

Los Maños – The lads from Aragon

The story of an anti-Franco action group

Mariano Aguayo Morán interviewed by Freddy Gómez;
and by Antonio Téllez



Mariano Aguayo Morán (1922-1994) was one of the members of the 'Los Maños' group. This group of friends from Zaragoza joined together to fight the Francoist regime in the optimistic days after the second world war. Originally active with the Socialist Youth, they soon joined the anarchist resistance alongside militants like Francisco 'Quico' Sabaté and José Lluís Facerías. Betrayed by one of the group members, Wenceslao Jiménez Orive was seriously wounded in a police ambush in Barcelona on 9 January 1950. Rather than be captured, he took cyanide. Simón Gracia Fleringán, Plácido Ortiz Gratal and Victoriano Muñoz Treserras were arrested the same day, and executed on 24 December 1950.

These interviews throw light not only on the story of the 'Los Maños' group, but the nature, motivations and difficulties of the anarchist resistance to Francoism.

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and by Antonio Téllez. Translated by Paul Sharkey

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What is Anarchism?

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

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

LOS MAÑOS: ANATOMY OF AN ACTION GROUP

This interview with Mariano Aguayo Morán (1922-1994), carried out in September 1976, provided an opportunity to get to grips with the history of the libertarian anti-Franco resistance in the years after the war (1946-1950), the Second World War having inspired high and often disappointed hopes at a time when, after fascist regimes had been defeated, the Franco regime looked like being the next in line to fall. The 'Los Maños' group (maño being a slang term for Aragonese) which grew out of the unfailing friendship between two young men from the working class El Arrabal district of Zaragoza, was quickly wedded to the cause of anarchist activism and drawn into the nebulous libertarian resistance of which Quico Sabaté (1915-1960) and José Lluís Facerías (1920-1957) were then the two emblematic representatives.

The reader will realise from the reading of it that the chief purpose behind this interview was not to embark upon singing the praises of the shadow warriors from those times, but to learn from the story of the 'Los Maños' group, as told by one of its protagonists, the difficult circumstances in which such resistance occurred and understand the problems with which it had to grapple. There, to our way of thinking, is where its morsel of human truth resided.

LOS MAÑOS: ANATOMY OF AN ACTION GROUP

ZARAGOZA, EL ARRABAL DISTRICT, 1940s

Q. *Your involvement with the Los Maños group grew out of your long-standing friendship with the man who was without question the group's touchstone figure, Wenceslao Gimenez Orive aka Wences. Could you tell us something about that?*

A. Ours was a strong, fine friendship between youngsters and we each derived a lot of benefit from it. We used to read the same books, watch the same movies, shared the same love of learning, albeit not always the same ideas, which very often sparked arguments between us. At the time, as far as I was concerned, I was merely on the left whereas Wences was a libertarian – as a matter of family tradition, one might say. His father had been in the CNT. He was a railway worker, shot by the Francoists. Wences prized the last letter his father had written him before his death.

Q. Did you often talk about the [civil] war in Spain?

A. Very often, of course, but we talked even more often about the world war. To us the connection was plain to see, just as it was plain to see that the defeat of Nazis would have implications for Spain. We were in our twenties and were fanatically anglophile. I should say that at the time the most straightforward way of working out whether such-and-such a person was anti-Franco was to test his anti-Germanism. The second you heard somebody say that the Germans were on the back foot or losing ground, you could trust him, for in most cases that meant that he was yearning for them to be beaten. And so a street-hawker who dropped in on my mother a few times and with whom I had chatted about the international situation one day handed me an envelope containing a copy of *Renovación*, an underground Socialist Youth newspaper published in Madrid. It was like manna from heaven. When we set eyes on it, Wences and I were so enthusiastic that we mentioned it to a mutual friend of ours, Simón Gracia Fleringán, whose father, a CNT member, had also been shot.

Q. And you knew him from where?

A. From the district. We were all living in the El Arrabal district in Zaragoza. Keen to know more, we sought out the street-hawker, which was not hard. His name was Manolo. After we had had a long chat with him, he told us that he belonged to the Socialist Youth. Without hesitation, we asked him to get us in and that is how we – Wences, Simón and I – found ourselves members of the El Arrabal district Socialist Youth group, which was made up of about ten members, most of whom had had relatives shot by the Francoists.

Q. What were your impressions, now that you were in a clandestine organisation?

A. To tell the truth, it was a little gang of pals, but the fact that we belonged to an organisation with the capability to publish a proper newspaper such as the one we held in our hands struck us as grand. Moreover, and even though this might seem nonsensical with hindsight, the fact that the Socialist Youth was in touch with the exile community greatly impressed us. To us, the exiles were the *crème de la crème*. We regarded them as a decisive force.

Q. How were the Socialist Youth organised and what capabilities had they?

A. By rather insulated groups. There was a Local Executive Commission, made up of one delegate from each group. The National Executive Commission of the Socialist Youth was based in Madrid. As to their capabilities, it was not long before we found out how limited they were.

Q. In what circumstances?

A. Wences, Simón and I were obsessed, literally obsessed, with the idea of bumping off Franco. We were forever talking about this and it had become something of a game for us to be dreaming up the best way of eliminating him. So we devised ridiculous plans, such as a plan to offer our services as man-power to Marshal Tito so that he would let us have the military equipment we needed to pull off our plan. The mere fact that he had fought in the civil war was all the proof we needed of his good intentions. Naturally, we were ignorant of the diplomatic considerations of the time. We were young and full of fire. One day, though, things took a more serious turn as far as we were concerned. I was working for a photographer who, as it happened, was the local Falange boss and a member of Franco's personal guard detail. Through him I found out that Franco was planning a trip to Zaragoza. I immediately broke this to the group. Needless to say we were cock-a-hoop at the news. We had our ready-made opportunity: all that remained now was for us to seize it. To be honest, I did not believe it until the day that Wences, through the good offices of a member of the socialist youth, was tipped off about the existence of a cache of grenades in a dump near Calanda, in Teruel province. He made the trip and actually brought back eleven grenades. We were over the moon. Now to draw up our plan of attack. It was simple: there were three of us, each of us stuffed two grenades into his pockets and then, at a specific point on the itinerary, we would launch a concerted attack on the procession.

Q. In short, a suicide attack, right?

A. Something of that sort, although there was just a chance we might escape in the confusion. And we knew that innocent people were going to perish, but they were Franco supporters, we told ourselves. But the problem was the gear. Of the eleven grenades retrieved, we tested three on

the banks of the Ebro. To our great despair only one went off. At which point we reckoned there was a danger of our becoming laughing-stocks, so we dropped that plan.

Q. How did you get hold of those grenades, again?

A. That's just what I was coming to. As soon as we had news that Franco was coming to Zaragoza, we put the matter to the Executive Commission of the Socialist Party (PSOE) through its local delegate. The answer was slow in coming but it was clear-cut: given the prospects opening up in the wake of the Allied victory, the party had no interest in encouraging any attempt to assassinate Franco. This was in 1946. The war had just ended. At which point a young man from the El Arrabal Socialist Youth, disgusted by the leadership's 'wait and see' policy, filled Wences in on the arms dump in Calanda.

Q. I suppose that stance on the part of the Socialist Party altered your views about membership of the Socialist Youth?

A. Yes, especially where Wences was concerned; he was convinced that, had it been briefed, the CNT's reaction would have been different.

Q. At that point you had no contact with the libertarian movement, then?

A. No, but it was not long before we did. At that point a fellow by the name of Ignacio Zubizarreta, known as Zubi, showed up in Zaragoza; he was in touch with an uncle of Simón's who had a libertarian background, albeit that he was no longer active. He was the one that introduced us to Zubi. Which came as an eye-opener for us. Zubi had a history as an activist and in addition he was an open sort of a person. Our meeting was a watershed. In the course of conversation he told us about the situation of the movement in France, its prospects and its frictions. Zubi, who belonged to the "apolitical" wing of the CNT and had been living in Bordeaux, had returned to Spain to form a guerrilla group. He was a member of the AMRE (Military Alliance of the Spanish Republic),¹ an

¹ The AMRE was launched in Toulouse in December 1944 by General J Hernández Saravia and a number of high-ranking officers from the erstwhile Spanish loyalist army. Its aim was to marshal former republican officers and it had between 3,000 and 5,000 members. The AMRE was disbanded in September

organisation led from France by General Hernández Saravia. He even showed us his AMRE card with its republican flag; it set out his rank. To tell the truth, it was a bit on the extravagant side, but he seemed to place great store by it. Unfortunately, Zubi was arrested very quickly and his arrest also led to the arrest of Wences who had quit the Socialist Youth to join the CNT.

FROM ANTI-FRANCOISM TO ANARCHISM

Q. I imagine then that the meeting with Zubi had an impact on his decision to leave the Socialist Youth?

A. It sure did but Zubi had not pushed it. Quite the opposite. He was all for our staying with the Socialist Youth. Maybe because he was aware of the tenuous foothold of the CNT in Zaragoza, or maybe for strategic reasons, but the fact is that he never pushed us into making the break. Wences was ready to make the move. He was fed up with the impotence of the socialists and his mind was made up to join the libertarian movement just as soon as he could. Not that Simón and I followed suit, straight off.

Q. How did Wences come to be arrested?

A. At a rendezvous with Zubi at his home in the Calle del Caballo in August 1946. We know now that in the wake of the arrest of Amador

1945 by the very same Hernández Saravia once he became Minister of Defence in the José Giral-led Republican government-in-exile. Note on AMRE and AFARE:

In these interviews Mariano Aguayo Morán refers to Ignacio 'Zubi' Zubizarreta Aspas as being involved with the AMRE (Agrupacion/ Alianza Militar de la Republica Espanola – Military Group/Alliance of the Spanish Republic) or the AFARE (Agrupacion de las Fuerzas Armadas de la Republica Espanola – Armed Forces of the Spanish Republic Group). The AFARE was the longer-lived of the two groups, being the target of a series of trials between 1946 and 1949. Even at the time, there seems to be conflation between the AMRE and AFARE. At this distance, it is hard to be more precise than to state that Zubizarreta was involved at some point with one of these republican military organisations.

Franco in Irun,² the police had been keeping comings and goings at Zubi's home under close surveillance.

Q. Was there any other fall-out from Wences's arrest?

A. For me, yes. The police turned up to arrest me after finding in Wences's home a postcard I had sent him for his birthday, in which I wished him "freedom". I was held at the station for a few days, but nothing particularly serious came of it.

Q. And Wences?

A. He did three months in jail. When he got out, he left Zaragoza to join the guerrillas.

Q. What sorts of things did you get up to in the Socialist Youth?

A. A range of things. One, for instance, was laying flowers on the mass grave of those shot on commemoration days. Sometimes we displayed a bit of imagination, like the day we floated a huge balloon with a republican flag displayed high above the district. Apart from that there were the classic activities like printing of leaflets and slipping them under doors or through letter-boxes.

Q. And I imagine there were youngsters within the group who were keen to do more and go a step further?

A. Yes. There was the comrade who will play a large part in the remainder of this story and who was, together with Wences, behind the formation of the 'Los Maños' action group. I mean Daniel González Marín, aka *Rodolfo*. When I met him he was claiming to be a member of the Socialist Youth's local executive commission. He was originally from Madrid, a student, extremely intelligent and cultivated and very well versed in matters political; he was well-spoken and had a command of several languages. From the moment we took up together I realised that he did not feel comfortable in the Socialist Youth and was drawn to the libertarian movement. Shortly after that, I myself left the Socialist Youth group to join the CNT

² Diego Franco Cazorla (1920-1947), better known as Amador Franco, was a Libertarian Youth activist. Arrested in Irun in July 1948, he was shot in Ondarreta prison the following year.

and, almost at the same time, the entire Socialist Youth group was dismantled. I was no longer a member but like the rest I wound up in jail and it was in jail that I came to know and appreciate Rodolfo. We became the best of friends.

Q. What was his background, in terms of politics?

A. His family was a middle class family from Madrid. His mother worked as a teacher. As for his father, who had held an important job in the Telegraph Service, he had been a UGT leader. During the [civil] war he had lost his sight, not that that stopped the Francoists from passing fourteen separate death sentences on him – Rodolfo, who had a good sense of humour, used to say that "the first one would have done the job".

Q. So, it is 1947 and you are behind bars. How were things in prison at the time?

A. I found myself in a rather weird situation; I had been rounded up with the Socialist Youth group, but I was no longer a member of it. In prison, I belonged to the libertarian group which was split in turn into two camps: the 'a-politicals' on the one hand and the 'collaborationists' on the other. One of the 'a-politicals' was Zubi, but they did not have numbers on their side. Just thirteen out of the five hundred libertarians inside belonged to the so-called 'a-political' faction and upwards of four hundred to the so-called 'collaborationist' faction. That said and despite the discussions and the arguments between them, relations between us were good.

Q. And you were aligned with which of these two factions?

A. The so-called a-political' one, Zubi's faction.

Q. And other forces?

A. There were about forty socialists, thirty eight of them from the Youth, having just been arrested, plus two or three older militants. There were also a few republicans, old guys. As for the communists, they were few in number but with their usual arrogance they behaved as if they were real political commissars. They had even set up a sort of people's court within the prison to sit in judgement of counter-revolutionary deviancy. Nutcases, eh?

Q. And by that point there were no more summary executions.?

A. No, but the shootings were still going on. In addition there were among the prison inmates men under sentence of death. I was not there long enough to find this out but I heard a lot of talk about it., especially the case of a well known tenor from Zaragoza who had gone to the execution stake whilst singing the aria 'L'adieu à la vie' from 'Tosca'.

Q. And how long were you in prison?

A. Three months.

Q. And Rodolfo?

A. Nine months. He was the last to get out. We met up after his release and he told me that he was now of the mind that the militant activity in which he had previously engaged was pointless. I remember his very words: "We're going to get nowhere cranking the handles of our copy machines, printing our little papers, writing our wee articles in newspapers that nobody reads." It was then that he told me that he wanted to join the CNT with an eye to playing a more active role in bringing down the regime. I told him I'd vouch for him to the CNT.

Q. And what became of Zubi?

A. He had been sentenced to death by a council of war in September 1947. His mistake was passing himself off as the regional AMRE chief. In the end his sentence was commuted and he got thirty years. He died ten years later in 1958, just as he was due for release. Most likely murdered.

Q. And what news had you had of Wences in the meantime?

A. I knew that he had spent time in France before making for Barcelona. That is why I went to see him, with his sister in tow. I mentioned Rodolfo's intention of joining the CNT and I put them in touch with each other. Later, Wences wrote to me that he reckoned Rodolfo was great.

Q. What was he doing in Barcelona?

A. He had joined Facerías's group. During his time in France, Wences had signed up for an action group in order to get back to Spain.

Q. Who handled that side of things in France?

A. At the time, Pedro Mateu,³ who was the coordinating secretary of the Inter-Continental Secretariat of the CNT-in-exile.

Q. And what had his response been?

A. He put Wences in touch with Facerías's group, but Wences felt out of place there. For one thing, it was a Catalan group and anti-Catalan prejudice was well ensconced in the Aragonese. Then again, he felt like a spare wheel and he did not like that. He wanted a group of his own, a group made up of militants whom he could trust implicitly.

DEBUT AND FIRST STEPS

Q. And that is where the 'Los Maños' group came into being?

A. Indeed. The idea of launching the group essentially arose out of the link-up made between Wences and Rodolfo. Previously, while passing through Zaragoza, Wences had asked me to sound Simón and another pal – Plácido Ortiz Gratal – to see if they would be agreeable to the setting-up of an action group. The response from both was positive. And so it was that on 11 February 1949 – I can still remember it – I told my mother that I was off to a dance for the evening and would be late home. The only person I took into my confidence was my brother, four years my junior, and off I went to say goodbye to Wences's mother. That evening Plácido, Simón and I caught the express to Barcelona. The only people who knew why we were leaving were my brother and Wences's sister. And maybe Plácido's brother. That is how the 'Los Maños' group was put together. Initially it was made up of Wences, Rodolfo, Simón, Plácido and me. At about the same time in Barcelona, César Saborit,⁴ secretary of the

³ Pedro Mateu Cusidó (1897-1980) who played a crucial role during those years in the coordination of logistical support for the action groups had – together with Luis Nicolau and Ramón Casanellas – been involved in the 8 March 1921 assassination of the Spanish prime minister Eduardo Dato.

⁴ César Saborit Carretero (1915-1951), a veteran of the Durruti Column, had served in 1948 as courier between the CNT's underground structures and the action groups. Later he joined the 'Los Maños' group before moving on to Facerías's group. He was gunned down by the Francoist police on 19 July 1951.

Catalonian regional committee, had briefed Wences that he knew some other youngsters ready to step up to the mark.

Q. The CNT of Spain was mostly under the control of the so-called 'collaborationist' faction. Saborit belonged to the other (apolitical) faction, the so-called 'hard-line' faction, whose powerbase was in exile, right?

A. Yes. Actually, the situation was muddled. Those who paid their dues to the underground trade union structures were most often affiliated to the so-called 'collaborationist' CNT. Those of us from the other, so-called 'a-political' faction passed for hard-liners. The 'collaborationists' used to refer to us as 'redskins' and said of us that we supported a misconstrued direct action, which is to say violent direct action.

Q. How did contact with Saborit come about?

A. He saw Wences and spoke to him of a Libertarian Youth member whose father had been shot by the Francoists and who was keen to join the group. We discussed the matter among ourselves. We couldn't really agree, mainly because we had all known one another for a long, long time and we reckoned that the advent of an outsider might create complications. Wences shared our feelings but since the request was coming from the regional committee's secretary who supplied our weaponry, he had no desire to cross him. So he proposed to contact the youngster in question. His name was Aniceto Pardillo Manzanero. We were to nickname him *El Chaval* (The Kid) as he was only eighteen. Well built and determined, he was virtually uneducated. He was primarily an adventurer. In short, we never took to him, especially me, but Wences championed his entry into the group, on condition that we put him to the test.

Q. You mentioned weapons. How did you come by them?

A. Wences had held on to two pistols from his time with Facerías's group. Besides they were easily come by when one belonged to a network. Ours were supplied by Saborit.

Q. And how was the newcomer put to the test?

A. Our first operation was designed to eliminate an informer, Antonio Seba Amorós, a one-time CNT militant who had been a brigade

commissar during the [civil] war and who had been 'turned' by the police. It was led by Wences, Rodolfo and El Chaval. We knew that the guy was in the habit of having his morning coffee in the same place, the 'Bracafé'.

Q. And you had proof that he actually was an informer?

A. Yes, we had been supplied with proof by the regional committee for Catalonia. There was no question about it; the guy was working directly for Quintela the Barcelona police chief. At the appointed hour on the day agreed, Wences, Rodolfo and El Chaval arrived at the 'Bracafé', but only Wences and Rodolfo were armed. To tell the truth, there was nothing glorious about this baptism of fire. Despite a hail of gunshots, the nark managed to get away. But well, the important thing is that he got the message and dropped out of circulation for good. As for El Chaval, Wences was happy with how he had performed. He had not cracked. From that point forth, he was taken into the group once and for all as the sixth man.

Q. And the others were agreeable?

A. The decision was Wences's. Oddly enough, he had a soft spot for the lad, excusing all his shortcomings by putting them down to his age. But Rodolfo was not fooled. Like us, he reckoned that he was not up to it, that he was a capricious lad who would bring us nothing but headaches. But that was all supposition. The trial by fire had clinched it. True, El Chaval was more of an adventurer than an idealist, but he seemed to fit the bill.

Q. What were your aims at that point?

A. Killing Franco was the only thing we cared about.

Q. And did you often mount punishment attacks like the one you carried out against the nark?

A. Shortly after the new guy was admitted, the group came face to face with a serious problem. El Chaval claimed to know who had murdered his father – allegedly it was a Falangist who made fish deliveries to the Borne market in Barcelona – and he put it to the group that he be liquidated. Quite apart from the fact that these charges of his needed authenticating, I myself was steadfastly opposed operations of that sort which

struck me as reeking of personal vengeance and nothing more. Plácido took the same line, but Wences, Rodolfo and Simón – all of their fathers had been shot too – were of a different opinion. They were all for bumping the guy off, as long as the regional committee could confirm the charges against him. The matter triggered many an argument among us, in the absence of El Chaval, of course. In fact there was a basic issue at stake. As I saw it, we should not get drawn into that vicious circle. For one thing, because it marked a shift in the nature of our aims; then because there would be too many sons of bitches needing to be bumped off. The whole thing struck me as morally stunted and politically counter-productive. But the fact is that despite anything I said, the group decided to trust the regional committee to look into things, the idea being as follows: either the guy would prove actually to be exactly who El Chaval said he was and needed liquidating, or, if he was not, we had to put some distance between ourselves and El Chaval as a matter of urgency.

Q. And your dealings with the regional committee were handled through Saborit?

A. Yes, always Saborit. Wences would meet up with him once a week, sometimes more.

Q. And enquiries were made?

A. Yes and a definite conclusion reached. It was hard to know exactly if the guy actually had murdered El Chaval's father, but it was established that he was a veteran Falangist, a piece of shit who had been up to his neck in lots of summary executions. So the group decided to make its move. In practical terms, an action of that sort is easily undertaken. On the other hand, one has to be able to take it on morally. To this day I reckon that the execution was a mistake and that it sullied our record. Naturally, there was no question of my playing any part in it. Besides, I wasn't asked. The target was a fish deliveryman. At 3.00 a.m. on the appointed day, his truck was stopped by Wences and Rodolfo posing as policemen. They had him get down from the cab and questioned him by the side of the road. He took the bait alright, giving a full account of his activities as a Falangist. At which point they went ahead with the execution. After the operation was over, Wences returned deflated and, even more, let down by the cold,

heartless attitude Rodolfo had displayed on the punitive expedition. From that day forth, Wences was sort of repulsed by him; this feeling never left him and it triggered many a ruction within the group.

Q. Your example touches upon which I reckon is an important point in the history of the action groups, having to do with what is politically acceptable and what should stay morally reprehensible. That the dividing line between one and the other is tenuous is something we know. It seems plain that as far as you were concerned, action had to have purposes that were beyond reproach, even if your entry into clandestine life also had the ring of vengeance, whether you like it or not ...

A. That was one of the main obstacles we had to face. Specifically, the act of becoming actors in our own lives, and armed actors at that, changed every prospect overnight. Our main motivation was opposition to Franco. That grew out of our history, what we had lived through as children and adolescents, during the [civil] war that had decimated our families. There was in our commitment a patent desire to avenge ourselves personally and that simply had to be resisted, if only for the sake of preserving our own humanity. Let me give you an example. I stated just now that I had been working for a Zaragoza photographer by the name of Ángel Cortes; not only was he the local Falange boss but he had taken the official portrait of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the one that was on display everywhere ... and, by the way, I was the one who developed the negative. The guy had been intimately and actively involved in summary executions and bragged about it. For instance he had told me, in fine detail how, on 19 July 1936, he had liquidated a UGT railway delegate who had come up from Valencia to organise a general strike. On a regular basis I relayed everything he told me to Wences, who was my mate. Once we set up the group, Wences took it into his head to execute this Cortes guy. Just between us, he would have been good value for it, but I would not hear of it and even threatened to quit the group over it. Why? Because I would felt personally responsible for his death and because I looked upon it as a barbarous expression of a personal vindictiveness that placed us on the same level as Cortes himself.

Q. Returning to the falling-out between Wences and Rodolfo, was that simply down, as you say, to different psychologies?

A. Wences was an idealist, a very high-minded character. As for Rodolfo, his was a very particular psychology: a blend of intelligence and coldness. Everything he did inevitably had this coldness about it. They were both strong personalities but their approaches to people and to action were different. For instance, Rodolfo used to insist that every single member of the group be equally implicated in the actions undertaken so that everyone would be in no doubt but that, if caught by the police, he ran the risk of the same fate – death – as the others. He also wanted each of us to be permanently armed. There was nothing so methodical about Wences. He relied more upon trust.

Q. We've gone into detail about Wences and Rodolfo, but not so much Simón and Plácido. What can you tell us about them?

A. Of the five of us, Simón was definitely the one who risked the most by going underground. After his father died, he had come by a lorry that he used to deliver milk, thereby supporting himself and his family. Despite the obvious advantages to his becoming one of us – he was the only one of us who knew how to drive – we had cautioned him against the consequences that his decision would entail for his family, but he wanted in. Plácido was the coolest head among us, deepest. He was a mate of Wences's, having worked on the railroad with him. At 28, he was the oldest member of the group.

ON THE TRAIL OF A TORTURER

Q. One of the main operations credited to the 'Los Maños' group was the attempted murder of Eduardo Quintela, a sinister individual who was head of the Barcelona Politico-Social Squad with an unenviable reputation for cruelty. How did that idea come about?

A. It came from Wences.. Actually there was nothing very novel about the idea. Several groups had already come up with it, such was the hatred that Quintela's methods aroused among anti-Francoists. That said, Wences's suggestion sparked no overwhelming enthusiasm from within the group, for one simple reason: as far as we – Simón, Plácido and myself, mainly, – were concerned, Quintela was only a stooge: the only target we had any

real interest in was Franco. Nothing should distract us from that target, into which our every effort had to be poured. With that in mind we had carried out renaissance along the Madrid to Zaragoza road and had even stumbled upon what seemed to us to be the ideal location for an attack, outside Catalayud. The problem was that we had to wait for Franco to make up his mind to travel that route. In short, while we waited for that blessed day to arrive, we agreed to mount an attack on Quintela. For a month we tracked him, keeping an eye on his comings and goings, which was not very hard as he led a very structured life: no venturing out in the evenings, no social life, no secret love affairs, just work and home, essentially. On the basis of what we had observed, the best time to pull off the attack was at about 2.00 p.m., the time when he invariably left police headquarters by car to eat lunch at home. In the course of our reconnaissance we unexpectedly bumped into Quico Sabaté in a café – Wences knew him – Quico and his brother José. After a lot of guarded conversation we realised that they were checking out the same things as us. In fact, Quico's group was laying the same plans as us. So we decided to make it a joint operation.

Q. And how did the operation go off?

A. One of the problems that every action group had to grapple with was how to fund operations. Unfortunately we had no choice but to rely on our own resources. I say unfortunately because activities of that sort – expropriations, shall we say, not to mention hold-ups – finished up taking priority over everything else, turning us into professional armed robbers. And with all of the dangers that that implied, the main danger being political. We all lived in terror of "copping it" during one of these hold-ups and being written off as criminals when we were resisters.

Q. Was that your only means of raising money?

A. Pretty much. At any rate, the only one that did not make us dependant upon the organisation and, for the most part, the organisation in exile. Anyway, the CNT exiles did not have the resources to fund us any longer.

Q. But you still had dealings with Toulouse?

A. Yes, but they were kept strictly to a minimum.

Q. And how were such ties established?

A. Through Pedro Adrover Font aka El Yayo⁵ who was the go-between between the action groups and the defence commission.⁶ El Yayo was in touch with Wences, and only with him. In actual fact, we had no wish to be beholden to the exile community, not because of any distrust of the defence commission but out of a wish to be autonomous. We actually reckoned that armed action had to be kept separate from propaganda or organisational work. We were out to serve as back-up for other activities, but without conflating the different types. Which generated some misunderstandings, by the way.

Q There's a tendency to think of the action groups as being under the supervision of the defence commission and guided by it. Now what you are saying would suggest instead that their operations were autonomous.

A. Comparatively autonomous, shall we say. Besides, the desire for autonomy was prompted by security considerations. We had to see to it that indiscretions were averted and in order to do that it was better if we kept our plans to ourselves. We knew, for instance, that the photo of Facerías displayed in every police station in Spain could only have come, he insisted, from the organisation's archives since it was the photo that appeared on the I.D. card that he left behind in Toulouse.

Q. So the money was not coming from Toulouse?

A. From time to time the odd sum might arrive, but basically we had to do our own fund-raising. Unfortunately so, as I have said. Because we were not cut out for it and it did not suit us. Worse still, such activity sparked derailment within our ranks. More often than one might think or say. Once you got past the initial distaste for such practices, some people finished up believing that it was easy money and an alternative to working. I've known a lot of people like that. Just to be on the sage side we can

⁵ Pedro Adrover Font (1911-1952) aka El Yayo, who had survived deportation to the Nazis' Mauthausen camp, joined the action groups back in 1947. He also handled liaison with the CNT in exile. He was executed in the Campo de la Bota (Barcelona) in 1952.

⁶ A body made up of the co-ordinating secretaries from the CNT, FAI and FIJL in exile: its task was to co-ordinate the armed struggle.

always say that those who arrived at that conclusion were not dyed-in-the-wool or "conscientized" anarchists, but it is a fact that the recourse to expropriations had a devastating effect on some hotheads whose anarchism was, when all was said and done, merely a veneer.

Q. How did you go about funding the operation targeting Quintela?

A. Oh, there were no heroics involved. The day before the appointed date, we decided to hold up three cinemas and make off with the takings. Before we could do that, we first needed a car. We always followed the same procedure: we would keep an eye out for a taxi, get in and tell the driver, whilst slipping him some cash for the inconvenience: "You're in no danger: we're a group from the anti-Francoist resistance." Generally things worked out well. On this occasion a parked taxi caught our eye. We followed the usual procedure, whereupon the taxi driver said to us: "Resistance my arse. You guys are from the FAI... Me too... My taxi is my livelihood. I won't give it up but I can come along with you." We chose to climb out of the taxi instead. Then we spotted another vehicle and the driver panicked; not only did he hand over his car, but he had abandoned his wallet as well. And it was well-filled ... So much so that we had no need to hold up the cinemas. As we leafed through the guy's identity papers, we realised the reason why he panicked. He was a big fish, a colonel. That's by the by but there were plenty of such turn-ups. There is a comic side to life underground. I'll give you another example before we move on more serious matters. One day we were strolling through Barcelona. Wences and Quico Sabaté were in front with Simón and I a few metres behind them, sort of providing cover. All of a sudden we saw Wences and Quico stop in front of a cinema and gaze at the photos, before Quico turned, drew his shooter and asked some guy for his papers. The guy complied. Quico glanced at the papers and handed them back. "Scarper!" he said to him. At which Wences flew off the handle. "Are you entirely off your rocker? Why did you do that?" To which Quico replied: "Off my rocker? Me? Definitely not. But you must have come down with the last shower. Did you not realise that that guy's been on our tail for the last quarter of an hour? The best thing to do in such cases is to turn and face them and check if the guy is police." "And was he?" Wences asked. "No, but he could have been", Quico answered as he holstered his gun.

“But everyone is looking at you”, Wences went on. “Don’t fret. As far as they’re concerned, we’re police.” And we dallied behind, not forcing the pace. Now that was Sabaté in a nutshell.

Q. And what about the Quintela operation proper?

A. Wences and Simón were put in charge of getting a car. They followed the usual procedure but the driver started shouting. He was waiting for his wife who was visiting the doctor. They had to threaten him before he would move the car, still ranting. For their part, Quico Sabaté and two members of his group, his brother José and José López Penedo,⁷ had commandeered a small lorry and were waiting at the agreed location. It was a covered lorry, the driver of which had to be taken away and held for the entire duration of the operation. Wences drew Quico’s attention to the dangerous behaviour of the car owner. Quico then had him put aboard the lorry, pointed his gun at him and told him: “The slightest sound out of you and I’ll make a colander out of you.” Whereupon the guy retreated into a profound silence. We waited for Quintela’s car to show up. Wences, López Penedo and Simón were in the car and Quico and José Sabaté standing in front of the raised bonnet of the lorry, pretending to tinker with the engine. Posted slightly further off, my task was to signal Quintela’s arrival by raising my cap. There could be no mistake as the vehicles from police HQ were readily identifiable. At 1.55 p.m. on 2 March 1949 I sighted the car and raised my cap. At this, Quico drew a Thompson machine-gun from the engine of the lorry, positioned himself in the middle of the road and fired a full clip. The driver was killed outright, the car ground to a halt and two occupants climbed out. At which point Wences and López Penedo stepped in and finished them off. The operation had gone off perfectly and we withdrew safely. But imagine our surprise when, a few hours later, the paper-sellers on the Ramblas called out the headlines of a special edition: “Scenes of terrorism in Barcelona. National Youth Front boss murdered by bandits!” We were dumbfounded. He was a big fish but he wasn’t the big fish we had been after. Apparently Quintela had caught on very quickly that there was an

⁷ José Sabaté Llopart (1910-1949) was killed seven months after this in a shoot-out with the police and José López Penedo (1915-1950) was arrested in November 1949, sentenced to death and shot shortly after that.

operation targeting him and he quit Barcelona and returned to his native Galicia. He died in his bed, long, long after that.

Q. What happened in the wake of the Quintela operation?

A. It was very tricky for us. The police were on edge. The week following the operation proved to be one of tragedy. Wences and I had lodgings on the Calle San Andrés with some comrades whom we were paying handsomely. Once they found out that there were guns on their premises, they panicked and made it plain to us that we needed to move on, pronto. With no alternative safe house, we had no option but to leave Barcelona. After mulling over a return to Zaragoza, we eventually decided to leave for Madrid as soon as we could.

FROM ESCAPE TO BORDER CROSSING

Q. Why Madrid?

A. The idea was to use the stay in Madrid to investigate the famous plan to assassinate Franco on the ground. Here we were counting on the fact that one of us – Rodolfo – was a native of Madrid, familiar with the city and had a few contacts there.

Q. So the six of you set off, then?

A. No, seven of us, because in the meantime and despite our reservations, César Saborit had decided to join us.

Q. Reservations? How come?

A. Because it seemed to us that Saborit would be of more use to us serving on the regional committee. Cesar was very effective when it came to coordination work. But, well, he was so keen on joining us that it was hard to turn him down. Especially since, in the wake of the Quintela operation, he was being so actively pursued by the police that he had had to quit his home and his job. Before joining us, César had secured 8,000 pesetas from the regional committee, plus a few detonators and some explosives.

Q. What was the date of your departure from Barcelona?

A. Early April 1949. The seven of us, then, plus our luggage containing several kilos of plastic explosives, grenades, four submachine-guns and a load of ammunition clips and explosive materials. The trip was a gamble, but it was made by train and without mishap.

Q. And once in Madrid?

A. In Madrid luck very nearly smiled on us. Through a pal of Rodolfo's we actually made contact with an officer who claimed to serve in Franco's personal guard. In return for 200,000 pesetas, half of it in sterling, this guy said he was ready to provide us with the route that Franco took every Sunday morning on his way to Mass. And some army uniforms.

Q. Too good to be true, right?

A. Indeed, but our obsession with killing Franco was such as to dispel any misgivings. The only (it seemed to us) insurmountable problem was coming up with the sterling currency. In the end our contact agreed to accept that half of the payment in Spanish currency and half in foreign currency. The thing was arranged for the week ahead, time for us to choose our target and plan the operation. The target was the Calle Embajadores branch of the Banco Popular Español. We brought it off successfully in that it raked in more than enough to pay our contact. The problem was that, for reasons we have never been able to fathom, he suddenly dropped out of circulation. We are forced to believe that our determination to proceed with the plan had eventually scared him. In short, there we were in Madrid with two bags stuffed with cash, but nothing to use it on ... Since things were beginning to smell a bit fishy, we made up our minds to leave the city.

Q. And go... where?

A. From Madrid we moved on to Málaga, then to Seville and back to Barcelona. In fact we were roaming from city to city. It was at that point that we decided to cross over into France, and let me just say that I was the keenest on that option. The life of the eternal clandestine did not suit me.

Q. How did the crossing go?

A. First we got hold of Falangist uniforms from the National Youth Front.

Q. Got hold of them? How?

A. Quite simply by buying them in a shop.

Q. And had you a guide along on the crossing?

A. Of course. The crossing was painstakingly prepared by Francisco Denis aka Catalá,⁸ a superb guide. For instance, we knew in precise detail what sort of food we had to bring along and in what order we would have to eat it; fresh produce first, dried ham next and, last of all, almonds. We set off from Manresa on foot on 1 May 1949, arriving in Osséja (Eastern Pyrenees) on 9 May. During the trip, more doubts arose about El Chaval. Piddling little things, really, but, taken all together, they were symptomatic of a bad outlook. And the fact is that his refusal to do any portering – we were loaded down like mules (the guide even more so) with fifty kilos per person – and the discovery that he had scoffed down all the ham we had on his own, well, that was the final straw. So much so that Wences, who had always shielded him, wanted his guts for garters. I was the one who got between them. My intuition let me down, as subsequent events were to show.

Q. You did the walking by night?

A. Yes, and then only keeping to tracks or across country so as to avoid patrols. We spent the days sleeping. On one occasion we stopped at a safe house where we had the guest room and a roof over our heads. It was a place known to the guides, smugglers and guerrillas. But the real problem was the snow ...

⁸ Francisco Denis Diez (1899-1949) aka Catalá, was one of the most effective people-smugglers of his day. His final border-crossing, from France to Spain, was made in May 1949, a short time after the crossing spoken of here. Picked up by the police, he was taken to the barracks in Sallent where he used a cyanide capsule to take his own life.

Q. *Snow? In May?*

A. Yes, one night the snow was non-stop. Trudging through snow is ghastly, ten times as tiring. There came a point where I lost hope and refused to go on. I had the impression that we were going in circles. And we actually were going in circles because Catalá had lost his bearings. This was proven by the fact that he, normally so close-lipped, could not stop cursing. He was forever looking at his compass, but to no avail; he could not find North. And it was bitterly cold. Really demoralising. In the end, though, we found the right direction and reached the barbed wire ...

Q. *What barbed wire?*

A. The barbed wire marking the border. At the time, in order to thwart crossings by guerrilla groups, the border had been placed under army surveillance and was bristling with barbed wire. So there we were faced by this barbed wire, having to cut our way through. We were geared up for that. And were in the middle of doing just that when we saw a lorry approaching... At which Wences said to me: "Have the shooters at the ready". Do you know what happened to me then? You'll never guess. I burst out laughing. Uncontrollably laughing. Just couldn't stop myself. Nerves. At which point Catalá told us: "We have to cross over. Step to it!" There was no hesitation. Over we went. I was covered in blood, my face scratched by the barbed wire. Another five hundred metres further on and our guide announced that we were in France. We trudged on for another bit before stopping to congratulate ourselves. Catalá got a fire going and I had the lousy idea of taking my boots off. I hadn't a single toe-nail left. The guide bawled me out, Rightly so. With my boots off, there was no way I could walk another step. They had to support me as far as the safe-house in Osséja. It was there that I made the acquaintance of Ramón Vila Capdevila aka *Caraquemada*, who lived in a sort of farmhouse that served as a base for the libertarian resistance. It was *Caraquemada*'s practice to operate alone. He would cross the Pyrenees whenever the notion took him and attack the pylons. Once he had felled the pylons, entire areas around Gerona or Berga would be left without electricity. Whereupon he would make his way back to Osséja, to his farm, to work on the land. He was a real oddball, a real lone wolf.

Q. *And what were your plans at that point?*

A. Using the money we brought back from Spain – part of it (10,000 pesetas) having been handed over to the Barcelona comrades for prisoners' aid (a further part was to have been handed over to the Toulouse comrades for the same purpose), we came up with the idea of setting up a shoe factory in Paris. Wences had looked into this plan with a pal, a cobbler by trade, who was living in Paris. The purpose being to provide us with a livelihood and buy some time so that we would not be dependent on anybody else. During our stay in Osséja, we had looked more closely at this scheme and, during one of our discussions, El Chaval had exclaimed: "We've come to France to work, then?" In vain we tried to explain to him that we weren't gangsters but freedom-fighters, but he just didn't get it. As far as he was concerned, resistance was a way of dodging work. Taken together with the wretched attitude he had displayed during our long trek from Manresa to Osséja, that remark destroyed whatever trust we still retained in him. Shortly after that, the group was to make the decision to cut him loose.

TREACHERY RAISES ITS UGLY HEAD

Q. *What were the circumstances?*

A. It happened in Paris. Actually the circumstances that triggered the parting of the ways were rather grotesque. On security grounds, the members of the group had given an undertaking not to enter into any romantic entanglements that might have implications for the future. To put that another way, we were free to have any sexual liaisons, but nothing lasting or exclusive. I imagine that had anyone other than El Chaval breached this rule, the group would most likely have overlooked it, but since on this occasion he was the one, it was a ready-made opportunity to eject him from the group. A decision that was to have very grave consequences for us ...

Q. *How come?*

A. El Chaval had shacked up with a girl from the Libertarian Youth, a very good-looking girl at that, whose parents were also libertarian militants. Her father –his name was Ferrer – was even Paris secretary of International Antifascist Solidarity (SIA). The Ferrer family had taken a notion to

emigrate to Argentina. In those days a Nansen passport was not acceptable to Argentina. A Spanish passport was required and so application had to be made to the Francoist consulate. The Ferrer family saw no problem in so doing. Egged on by the daughter, El Chaval, not the sharpest knife in the drawer, decided to follow suit without telling anyone. Off he went to Paris under his phoney identity, or rather under a borrowed identity – Francisco Peralta Verges. From what I know, the services at the consulate spotted immediately that they were dealing with a ‘wolf in sheep’s clothing’ and they referred his file to the embassy’s legal advisor, who quickly realised that the identity being used was a false one. The lead was followed up and it all came out. At least, that’s the conclusion I came to later on. El Chaval took the bait. True, in the mean-time the embassy had forwarded his file to Inspector Polo at Barcelona police headquarters, who travelled up to Paris to meet him. Actually, Polo, who knew what he was at, turned him down. He then suggested that he could sort out his situation in return for his cooperation.

Q. By which point your contact with him had ceased?

A. We had had no further contact as a group, meaning that he was not au fait with our plans, but we had not severed all contact with him. At that point, we looked upon him as an adventurer, an undesirable, but not as a traitor.

Q. But once he had been dropped from the group, that danger was boxed off, right?

A. No, because he had knowledge of a lot of things about the group which, by the way, he attempted to rejoin.

Q. How?

A. From some source unknown to me he found out in December 1949 that the group had left Paris. Whereupon he did all in his power to regain contact. He thought the ‘Los Maños’ group had already set off back to Spain. What he did not know was that it was in Toulouse, just waiting for a chance to cross the border. Briefed on his intentions, the group declined to have him back as a member. After which he offered his services to Facerías’s group: Facerías turned him down as well.

Q. And was Quintela pulling the strings?

A. Of course ... What mattered to Quintela was getting him back inside the group so that he would have an informer. But, despite that set-back, Quintela had at least discovered that the ‘Los Maños’ group had set off back to Spain. So the tracking could begin.

Q. Just one question: why had the group decided to resume its activities? What had altered between May and December 1949?

A. That’s a hard one to answer, especially as we cannot tackle it from the point of view of rationality alone. Adopting that standard, the decision was a nonsense because, in spite of Wences’s best efforts – and of the ‘Los Maños’ group generally – to improve clandestine operations and have the defence commission coordinate actions, it cannot be argued that, six months after our arrival on French soil, we had made any progress. Quite the opposite. On the one hand, among the responsible bodies of the CNT-FAI there had been a discernible rise in a predisposition to idleness, and, on the other, the news reaching us from inside Spain were daily proof that the repression there was increasingly effective. So, in rational terms, the decision to set off for Spain again was suicidal. To understand it we must, I reckon, look to the psychological make-up of the men making up these action groups, our own, but Sabaté’s as well, or Facerías’s group. The deep commitment they had made rendered them incapable of adapting to the reality of a situation which, examined with a cool head, should plainly have put them off from sticking to their course. As far as they were concerned, switching to something else was just not a possibility. They could not conceive of living their lives any other way. To be sure, there was a lot of the Don Quijote in all of this: even though the battle be hopeless, it had to be fought to a finish. That, I believe, is a peculiarity of the libertarian resistance of that time. But, looking beyond the Don Quijote, there was also in these men of action a yearning to live that way, looking danger in the face every day. As far as they were concerned, the worst thing was admitting that that course of action was going nowhere. In that sense, it might be argued that they were intrinsically idealists.

Q. And in your own case, you did not go back. How come?

A. Probably because I no longer believed in it, but more likely because I did not share that psychological make-up. As I have said, out of the group of us, when we escaped from Spain, I was the one keenest to break with that endlessly clandestine lifestyle. In France, I turned to other matters, notably becoming the administrator with the weekly *Solidaridad Obrera* in Paris.

Q. You were still a member of the group, albeit ... dormant ... shall we say?

A. That's it. I looked after certain missions abroad and certain contacts. I had the group's trust but I was no longer an active member.

Q. So when was the decision to head back made?

A. Late November 1949, when the group passed through Toulouse. It was made up of Wences, Plácido, Simón and a newcomer, Salvador Salgado. The border crossing was made on 22 December. The destination, Barcelona.

Q. Back, if you will, to El Chaval. You say he tried to rejoin the group then tried to gain admission into Facerías's group. So he had the contacts needed to do that?

A. Of course he had contacts. Let me remind you that the only reproach that could be made of him, then, was that he was an adventurer, an unreliable, immoral sort. As far as we were concerned, we had done the needful to kick him to the kerb. For instance, we had warned other groups, such as Facerías's, and had in fact blocked his joining the FAI. But, well, the movement operated in such a way that, whilst it minimised the dangers, it could not eliminate them entirely. And so some irresponsible comrades, whom I would prefer not to name, had called upon his services for certain illegalist activities and it was in that context that El Chaval, who was already working for the Spanish police, was arrested in Paris in late December 1949, after he and two accomplices had held up a tobacconist's on the outskirts of Paris.

Q. When he was arrested, were you still unaware that he was working for the cops?

A. No, it was while he was under arrest that we found that out ...

Q How?

A. The concierge of our Paris premises in the Rue Sainte-Marthe, who was a comrade, found an envelope containing letters from the Spanish police and a permit in the name of Mercedes Ferrer, El Chaval's partner. And that is how we found out about the thing.

Q. As simple as that?

A. Oh, yes ... Meanwhile El Chaval, who had been given a four year prison term, took it into his head that if he supplied evidence of his treachery, his sentence might be reduced. So he got his partner to retrieve the envelope in question.

THE END OF THE 'LOS MAÑOS' GROUP

Q. By the time you came upon the proof of his treachery, the 'Los Maños' group had already been wiped out, right?

A Yes ... I can still remember it: afternoon of 9 January 1950, I was on the Rue Sainte-Marthe premises when the phone rang in the regional committee's room. The call was for me. Wences's sister was at the other end. She asked me: "Is Wences in Paris?" I replied: "Yes, Victoria, he's in Paris." I couldn't tell her that he had gone back to Spain. "Tell me the truth, Mariano, because the papers in Zaragoza are saying that he was killed this morning in Barcelona..." Well, I just broke down. I hung up, collapsed and the comrades had to tend to me. Later I found out how Wences had died. He was leaving his safe house in the Sarriá quarter just as he did every day to meet up with the group. At which point he heard shouted instructions. At the same time, a young girl crossed his path and in one final noble gesture, Wences shooed her away. He knew that he was about to perish in the showdown and wanted to spare her the same fate. He drew his Mauser and started shooting at the police. Fatally wounded, he nevertheless found the strength to take his fountain pen from his pocket, with the cyanide capsule concealed in its top. Wences knew that that was how he was going to meet his end. He had told me as much

several times, but, well, such things are often said. You thought about death, but not as something tragic. I see Wences's death as an intimate happening of extreme significance. The ties that bound me to him were so strong ... I loved him ... Loved him so much ... His death marked a turning point in my own life. Today, though I hesitate to say it, I'm convinced that it enabled me to turn the page once and for all and, having done so, to move on.

Q. Shortly after that, you had a letter from Simón and Plácido dealing with the circumstances surrounding Wences's death, their arrest the same day, and also certain suspicions ...

A. Indeed. When Simón and Plácido met up in prison, they used clandestine channels to get a letter to me, entrusting me with a delicate assignment: uncovering who had betrayed them. As far as they were concerned, the traitor had to be one of the two group members who had evaded arrest – Rodolfo and Salvador – but their suspicions were very obviously concentrated upon Rodolfo.

Q. Why Rodolfo?

A. Their suspicions were not based on anything specific. The only thing Simón and Plácido had against him was that he had been negligent by turning up late for several rendezvous and that Wences himself had asked Salvador to keep an eye on him.

Q. What was your reaction to such suspicions?

A. I was dumbfounded ... A short while later I was contacted by Salvador and Rodolfo who wrote me from Burgos to ask me to organise their cross-over into France. So I travelled down to Hendaye to meet a comrade recommended by the defence commission and he put me in touch with some Basque smuggler networks. The cross-over could not have gone any smoother. I picked them up from Hendaye and we made for Toulouse where they were urged to lie low for a time in Italy.

Q. And what of the suspicions hanging over Rodolfo?

A. I ought to say, first, that without any knowledge of the terms of that letter from Simón and Plácido, Salvador shared those suspicions too. The

problem was that he could not put his finger on them, and with good reason. It was at that point, which is to say, very quickly thereafter, that I found out, following the discovery of the celebrated envelope, that El Chaval was working for Quintela. Once I had, I warned Rodolfo and Salvador. I remember that Rodolfo, a cold fellow not given to sentimentality, sent me a very emotive letter asking that I clear him, as quickly as I could, of any suspicions entertained by Simón and Plácido, knowing, as we all did, the fate that awaited them. As a matter of urgency, he did not want them going to their deaths suspecting him of having betrayed them.

Q. And did they find out?

A. Yes, the letter I wrote them was passed on in good time by their lawyer. Prior to their being executed in the early hours of 24 December 1950. [KSL note: Victoriano Muñoz Treserras (or Trasserra) was born in Barcelona in 1923. He was executed alongside Simón Gracia Fleringán and Plácido Ortiz Gratal on 24 December 1950. He is described simply as a "CNT driver and a guerrilla with the Los Maños group". Possibly he joined the group late on, which would explain why so little, other than his union affiliation, is known about him and why he is often overlooked.]

Q. Which leaves one question outstanding: what became of El Chaval?

A. He got out of prison in 1954. A month later, he was again featured in the French press. He had been, it seemed, beaten up near Saverdun (Ariège department). The most likely thing is that he managed to escape an assassination bid. And then Antonio Pardillo Manzanero aka *El Chaval* dropped out of circulation. All the evidence suggests that he returned to Spain.⁹

⁹ At the time of this interview, Mariano Aguayo Morán had no way of knowing that he himself had been the cause of El Chaval's resurfacing. Within days of the interview, Mariano had recounted the story of the 'Los Maños' group to Eliseo Bayo, a reporter with Barcelona's *Gaceta Ilustrada* which had added it to a series on the libertarian resistance. The immediate outcome of its publication was to expose the fact that El Chaval was working as a security guard at the offices of the daily *La Vanguardia*, where the *Gaceta Ilustrada* was also printed. Now exposed he was forced to quit his job. What we do know is that a few weeks later Aniceto Pardillo Manzanera died ... of heart failure. "Of fear", some say.

Q. And can we end this conversation with some sort of an assessment?

A. If we evaluate those years, we are forced to concede that the negative clearly outweighs the positive. For one thing, in that adventure, we lost a number of militants and most likely our best ones at that. Then again, there is a slippery slope that is hard to counteract. I mean expropriations as a source of easy money. Out of necessity, we lived on the margins and we lived like marginals, which cut us off from our roots. Finally, we had no support in the Spain that Francoism had so intensely brain-washed that even those who should have been well disposed towards us regarded us as common gangsters. And in many a case, such as *El Chaval's*, that is all that we were. There is no bones about that; indeed we are duty bound to say it, not that it diminishes the respect we should have for fates such as those met by Wences, Simón, Plácido and many another besides.

Interview with Mariano Aguayo Morán, conducted in Gagny, 29 September 1976, by Freddy Gómez

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Mariano Aguayo Morán, interviewed on 18 February 1992 by Antonio Téllez about the formation of the Los Maños group

Antonio Téllez: *The fight against Franco is even today little known in many respects. Most of the urban guerrilla groups that fought against Francoism came back from exile. Your group was made up of young people who were still living in Spain. I reckon it might be of interest to discover how and why you plumped for armed struggle against the regime.*

A. Yes, I remember it all as if it were yesterday. Beyond the perimeters of the clandestine organisations – be they anarcho-sindicalist or socialist – which were forever being broken up by the police, there was a ferment among the populace, especially in towns with a revolutionary tradition such as Zaragoza which, at the time of the army revolt against the Republic, had upwards of 25,000 anarcho-sindicalist militants and nearly 7,000 socialists belonging to the Workers' General Union (UGT) and indeed, the communists had managed to recruit a core of almost 1,500 members. On 19 July 1936, Zaragoza fell to the Nationalists, becoming one of the cities where the Falangist repression was enforced most savagely. There was scarcely a working class family that escaped persecution and was not left with some loved one to mourn.

Q. Later you launched the Los Maños group. How did you start off your anti-regime activity?

A. At the end of the civil war, some youngsters from El Arrabal, a district of Zaragoza located on the left bank of the Ebro, began acting off their own bat, unrelated to any antifascist organisation. The dream and yearning to help bring down the Franco regime emerged from my fitful encounters with a young man who sold goods door-to-door; he was a socialist by the name of Manolo who, come the Second World War, set out in search of a news bulletin released by the British and helped circulate it. In next to no time there were several of us youngsters taking the bulletin and hanging out with the groups that customarily loitered near the British vice-consulate. Through comment relating to developments in the war we would criticise the dictator Francisco Franco, egg one another on and devise plans for the day of liberation, everybody – even the

Francoists themselves – being convinced that victory for the Allied forces and the defeat of Nazism and fascism would bring it about.

Q. Had you any clearly defined ideology?

A. The driving forces behind what we referred to as the El Arrabal group were, at the outset, Wenceslao Jiménez Orive, Simón Gracia Fleringán – both of them sons of anarcho-syndicalists shot by the Francoists – Manuel Fernández and myself. Whilst there was a degree of identification with everything that had to do with the organisation to which their murdered fathers had belonged, it is equally the case that we were all lacking in clear cut ideas, other than the idea of fighting a regime that had plunged Spain into ignominy. Later some other youngsters, Antonio González for one, joined the El Arrabal group.

Q. How did you manage to come into contact with political or trade union organisations that had reorganised underground in the immediate aftermath of the Francoist victory?

A. Wenceslao and Simón had an acquaintance, a youngster of roughly our own age, who had shown them a clandestine news-sheet, *Renovación*, organ of the Socialist Youth and published, so it seemed, in Madrid. They greedily devoured its forbidden columns. There were some things therein that were new to them and to me and which we did not quite understand, but we were seduced nonetheless. The fact is that that underground sheet had opened up fresh horizons for us. We kept in touch and one day we were delighted to join the Socialist Youth.

Q. And what sorts of things were the Socialist Youth up to at the time?

A. In the El Arrabal district, the one with which I am most familiar, they were numerous. On every commemorative date or nearly every significant anniversary – 14 April (the establishment of the Republic), 19 July (the date of the army revolt and its defeat across half of Spain), 1st of May and so on – we would hand out subversive leaflets: we laid a huge wreath in Zaragoza's El Torrero cemetery in honour of shot antifascists; we tried, unsuccessfully, to float a balloon flying the flag of the Republic whilst simultaneously raining down antifascist leaflets calling for rebellion; we daubed slogans on the walls ... It was not long before the El Arrabal group

came to notice. Its members were all itching to encourage concerted action by all opponents of the regime, of whatever persuasion.

Q. At what point did it occur to you that the Franco regime had to be combated with weapons in hand?

A. That was in 1945. Our El Arrabal group had reached the conclusion that the time had come for a different sort of action, to do something that might have an actual impact, something that might reverberate and prompt other young people to join in the struggle. Our illusions about the defeat of Mussolini and Hitler inevitably leading on to the defeat of Franco had long since evaporated. It was at this point that I got wind of the dictator's imminent arrival in Zaragoza on his first post-war visit, for which the authorities were making secret preparations. I found out through my boss who was a *camisa vieja* (old shirt = veteran Falangist) and a member of Franco's Special Guard. In the light of this one-off occurrence, Wenceslao Jiménez, Simón Gracia, Plácido Ortiz and a few more of us put our heads together and decided to approach the Socialist organisation and ask it to furnish us with the wherewithal to mount an attempt on the life of the head of state. It was on this occasion that I bumped into Daniel G.M. [González Marín] aka Rodolfo, who later went on to become a member of the 'Los Maños' group, but who was at that point regional secretary with the Socialist Youth. It was during the preparations for that attack that the deep-seated desire that was to be a feature of our action group surfaced: the desire to be the architects of the removal of General Franco. We were all for mounting that attack openly, even should it cost us our lives. The heads of the Aragonese socialist organisation did not veto it, but they were sitting on the fence. After several fruitless discussions, we made up our minds to do without them and to take up the offer made by a young socialist from another district who, taken by the idea, had told us that he could lay hands on some grenades stashed in a village in Teruel province which had changed hands during the war, which were still out there just waiting for someone to go and collect them. The only condition he placed upon handing them over to us was that we let him in on the assassination attempt. We went there and fetched eleven Universal-type grenades back to Zaragoza. According to our reckoning, it turned out that we would need twenty, but all we had was eleven and not one more!

Q. And how many members were in the El Arrabal group at that point?

A. We had decided that six of us would mount the attack using the grenades available to us; three of us on each sidewalk, positioned across the street from one another. Once we found out the itinerary the procession would be following, we picked a place on the Calle Alonso which Franco had to pass in order to reach the Virgen del Pilar church. Each of us would have a grenade in his pocket, with the pin removed so that, no matter what might happen, all we had to do was unclench our hands and the device would go off. At an agreed signal all six were to hurl their grenades simultaneously at Franco's vehicle.

Q. And what stopped this operation from proceeding?

A. The plan had been painstakingly prepared and we all thought that we had provided against Franco's having any chance of escape. The operation was called off because of an unforeseen development. We had decided to put the grenades to the test since they had lain buried for so many years: we simply had to know if they were still in working order and at the same time get some practice in their usage. To that end we went into a field on the outskirts of Zaragoza and something freakish happened: of the three grenades tested, only the third one exploded. We had eight left but no guarantee that they would work. That uncertainty and fear of our becoming laughing-stocks and sacrificing our lives to no purpose made us pull back.

Q. And when did you burn your bridges with the Socialists?

A. Franco's visit to Zaragoza and the missed opportunity to finish off the tyrant created friction between the El Arrabal group and the Socialist organisation. Wenceslao Jiménez was the first of us to cut ties with it.

Q. And how did you establish contact with the clandestine libertarian movement?

A. Wenceslao was the one who handled contacts for the group and who set about tracking down CNT militants and who succeeded in that. How, I have no idea, but he pulled it off. His first contact was with an Aragonese militant, Ignacio Zubizarreta Aspas, aka Zubi, a veteran who must have been in his 50s and who had, during the civil war, been a militiaman with

the Ascaso Column and then a captain with Agustín Remiro Manero's Machine-Gunner Battalion, a unit specialising in operations behind the Francoist lines. He was an extraordinary man, full of enthusiasm and not at all sectarian. His main concern was to encourage concerted anti-Franco action. By then Wences was no longer a member of the Socialist Youth but the rest of the group were still members, albeit none too starry eyed about it. Zubi was all for the actions our comrade put to him but he advised him not to get involved in proselytization efforts because, according to Zubi, a group's eagerness to act counted for more than its ideology. I know that you knew Zubi well yourself in France and that you had seen him in Zaragoza at his Calle Del Caballo home in 1946.

Well, at the time, Zubi was closely connected to an underground group known as the *Agrupación de Fuerzas Armadas de la República Española*/ Armed Forces of the Spanish Republic Group (AFARE) which had been founded in Barcelona in January 1945 by former soldiers and officers from the Republic's army and which was an umbrella for people who differed in their views but who were all ready to fight in order to overthrow Franco. [See first note to other interview for more on AMRE/AFARE.] In his eagerness to do something, Wences had joined the AFARE and Zubi had endorsed his action. The remainder of the group then put it to the Socialist Youth that it should join, but to no avail. Zubi and Wences saw eye to eye on the need to do something of significance that would not be subject to a party political leadership and they reckoned that the AFARE sounded like it might fit the bill. They had considered seizing the General Military Academy. To which end they were getting ready for some preliminary reconnaissance work. In a sergeant's uniform and with the connivance of Antonio González, a member of the El Arrabal group doing his military service as an orderly for the Academy's officers, Wenceslao managed to get into the barracks and sketch a plan of the building. The ease with which he pulled off that risky operation bolstered his determination to orchestrate the attack he had in mind. But the plan was aborted after Zubizarreta happened to be arrested by the police looking for his brother in August 1946. Wenceslao was arrested in turn in the Calle Del Caballo. Hauled in front of a council of war held in Zaragoza on 20 September 1947 to deal with 28 individuals charged with AFARE membership and sentenced to thirty years behind bars along with fourteen other accused, Ignacio

Zubizarreta would die behind bars in Guadalajara in 1958. Wenceslao, though ferociously tortured and interrogated by a young, 23 year old policeman called Luis Ansón Luesma who would go on to become an inspector with the Zaragoza Politico-Social Squad, made no statement likely to compromise anybody else. After three months in El Torrero prison he was released on licence by the end of the year.

Wenceslao had not lost touch with the libertarian movement. In July 1947 he was in Madrid and there he was appointed Aragon's regional delegate to a national plenum of the Iberian Libertarian Youth Federation (FIJL) held on 15 July, alongside a FAI plenum. Our friend had delved deeper into anarchist ideas and into the internal operation of the organisation but he still had a lot to learn. His participation in that plenum triggered certain suspicions, including the suspicion that he might be a police nark, in which case there would be a score to settle with him. Luckily, things never got that far, for a Madrid comrade travelled up to Zaragoza with his photograph and the whole thing was sorted out. Not that that prevented his appointment as delegate from being slightly irregular for purely material reasons, as he himself acknowledged later in all candour, as is plain from this document, addressed to the organisation, in which he writes:

"The Aragon delegation was plainly irregular. The Aragonese groups did not so much delegate as vouch for a certain person freshly arrived from that regional who was seen as a lightweight out of his depth on organisational matters. So said the report from the plenum of regionals in which a measure of dissatisfaction was expressed regarding the below par performance of the Aragonese delegate, which is to say, my performance.

I understand the disappointment felt by the comrades from the Regional once they realised that not only had the delegate from Aragon brought no resolutions to the plenum, but that he was also blatantly a greenhorn, not to say inept when it came to organisational matters. It is not my intention in this report to mitigate the opinion expressed about me, for I concede that it is fair and accurate comment, but I should like at least to set out the reasons which, given the circumstances, led to my being chosen, plainly irregularly, as delegate. I happened to be in Madrid at the time. I knew vaguely that some national plenums of regionals were due to be held, but it was a matter that did not concern me directly since it was unrelated to my reasons for being in the city: in any case, I did not know where and when those plenums were to take

place or which delegations would be represented there; I had no knowledge even of the agenda and, finally, no knowledge of any accords reached by my regional. My arrival and presence in Madrid were anomalous because of the special circumstances, typical of clandestinity and which are occasionally sources of confusion. There was a pressing need for me to get out of Zaragoza and I left without the full suite of documents and credentials (supplied by the organisation), which made me suspect in the eyes of the Madrid comrades. During the first few days after I turned up such suspicions led to a sort of arm's length treatment that came as blow to my spirits that on occasion not only made me self-conscious but also had me acting thoughtlessly at times. Eager to dispel this climate of distrust and these serious suspicions, I was impelled to volunteer my services for any task at all, regardless of the sort of work entailed or any danger that it might involve. So much so, that when I was told one evening that I was to report at a given time the following day to a given location, I never asked the reason why – not that they would have told me – and it never occurred to me that that might have been appropriate since I had put myself forward unconditionally for anything at all. So it was that, unknowingly and without the slightest aptitude for the thing, I found myself, out of the blue, attending the plenum as the Aragon regional's delegate.

There may well be those who will not understand how the Aragonese comrades, knowing my lack of ability, could have chosen me as their delegate to represent a regional of such significance. My answer to that has to be that in point of fact they were unaware of the inadequacy of my knowledge of organisational matters, as the only references they had had regarding me were based on how I had conducted myself in Zaragoza police stations, my recent stay in El Torrero prison, my dealings with the CNT regional committee in January of this year and my dealings with a comrade (Zubizarreta) who was imprisoned in Zaragoza, who thought well of me and sang my praises, maybe exaggerating somewhat. The underground struggle in Spain, with its difficulties and characteristics, sometimes displays certain features that appear reasonable only to those directly involved. Thus, on occasion, what counts as far as the struggle is concerned is not organisational expertise but rather the personal determination of the individual to be pro-active; so much so that from time to time, through clandestine activities, a person gains a profile who actually has only a superficial understanding of ideas, especially considering his age and the extremely difficult circumstances of the education of a younger generation that has not known anything other than noxious fascist surroundings. These, perhaps, were the grounds on which the Regional Committee, having no way of sending someone to Zaragoza and capitalising, first, upon my presence in Madrid and, secondly, eager to banish all suspicion surrounding me, saw fit to give me a vote of confidence by making me the

region's representative, not thinking for a second that I might not be equal to the occasion.

The certain fact is that, without knowing how, I found myself as Aragon's delegate. When my mission was explained to me, I was torn in two directions. On the one hand, my dignity was insisting that I should not be representing a regional with such an outstanding track record and I was perfectly well aware of my inadequacy to the task, in terms both of my lack of knowledge of the organisation and of my ignorance of the resolutions adopted. Moreover, the climate surrounding my arrival in Madrid, plus fear of my refusal being construed as a slap in the face by the Zaragoza comrades both stopped me from walking out of the plenum; I had no desire to raise fears in some that treachery might be in the offing nor to insult others. Besides, I placed greater store by my dignity than by my vehement wish to meet with experienced militants from the movement such as this opportunity was offering me and learning personal lessons that might allow me to determine my actions and performance in the future. And whilst the Aragonese comrades had no luck at that gathering on account of the shortcomings of their delegate, they can rest assured that a young man emerged from it convinced that, if there is anything in this world worth sacrificing one's life for, it must be anarchist ideals, the only ones that strive for the utter emancipation of man."

It goes without saying that this report from Wences reflects the high-mindedness that was a feature of his entire ... alas, all too short ... life.

Q. And what did Wences do after that unhappy experience in Madrid?

A. Wences, who was a man of action by temperament, then made up his mind to join a guerrilla band for a time. Among its members were Manuel Galvez aka 'El Sevilla' and Gabriel Cruz Navarro. That decision took him firmly outside the law. His restless nature could not settle for the nomadic life of the rural groups which, because of the meagre resources at their disposal, tended to live on a defensive footing, concerned more with escaping the relentless persecution by which they were targeted than with mounting the offensive operations that Wences was after. Let down by this taste of guerrilla life, Wences warned the El Arrabal group that he had decided to cross into France.

Once Wences had gone, I had established contact with Gonzalo Calleja de Lucas (b. 1922), an active militant from the Aragonese regional and met up with Manuel Galvez and Gabriel Cruz Navarro. Galvez had been

arrested on 26 December 1947 and, beginning the following day, lots of comrades holding positions of responsibility were rounded up: among them was Gabriel Cruz who was the defence secretary of the Centre Regional Committee of the FAI and who went mad under torture; they also nabbed Ángel Urzáiz Simó, secretary of the FAI Peninsular Committee. Both men would be sentenced to thirty year prison terms by a council of war in July 1949. As for Gonzalo Calleja he was to be arrested in Carrascosa de Henares (Guadalajara) on 4 January 1948.

Q. What did Wences get up to during his stay in France?

A. His purpose in leaving the country was to make careful preparations for an operation he wanted to mount inside Spain with his friends from El Arrabal, but, since nothing can be achieved overnight, he began work straight away, first in Lyon as a machine fitter in a type-writer factory and later at the same line but in Paris. But his mind was entirely on the fight against the Franco regime as is evident from his letters, or rather, the copies which I have preserved. In November 1947 he wrote to Pedro R. in Andorra "(...) As to the matter of my returning to the fray, rest assured, comrade, that I have only one word, that I have given it and that you can depend upon it whenever you see fit and that, just as I have no intention of letting you down, so I have confidence in the fact that you will not let me down." And in another letter, "I am pleased to learn that Mariano Olaya is in Spain and this is a detail that has lifted my morale. Unless I am mistaken, you hinted in your last letter, that I should be ready to join you as quickly as possible. You know how much I would love to join you as quickly as possible, just as soon as I get my permit, as I am still on a provisional one, after which I will be off to Toulouse. The ball is in your court: if you think necessary, we need not wait for the good weather, because when it comes to the struggle beggars cannot be choosers. I await your specific response (...)"

In another letter Wences wrote: "(...) Yes, friend, I have no idea what fate holds in store for me but if it affords me the privilege of living a few more years, I have no great yearning to see London or New York for I hold that all the fine living of those cities is beyond the purse of a working man; furthermore, in order to tour the world one must first have lost all feeling for humanity; in short, one would have to be a low-life in every sense of the term; I did not fall that low and did not roll in the mud; I have not had – nor do I wish any – any dealings with the dung-heap of vice, depravity and forgetfulness. Besides, if my death is to be a violent one, rather than

perish of depravity, I would rather it be in defending a just and noble cause, for that would bring me the satisfaction of knowing that my sacrifice will be a contribution towards the well-being of those who are to come after me, not a sacrifice to the ambitions of the few (...)"

Q. Fine. We know that Wences was in France. But what became of the rest of the members of the El Arrabal group who had remained in Zaragoza?

A. In August 1946 there were two big swoops in Zaragoza: one against the socialists, with thirty five arrests made and the other against the libertarians, with twenty seven arrests. Upwards of sixty young people wound up in prison, I being one. I had quit the Socialist Youth a while earlier and the police knew that I was a member of the CNT. In one of his letters, Wences refers to Mariano Olaya. Together with another Aragonese militant – Enrique García Estella, one-time militant from the 25th Division who had gone into exile in Algeria – he had come back to Spain to try to reunify the organisation which had split: they failed utterly in that task and both had been rounded up with the twenty seven. During the Christmas holidays in 1947, they had stayed at my place, despite my mother's being, naturally, frightened. In prison I bumped into Daniel G. M, aka Rodolfo, former secretary of the Executive Committee of the Socialist Youth in Zaragoza and soon to become a member of our action group. I was freed after three months and Rodolfo some months after that. Once on the outside, I had re-established contact with José Iglesias Paz aka 'El Gallego' who had turned up in Barcelona in July 1948 as delegate from the exile organisation's legal aid section to provide legal assistance to prisoners in Barcelona, Zaragoza and Madrid. He had come out to Zaragoza and handed me a significant sum of money earmarked for prisoners and their families.

In Paris, Wences had made the acquaintance of José Lluís Facerías aka 'Face' who, together with his action group, had been giving the Catalan police the run-around for several years. The meeting was crucial and Wences promptly joined the group and crossed the border with it on 26 November 1948. The group arrived in Barcelona just as Rodolfo was set free. Wenceslao had not given up on the idea of forming an action group with his El Arrabal friends. Despite the advice of Facerías, who was right,

by the way – and who told him to stay away from Zaragoza as it was very unwise to go there – he dropped in to see us.

On his return to Barcelona, Facerías being unhappy with his having made the trip to Zaragoza when he had been advised against it, left him on the bench when it came to bank robbery: it was at that point that the two fighters parted company. Wences then summoned me to Barcelona and put it to me that we launch an action group composed of the comrades from Zaragoza. I already had a record, the police were forever calling me in and had me under close watch, and that represented a real threat for comrades from France or other provinces of Spain who might drop in on me. Wenceslao's idea was nothing new and we had talked about it dozens of times, so I told him again that he could count me in.

On his release from prison, Rodolfo came to see me to get me to put him in touch with an action group. After sorting it out with Wences, I sent him Rodolfo and they were both happy with the encounter and Rodolfo agreed to join the Los Maños group which was in the process of being set up. Simón Gracia Fleringán aka 'Miguel Monllor' and Plácido Ortiz Gratal aka 'Vicente Llop' were also all for the idea and all three left Zaragoza once and for all on 11 February 1949. The following day we met up with Wences and Rodolfo in the Plaza Urquinaona. José Lluís Facerías had shown a lot of understanding with Wences and had given him two handguns, a submachine-gun and 1,800 pesetas to help him put his group together quickly.

César Saborit Carretero who had served in the Durruti Column during the war and then in Batallón de la Muerte (Death Battalion) and who was a labourer in a brickworks and the then secretary of the CNT Construction Union and a member of the regional committee in Catalonia then introduced to us a eighteen year old lad who would later betray the group – Niceto Pardillo Manzanero aka 'El Chaval' who had been associated with the group known to the comrades in exile as 'Los Maños', for they were aware of our activities but not of the make-up of the group. Later, by way of giving the group an identity we dubbed it the 'Grupo Inovación, but we were always referred to as 'Los Maños'.

To sum up, it can be stated that what triggered the formation of the 'Los Maños' group was 1) the fall-out between Wenceslao Jiménez Orive and the Facerías group, a fall-out that came almost immediately after their

arrival in Barcelona; 2) the timely release of Rodolfo which coincided with Wenceslao's arrival in Barcelona; 3) the relentless monitoring and harassment to which I was subjected in Zaragoza ever since I had been released on licence; and 4) the fact that Simón, Ortiz and I were itching to do something with Wenceslao whose innate qualities, temperament and operational intelligence inspired us with the highest hopes.

As to the activity and extermination of the group, I need say no more, as you have already recounted then in great detail in the book you published in Paris under the Ruedo Ibérico imprint in 1974 as *La guerrilla urbana: Facerías*. (See Antonio Téllez, *Facerías: Urban Guerrilla Warfare (1939-1957)*, published by Read&Noir, 2011)

From losdelasierra.info/spip.php?article115 See entry under AGUAYO MORÁN, Mariano

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Mariano Aguayo Morán (1922-1994)

A professional photographer, Aguayo started out as an anti-Franco activist before joining the Los Maños group. In France he worked on the anarchist publications *Solidaridad Obrera*, *Atalaya*, *Frente Libertario* and *Confrontación*.

Fredy Gómez

Son of a leading CNT exile, and anarchist writer and publisher in his own right.

Antonio Téllez Sola (1921-2005)

As a veteran of the 1930s FIJL, the Spanish civil war, the camps and labour battalions in France, the French Resistance, the Val d'Aran incursion in 1944 and the underground struggle against Franco, Téllez was especially well-placed to undertake his lifetime's work of reconstructing the lives of the anti-Franco libertarian guerrillas, many of them personal friends and acquaintances of his.