the front. These troops and others led by Lister formed regular but communist troops in the popular army, and were used to destroy the collectives of the Levant and Aragon in 1937/8. For the bourgeois PCE it mattered most to destroy anything that savoured of revolution under the pretence that such 'excesses' were frightening off potential help from the liberal democracies. In reality this policy fitted in with Stalin's. Stalin had made a pact with France to frighten Nazi Germany. However if one looks at the dates of arms supplied to Spain by the USSR one notes that virtually no

arms were supplied to Spain after late in 1937. Instead Stalin made a pact to divide up Poland with Hitler. No one can doubt that the PCE meant to destroy the revolution with its slogan of 'The war first'.

Dilemmas

The problem posed to the revolutionary left was of how to defend and extend the revolution, and win the war at the same time. Essentially an explanation for the defeat of the revolution and the victory of Franco has to relate to the way the revolutionary left faced this problem.

Why did the CNT not build the revolution? 'No Libertarian Communism — first crush the enemy where he is' (*Solidaridad Obrera* 21-7-36). '... the government of the Popular Front in Spain is no more than the reflection of a compromise between the petty bourgeoisie and international capital' (*Sol. Ob.* 3-9-36). When after the CNT had joined the national government in Madrid (4-10-37): 'circumstances have ... changed the nature of the Spanish state and government, it has ceased at this moment as the regulator of the organs of the state to be an oppressive force against the working class' (*Sol. Ob.*).

Durrutti seems to have believed that there would be an anarchist seizure of power, after Zaragoza was taken. Santillan, according to Abel Paz, proposed 'democratic collaboration', not dictatorship, i.e. rule by the CNT alone would be against anarchist principles, and might provoke armed intervention from foreign powers. After a few weeks of this policy G. Olivar who at first had argued that revolution was inseparable from the war told Durrutti in August 1936



bourgeoisie, when one attacks foreign property, when public order is in the hands of the workers, when the militia is controlled by the unions, when, in fact, one is in the process of making a revolution from the bottom up, how is it possible to give this a legal basis?'

These are just some of the arguments that went on in the CNT. The arguments of the Nosotros group appear to have been defeated by Santillan and the ex-trentistas first in Barcelona where the tide of revolu-

weaker and therefore more liable to pressure from outside groups) all reinforced this compromise.

Two arguments need consideration: (1) What was the effect of the policies adopted? (2) Was there any alternative?

The most persuasive argument appears to be that the CNT had to be moderate to win foreign aid. The CNT seems to have had some naive ideas about this aid: One article in *Solidaridad Obrera* gave uncritical praise to the USSR, without asking who the arms would go to. In any case all the arms went to repress the revolution as much as to fight at the front. Operations launched in the Balearics to entangle Britain and France against Italy, on the grounds that neither party would allow the other to gain influence, achieved nothing.

In fact the policy of placating the liberal democracies had great costs. It meant that the revolution made no attempt to destroy Franco's base in Morocco by supporting an anti-imperialist struggle. Spain also accepted that there should be no attack on Algieras where troops arrived from Morocco. Thus the Spanish navy, which remained in republican hands for most of the war, was left idle, where it could have struck an important blow. Britain was unhappy about warfare in the vicinity of its base at Gibraltar. The government compromise also related to the use of the Bank of Spain's gold deposits. The IWMA had co-operated in a plan to use the money to buy arms after the gold had been seized by a force led by Durrutti and Santillan. The latter however developed cold feet at the thought of alienating the government of Madrid. Subsequently the gold went to Russia and the arms deliveries ceased.

The effect of the policy of working within the parliamentary institutions which the CNT leadership developed from the beginning of July, also had counter-revolutionary effects on the development of the armed forces. Whilst the leaders worried about imposing dictatorship, the forces were recruited that were to retake Barcelona. Whilst some anarchists were saying we must take Zaragoza before building libertarian communism in Barcelona, the PSUC prepared for the confrontations of May 1937. The CNT accepted the destruction of the watch committees at a time when the Spanish branch of the GPU prepared for the murder of embarrassing militants. The leader of the POUM, A. Nin, was taken by the GPU and killed, possibly in Moscow. Other well known militants disappeared, notably Camillo Berneri. Rumours persist that Durrutti was shot from behind. Meanwhile at the front militarisation was accepted. Concessions were won, all the CNT units being kept together, but militarisation still meant the destruction of revolutionary self-discipline in favour of regimentation. C. Mera who at the Zaragoza CNT Congress had opposed militias (he wanted guerilla warfare) ended up by making a speech where he declared that as a General he would no longer speak to an ordinary soldier!

Economy

Within the economy there were two problems: finance and the UGT. The failure of the CNT to destroy the capitalist economy, its failure to organise and plan the economy for itself meant that raw materials for collectives were not secured, orders for uniforms were sometimes made abroad rather than going to revolutionaries. The PSUC used its positions to reverse collecti-



that it was necessary to build the revolution secretly from within a government. He replied: 'When the workers expropriate the

tion was strongest, later in national meetings where the representatives of the CNT from outside Catalonia (where the CNT was

The revolution and civil war in Spain in 1936-1939 contained some of the greatest moments in the history of the European working-class.

It is important for libertarians to remember that the largest single organisation of the working-class in Spain was the CNT, the anarco-sindicalist trade union.

Today, 40 years on, does the libertarian tradition have any importance in Spain?

The answer to that question must undoubtedly be yes. Despite being ignored by most of the revolutionary Left in Britain, the Libertarian movement has grown rapidly since the death of Franco. The CNT is growing rapidly, and now has perhaps as many as 30,000 members. As important, it seems to have learnt from the mistakes it made in the Civil War.

The Libertarian Spain Committee believes that solidarity work with Spanish libertarians is vital for us in Britain, and sees Spain as "the weak link in European capitalism."

Libertarian Spain, bulletin of the LSC, is available for 20p inc. postage, bundles of 5 for £1 cash with order, from LSC, 136 Burley Rd, Leeds 4. No 1, still available, covers the rebirth of the CNT, the June elections, economic and political background. No 2, available from January, covers recent developments, the counter-culture etc etc.

Libertarian Spain

