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The Spanish Civil War in Euzkadi and Catalonia

contrasts and convergences

●
Miguel Romero



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Foreword

Like many others, this *Notebook* was conceived and developed on the basis of lectures given several times and the International Institute of Research and Education in Amsterdam, as well as work done in the framework of academic requirements.

The history of the Spanish Civil War is a rich and complex subject which can be approached in different ways. A first, rather simplistic, reading is to see in the Spanish events a conflict between democracy and fascism. Another is to see the 1936-39 conflicts as a preview of the Second World War with the confrontation between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. A third, minority, historiographic current interprets this period as the last expression of the big revolutionary wave which swept through Europe in the inter-war period after October 1917.

As Miguel Romero demonstrates, the Spanish Civil War was these three things at once and a historian must bear in mind these three completely interwoven dimensions: defence of the Republic under threat from the Francoist military rebellion (which can be considered as the Spanish form of fascism); the international dimension of the conflict (Italian and German intervention, non-intervention by the French and British, the mobilization of the workers' movement in the International brigades); finally the confrontation within the Republican camp between the Popular Front controlled by the Stalinist forces and the labouring masses of Catalonia incarnated in the anarchist CNT and the Marxist POUM.

During the 1930s, the Spanish state represented the "weak link" in the European imperialist chain, as had tsarist Russia during the First World War. But the Russian Revolution opened a cycle of anti-capitalist struggles in Europe while the Spanish Civil War marked the end of this cycle. Could it have given new life to the class struggle and been a turning point in the European situation, putting an end to the accumulation of defeats (Germany and Hungary in 1919, Italy in 1920, and 1922-25, Britain and China in 1925-27, Poland in 1926, Germany in 1933 and Austria in 1934)? This is not a question of rewriting history to accord with our wishes, but only to point out that it does not follow a pre-determined path, that there can be different outcomes to each crisis. The choices and actions of men and women decide which possible outcome will become reality. Nobody had a recipe for the triumph of the Spanish revolution, and Miguel Romero does not pretend to give it to us after the event. He simply reminds us that the decision of the Popular Front to crush the revolution in Catalonia was neither inevitable nor necessary. Events prove that it was in fact disastrous.

This *Notebook for Study and Research* is not a new historical summary of the Spanish Civil War. There is already very extensive literature on this subject, of

which the bibliography in this NSR gives only a glimpse. Miguel Romero is certainly not a historian of events but a revolutionary activist who questions conventional history and tries to look at it from the point of view of the defeated and oppressed. Leaving aside all revolutionary rhetoric, this basic methodological starting point makes it possible for him to show that the defeat of the revolutionaries in the Republican camp paved the way for Franco's victory.

The originality of this study is the way in which it integrates the *national question* into its analysis of the civil war. In the Basque country and in Catalonia, defence of the Republic, revolutionary mobilization of the workers and the anti-fascist struggle took place in two different and specific *national contexts*. Retracing the tormented history of the autonomy statutes of Catalonia (1931) and Euzkadi (1936) from the fall of the Alfonso XIII monarchy to the victory of Franco in 1939, Miguel Romero develops a comparative analysis of the civil war in the two countries. He notes that the shared tragic conclusion to the conflicts should not hide the very different dynamic of the social and political forces in the two situations. In Catalonia the Republican camp was dominated by a left nationalist force — *Esquerra* — and became the scene of an authentic proletarian and popular revolution, incarnated by the central committee of the anti-fascist militias led by the CNT and the POUM. In Euzkadi, the opposition to the Francoist rising was from the outset totally under the domination of the dominant — bourgeois, conservative and Catholic — current of Basque nationalism. In following these two distinct paths that come together in defeat, Miguel Romero criticizes certain traditional interpretations, according to which the Catalan revolution and the defence of the Basque national identity were incompatible with the anti-fascist struggle. In Catalonia, the crushing of the revolution by the Popular Front disarmed the Republicans faced with fascist reaction. In Euzkadi, the left's underestimation of the importance of the national question made possible the affirmation of rightwing nationalism in the leadership of the Republican camp, which also had catastrophic consequences for the outcome of the war.

Pierre Rousset, Enzo Traverso

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N° 13

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Chronology

1930. January: Resignation of Primo de Rivera. End of the dictatorship.

1931. April: Republican majority in municipal elections. Abdication of Alfonso XIII and proclamation of the "Workers' republic".

December: approval of the new constitution, as well as the Catalonia autonomy statute.

1933. January-March: Hitler takes power in Germany.

1934. October: formation of centre-right government of Lerrox and Gil Robles. Mass reaction expressed in the call for a general strike by the Workers' Alliance. Workers' rising in Asturias, followed by the formation of a government with the socialists, the anarcho-syndicalists, members of the BOC and, at the last minute, the official Communists. The repression ended in a bloodbath (80,000 imprisoned, 5,000 dead and 8,000 wounded). In Madrid there was a violent general strike and in Catalonia the 6 October events, marked by a semi-insurreccional general strike led by the Workers' Alliance — without the CNT — and by the resignation of the Catalan government. Abolition of Catalan autonomy.

1935. August: Seventh Congress of the Communist International which adopted the strategy of the Popular Front.

September: Foundation of the POUM.

1936. February: victory of the left coalition known as the Popular Front in the elections.

May: Azaña is elected president, Cásares Quiroga prime minister. The only criticism comes from Joaquín Maurín.

June: general strike and victory of the Popular Front in France.

July: military rising which marks the start of the Civil War and the revolutionary process in most of the Republican zones. Birth of the PSUC.

August: Italy and Germany mobilize alongside the military in revolt. Soviet consul arrives in Barcelona.

September: constitution of the Non-Intervention Committee on the initiative of the French Popular Front government. It includes 25 European countries (including Germany and the Soviet Union). Its aim is to impose non-interference by the rest of Europe in the Spanish civil war: this passivity signifies *de facto* recognition of the legitimacy of the military revolt. Largo Caballero is named prime minister. The CNT and the POUM join the Catalan government.

October: creation of a Republican regular army, initially co-existing with the anti-fascist militias formed during the popular uprising. Approval of the autonomy statute for Euzkadi. After the fall of Toledo, Franco declares himself sole head of state.

November: arrival of the International Brigades in

Madrid.

December: the POUM is excluded from the *Generalitat* government because of the pressure of the PSUC and with the agreement of the CNT.

1937. February: fall of Málaga.

March: republican victory in Guadalajara against Italian troops.

April: bombing of Guernica by German aircraft. Guernica, a Basque town of seven thousand inhabitants was completely destroyed. Thanks to the famous painting by Picasso, it became a symbol of Francoist barbarity.

May: after the attempt by the *Generalitat* to re-establish control over the central telephone exchange of Barcelona occupied by CNT workers, there is a workers' uprising supported by the militant anarcho-syndicalist base and by the POUM. The intervention of the FAI leadership — García Oliver, Montseny and Vázquez — makes possible a return to normal after a vague promise of reconciliation. The insurrection was followed by a Stalinist-type wave of repression principally aimed at the POUM (assassinations of Nin and Landau), but which also targeted anarchist circles.

June: fall of Bilbao. Start of repression in Catalonia: the POUM is banned and its leaders arrested.

September: capitulation of the Basque army at Santoña.

October: the Vatican officially recognizes the fascist regime based in Burgos.

1938. July: Battle of Ebre, which marks the last big Republican military offensive.

September: Munich agreement, with the capitulation of the democratic European powers to German expansionism.

November: withdrawal of the International Brigades. Withdrawal from Ebre. Japan recognizes the Franco government.

1939. January: fall of Barcelona to fascist troops.

February: fall of Catalonia. The Franco government is recognized by France and Britain.

March: occupation of Madrid by Francoist troops, after the coup d'état by colonel Casado which is an expression of the sharp conflicts between the Republican right and the CNT on the one hand and the PCE-PSUC on the other. Definitive fall of the Republic.

April: the United States recognize the new fascist Spanish regime.

August: Ribbentrop-Molotov pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Collapse and death in exile — at home and abroad — of the Republican forces who suffer harshly from the effects of the defeat.

Introduction

For Enrique Rodriguez, friend and comrade, in memory of all the members of the POUM who, like him, fought with dignity for the socialist revolution during the Spanish civil war.

The revolutionary left does not take much interest in historical debates. This is perhaps due to the attraction of today's great events and to the fact that analogical reasoning sheds little light on them.

Whilst sharing this point of view, I believe history remains an important field for ideological struggle — modern bourgeois ideologies are founded on colossal historical manipulation, particularly where popular revolutionary movements are concerned — and for political education, provided we ask of it only what it can legitimately deliver: an understanding of the past.

The Spanish Civil War holds an important position in the history of the European workers' movement. It is one of the events of the interwar period whose outcome determined the course of the international situation. It was a testing-ground for ideas, for political and military strategies, for cultures — in short for the fundamental issues of the epoch. We have an enormous bibliography at our disposal on this theme, comprising more than 16,000 books, amongst which there are general studies of the highest quality. I am thinking particularly of *The Revolution and the War in Spain* by P. Broué and E. Témime, *The Spanish Revolution* by R. Bolloten and *Recuérdalo tu y recuérdalo a otros* by R. Fraser, three works which can be considered as complementary. This *Notebook* is based on these as well as on other works. It aims, while respecting the historical truth, at a political activist's understanding of a limited portion of the civil war; the question of power in republican Catalonia and Euzkadi.

The text must inevitably assume some knowledge of the general facts of the civil war and this may give rise to some problems of understanding for readers unfamiliar with the material. This introduction cannot and does not pretend to resolve these problems. I will limit myself to a few elements as a reminder to these already familiar with the subject, which may be of help to those who are not, particularly if it moves them to read the books I have just mentioned.

Spain in the 1930s

At the start of the 1930s, Spain was a backward capitalist country, still essentially agrarian, but already marked by not insignificant industrial development — "proto-industrial" as some would have it. Its inhabitants numbered 23.5 million. The active population was 8.5 million — the majority in the primary sector (agriculture 45.51%, industry 26.51%,

services 27.98%). Despite growing urbanization since the beginning of the century, only about three million people lived in towns of more than 100,000 inhabitants. Industry was concentrated in the periphery: Barcelona, Biscay, and Asturias, followed by Madrid, the capital. The most numerous industrial working class sectors were building (400,000 workers), the metal industry (around 340,000), textiles (300,000, of whom about half were women), and mining (176,000). Excepting the Basque metal industry, large-scale industry hardly existed.

Finance capital controlled the country's economy: six major groups dominated industry and services. The agricultural sector was typically oligarchic: ten thousand families owned half the land.

The urban and rural petty bourgeoisie represented around half the active population and played an important social and political role in Spanish society.

Finally, foreign capital had an important presence in certain key sectors (American in telephones, British in the Basque metal industry and the Andalusian copper mines, Belgian in the railways, and so on).

The bourgeoisie was as weak economically as politically. This was most evident in the crisis of the Spanish nation-state. In Catalonia there was a majority national consciousness and very influential nationalist organizations. The traditional party of the Catalanist bourgeoisie, the *Lliga*, was losing its base to a new organization founded just before the Republic was proclaimed in 1931: *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (The Catalan Republican Left or ERC).

In Euzkadi, the nationalist movement was weaker, but already represented a social and political force which was to develop rapidly under the Republic. Its main organization was the Basque National Party (PNV), founded at the turn of the century by Sabino Arana, with an ideology permeated with racism and reactionary Catholicism. After a long period of crisis, the party had been on the rise since 1930, marked by a political evolution in which its traditional roots coexisted with republicanism.

The extreme backwardness of Galicia, another oppressed nationality, held back the development of a nationalist movement, which failed to constitute a mass movement during this period.

The political weakness of the Spanish bourgeoisie was also reflected, characteristically, in the enormous power of the church and of the army. The church's members numbered 130,000, in a country where there were only 35,000 university students (and an illiteracy rate of 45%). As well as its active membership, the church also disposed of an economic empire comprising buildings, banks, mines, transport enterprises, and so on.

As for the army, its service record consisted of the

typically Spanish military coup known as the *pronunciamento*, bloody interventions against popular movements and a succession of disastrous colonial adventures. Its bloated apparatus contained 195 generals and 17,000 chiefs and officers for 109,000 soldiers. The vast majority of the officers were openly reactionary and anti-republican and sought a political rôle that corresponded to their belief that the army incarnated the interests of the "fatherland".

The workers' movement

Since 1923, Spain lived under the military dictatorship of general Primo de Rivera, who described himself formally as a "military director" nominated by king Alfonso XIII. By the end of 1929 it was obvious that the dictatorship had failed to resolve the crisis of the monarchy and modernize the economy and political regime to meet the needs of the industrial and financial bourgeoisie. This failure was to lead to a mortally wounded monarchy and a politically disorganized, though enriched bourgeoisie.

When the dictatorship fell the workers movement was, to used Maurín's phrase, a sleeping giant.

At that time Socialism and Anarcho-syndicalism were the two fundamental currents of the workers' movement. They had experienced the dictatorship in a very different way.

The Socialists collaborated with Primo de Rivera until the eve of his fall. They had nevertheless conserved considerable strength; in 1930 the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) had 16,878 members and the General Workers Union (UGT) — which it led — had 287,333. It underwent considerable growth under the Republic: in 1934 the PSOE claimed 100,000 members and the UGT 1.25 million.

The Anarcho-syndicalist trade union, the National Confederation of Labour, had been heavily persecuted and practically dismantled by the dictatorship. But from 1930 onwards it reorganized rapidly, regrouping the most radical wing of the workers' movement with about the same membership the UGT. In 1927 the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) was formed and rapidly took control of the CNT, leading it under the Republic in an insurrectional direction together with trade union struggle based on direct action and clearly opposed the reformist trade unionism of the Socialists.

In 1930 the PCE was just a group of 800 members in the grip of the sectarian delusions of the "third period". Until the insurrection of 1934 (see chapter I) it did not grow significantly. On the eve of the insurrection, a change in line allowed it to join the Workers' Alliance (*Alianza Obrera*), the unified leadership of the struggle, which it had always denounced as the "Holy Alliance of the counter-revolution". Its policy of resistance until the end of the insurrection conferred on it a prestige which helped it grow substantially. Even so, on the eve of the civil war which erupted on 18 July 1936, it had only 50,000 members.

A few days after the beginning of the civil war, the

very weak organization of the PCE in Catalonia achieved an important political success when it fused with socialist and nationalist groups to form the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC) under the auspices of the Communist International. The PSUC's initial membership was about 7,000.

The profoundly sectarian and bureaucratic nature of the PCE had provoked, at the dictatorship's end, a splitoff of several federations, of which the most important was certainly the Catalan-Balearic Federation led by Joaquin Maurín. This organization was behind the creation of a "mass front", the "Workers and Peasants' Bloc" (*Bloque Obrero y Campesino*), which had only 5,000 members in 1934. During the Republic's early years, the BOC followed a vacillatory course, tending to adapt to the nationalist organization *Esquerra*. But from 1933 onwards, it moved clearly to the left. It was the BOC which launched the idea of organising workers' alliances, which were the protagonists of the workers' movement's recuperation until the insurrection of October 1934.

Finally, the left opposition was organised from the end of 1930 around a small nucleus of militants. In spite of a remarkable effort of revolutionary propaganda, its growth was quite limited; in 1934 it had 400 members. At the end of 1935, against Trotsky's advice, the Communist opposition joined the BOC to form the Workers' Party of Marxist Unity (POUM). This revolutionary organization's main influence was confined to Catalonia, where it had 7,000 members when the civil war began.

These were the protagonists in the events which now unfolded.



Planificación, mercado y democracia

La experiencia de los llamados
países socialistas

Catherine Samary



I. The Antecedents

The course followed by the Basque country and Catalonia in the Spanish Civil War, initially very different both socially and politically, eventually converged in defeat: the exile of Aguirre and Companys symbolized these two trajectories. A comparative study of these two experiences can help us understand a number of fundamental problems of the war in the republican camp. I shall try to do this within the limits of this study. The criteria adopted are as follows:

a) we deal with the period from the beginning of the war until 1937. By then the war was lost in Euzkadi and the revolutionary process in Catalonia was definitively crushed;

b) we divide this period into three stages: from July to September 1936, from October 1936 to May-June 1937, and the events of May-June 1937 (with a certain flexibility determined by the differences in the national situation). These stages corresponded to what can be roughly termed the "constitutive phase" of the two governments, "the exercise of power", and "the defeat".

c) the problem of political power is at the centre of this study: who held power and how? In my view this was the fundamental issue posed by the war.

The accumulated experiences of the five years which began with the proclamation of the Republic and ended with the explosion of the civil war had a decisive influence on the general situation in Spain and notably on the course of the war in Euzkadi and Catalonia. It is useful to refer to this to give our work a general framework. I shall deal with this under four headings: the proclamation of the Republic; the statutory process; the events of October 1934; and the elections of February 1936.

The proclamation of the Republic

The great victor of the 12 April 1931 elections in Catalonia was the *Esquerra* (ERC). This might be considered surprising, since the party was a recent creation. But the ERC was a very special party. It represented a left political current within the traditional Catalan nationalist movement. This was a very broad and heterogeneous movement, which consolidated itself under the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, following the initially collaborationist attitude of the *Lliga* and notably of Cambò, whose effects were not compensated by its subsequent timid rectification. The *Esquerra* was a sort of "party-movement" corresponding to what the historian E. Ucelay terms the "populism" of its political programme. [8. The numbers in square brackets refer to the bibliography at the end of the Notebook.]

From the beginning it could call on a vast network

of social, cultural, professional and other organizations rooted in Catalan society, thanks to a system of indirect affiliation. Indirect affiliation allowed it to politically represent this heterogeneous and varied social tissue, and to establish links — vague and sometimes conflict-ridden, but also very effective at decisive movements such as the 1936 elections and above all the civil war — with the workers' movement (its Achilles heel, because it never secured a significant implantation). Finally, this populism favoured an ideological identification with its social base which could resist the gyrations of practical politics which, in the ERC's case, as with many parties of similar characteristics, were much below and often in conflict with its programmatic declarations. This is the primary explanation for its success in the 12 April elections.

This victory was followed by a "gesture" which seems very important to me: the proclamation of the Catalan Republic by Macia on 14 April. In general, militants have paid more attention this fact than have historians (Andreu Nin, for example, considered it "that most revolutionary act of 14 April"). Its effect on the immediate course of events was limited: the situation was rapidly recuperated through the creation of the *Generalitat*, a pre-autonomous regime created by agreement with the central authorities of the Republic. However this act had very important consequences for the relationship between the *Esquerra* and the Catalan people. It was, in effect, the affirmation of a hegemonic will, a concrete legitimation beyond all legal formality, a measure in perfect harmony with the foundation of a constitutional Republic which the popular majority considered it was creating in the streets (it should be added that it confirmed a political leadership superior to the legalistic *manœuvres* of the republican-socialist coalition in Madrid). I think that on the one hand this was fundamental for the ERC's conquest of the leading rôle it was to play in the Catalan republican camp until the defeat: on the other hand it also explains its crushing victory in the Catalan constituent assembly elections.¹

The experience and situation of Euzkadi were completely different. Here, as J. L. Granja points out [8], the 12 April elections reproduced the traditional division between the industrial-urban zones where the republican-socialist coalition won out, and the rural zones where Carlism and the PNV held sway. Granja adds that the majority in Euzkadi was not republican.

1. The elections for the Constituent Assembly (*Cortes Constituyentes*) took place on 28 June 1937. The socialist-republican bloc won a striking victory boosted by the majority electoral system (around 63% of parliamentary seats). The PCE presented its own candidates and won 190,605 votes (0.4%) concentrated in Andalucía (100,000) and 50,000 in Asturias.

The *Comuniòn Tradicionalista* movement, with an especially strong base in Navarra, was clearly anti-republican and, in general, anti-democratic. The situation of the PNV was more ambiguous. I am not sure what weight to attach to its description of itself as "Basque republicans carrying the cross of Christ", which according to Tuñón de Lara was advanced at election meetings in 1931. In any case in the Spain of the 1930s, the terms "republican" and "cross" seem fairly contradictory. Probably, for the PNV's base, the second was more important. The fact is that the PNV did not sign the pact of San Sebastian and did not join the republican bloc. Mistrust, if not overt hostility, marked the history of the Republic in Euzkadi. The lay character of republican ideology and the deeprooted anticlericalism of the Spanish workers' movement of the time, contradicting the part played by religion in Basque nationalist ideology, were fundamental causes of this relationship of hostility and mistrust. But the situation contributed to the sharpening of this conflict. First of all the PNV, according to Azaña, had only "relative weight in general Spanish politics" [14], much less than that of Catalan nationalism. This refers to a real problem: the marginalization of Basque nationalism on the major issues facing the country at the time. The problem is especially important if one recalls that the Basque dimension played a central role in the socialism of Prieto, the main PNV's main competitor within the Basque workers' movement, a fundamental social component of nationalism. In this framework, the incomprehension of, and hostility towards, the national question typical of Spanish republicanism and socialism expressed themselves openly in relations with the PNV.

The statutory process

These different points of departure had profound consequences for the two statutory processes.

In Catalonia the process was relatively quick and simple. *Esquerra* clearly wanted an agreement and its support for the Nuria bill was purely formal.² It immediately accepted the text proposed by the parliamentary commission. After the Sanjuro *Pronunciamiento*, the text was approved in a euphoric climate of "republican unity".

In the Basque case, in contrast, the much more tortuous route followed did not lead to a positive outcome and inflicted deep wounds which left their mark on the conflicts described above. Noteworthy are the PNV's weakness and political disorientation on the one hand, the attacks to which it was subject and the republican bloc's often serious errors, marked by Prieto's oscillations.

2. A commission designated by the *Generalitat* worked in the Hotel-Refuge of Nuria on a draft statute which was submitted to a referendum on 2 August 1931 and approved by 99% of those voting. This draft was considerably modified by the Cortes, which enacted its corrected version in September 1933.

The alliance with *Comuniòn Tradicionalista* on the problem of the statute of Estella³ can only be understood as a reaction against the repressive attitude of the republican bloc and reflects the primacy of national consciousness in the then PNV leadership. Not only was this bill destined to fail, but it was not difficult to foresee that the Carlist ally would sooner or later change sides. The debate on the new bill in the parliamentary commission, in spring 1932, was probably a decisive moment. Aguirre was not mistaken when he refers bitterly to the different course that events could have taken if the "democrats" — by which he probably means above all the socialists — had adopted a different approach in Navarra [11, p934]. In effect a united front between the republican bloc and the PNV in the whole Basque country in favour of the statute of autonomy could have met with the approval of the nationalists and legally established a situation comparably to that which existed in Catalonia. However, at that time the relations between the two forces was far from comparable to that established during later years. In fact the situation became even more serious in 1933, when the left called for abstention in the 1933 referendum. In this case Prieto's attitude, which some months before had been favourable to a rapid discussion within the *Cortes* on the statute of autonomy for the Basque Country, seems to me completely symptomatic of the approach taken by Basque socialism towards the national question, another determining factor in the defeats in Euzkadi.

This attitude was influenced from then on by the sharp political competition between nationalists and socialists, based moreover on very strong social and ideological differences. But I do not think that one can characterize Prieto's socialism as "hostile" to the Basque national question. Prieto, the most consistent and "modern" of the socialist political leaders of the 1930s, remained indifferent to the national question. In his eyes, this question concerned "another" political force and a sector of Basque society foreign to the "authentic" workers' movement. He did not deny the need to integrate the objectives of national emancipation, with the proper content, but for him this was a purely tactical issue linked to the demands imposed by governing the state, and, more secondarily,

3. In spring 1931, the mayors for autonomy movement led by José Antonio Aguirre, mayor of Guecho (Biscay), launched by the PNV and supported by the traditionalists and independent Catholics who controlled most Basque towns (except the biggest where there were left majorities), entrusted the Basque studies society to draw up a draft statute. The draft was afterwards modified in a rightward direction (particularly in the establishment of independent diplomatic relations with the Vatican which was intended to counterbalance the secular orientation of the Republic, and in depriving immigrants of the right to vote). The result was known as the Statute of Estella, as it was approved in the town in Navarra on 14 June by the representatives of 480 Basque townships — that is three-quarters of the existing municipal councils representing slightly more than three-quarters of the population.

to his electoral goals in Euzkadi. From this standpoint one can better understand the oscillations of Basque socialism in relation to the statute, which contributed to re-enforcing the traditional barrier separating the popular socialist and nationalist sectors.

After the 1933 referendum the Basque statute was blocked until the victory of the Popular Front.⁴

October 1934

The important events of October 1934 (the Asturian insurrection) interest us here only from the point of view of their influence on relations between the workers' movement and the nationalists. Here again, the experience of Catalonia and the Basque Country are very different.

There were three poles of reference in Catalonia :

a) *Alianza Obrera*, which tried without success to develop a general strike with an insurreccional dynamic (only some localities were drawn in). From this setback was born the communist current which gave birth to the POUM towards the end of 1935, a party which was to play a central role during the civil war in Catalonia;

b) the CNT, which adopted a position halfway between abstention and boycott towards the strike, in the framework of its very sharp conflict with the *Esquerra*;

c) the Catalan government, notably the ERC, which eventually determined the course of the struggle by reducing it to an ephemeral political proclamation and, in a certain sense, to a repetition as farce — following Marx — of 14 April.

Thus two characteristic elements of the Catalan situation can be distinguished: the political hegemony of the ERC, acting as an autonomous force within the republican bloc, and the hegemony of the CNT in the workers' movement, which followed its own road, at that time markedly antagonistic to the general political orientation of the left.

In Euzkadi the general strike was very important in spite of the PNV's abstention and that of the STV

(Basque Workers' Solidarity). For a long time it was thought that the STV, unlike the PNV, took very active part in the strike: this, for example, was Orzi's position [2].

J. L. Granja offers a much more nuanced interpretation of events, reducing the STV's active participation to the industrial area of Nervion. This is significant and we will return to it. The PNV's abstentionist position should be noted; it reflected more a desire (and hence a wish to assert its own "neutrality" in a conflict between left and right, all the more when the workers' movement played a dominant role in it) than a real option, as the consequences of the 1934 defeat showed.

Finally we must note that these events marked a change in the orientation of the small Basque Communist Party, which took a more open and less sectarian attitude on the national question, going as far as to declare its backing for the 1933 statute of autonomy. As Antonio Elorza notes in an article which appeared in the review *Hemen eta Orain*, No. 13, this change had no important immediate consequences, but allowed the PCE to begin playing an active role in Basque politics (a role which, during the war, went way beyond the party's organizational strength).⁵

The repression stoked up from October 1934 onwards, directed at the workers' movement as a whole but also against nationalist forces, certainly helped clarify the basic data of the national question in the Republic and to establish links of solidarity between different political currents and trade unions which found themselves together in prison.

In Catalonia, we might say, this clarification was not needed. The popular nationalist sectors were already hostile to the republican right. In any case the suspension of the statute and the imprisonment of the Catalan government finally defined the two camps. In the Basque country the clarification was necessary and one could even say that it went less far than could have been hoped for, if the hesitations of the PNV when the war broke out are anything to go by (we shall return to this in the next chapter) However this situation was to create the conditions for a rapprochement between the organizations making up the Popular Front and the PNV which took place through the February 1936 elections.

The February 1936 elections

To conclude this chapter we shall add some comments on the results of these elections which once more reflect the important differences between Catalonia and the Basque country.

The central programme of what was called the Popular Front included the re-establishment of the

5. Historian of great value, politically close to the "renovators" of the PCE. The review *Hemen eta Orain* was the CP journal in Euzkadi. The date of the article is the second half of 1930.

Catalan statute of autonomy. Here we can see the importance which the republican and left forces assigned to Catalonia. It also explains the strength of the *Front d'Esqueres* electoral coalition, clearly hegemonized by the left. The electoral victory was important, notably in Barcelona, where the front secured around 64% of the votes. But the results secured by the nationalist right, organised in the "Order Front" led by the Lliga — 36% of the vote — proves that its influence was far from negligible. This only makes its disappearance as an active force with the outbreak of civil war more striking.

In Euzkadi, the battle unfolded on three fronts, opening in a parliament polarized between three more or less equal forces. After an initial setback in February, the PNV secured 9 deputies, the right 8 (of which 7 from Navarra) and the Popular Front 7. In the provinces the PNV and the Popular Front divided the seats of Biscay and Guipuzcoa between them; in Alava the Popular Front got one seat and the right got one. The right won all the seats in Navarra. If elections are a distorted reflection of social reality, we must conclude that in the light of events the distortion in this case was minimal.

In spite of their divided presentation at the elections, and even though the Popular Front's programme studiously avoided the question of the Basque statute (in fact the statute of autonomy was included in the programme of the basque coalition, but only as an electoral expedient), the result of the elections and the dynamic of division which they initiated, made it possible to recover the statute of autonomy in a climate of collaboration between the PNV and the leadership of the Popular Front (and particularly Prieto, as we shall see). The latter proposed once again a pragmatic formula to resolve the problem: a brief statute as close as possible to Catalonia's. The war rudely interrupted the parliamentary negotiations.

In concluding this chapter we must insist on one point: the difference between the "political centre of gravity" in Euzkadi and Catalonia. This element is in my opinion more important than social and political analogies which can be made between these two nations.

In Catalonia the centralist right was very weak; the nationalist right had a certain electoral weight but was politically defeated by the ERC; the hegemonic nationalist force was a clearly republican organization, populist in the precise sense defined above; the main force in the workers' camp was the CNT and the most important Marxist force the POUM, a revolutionary and anti-Stalinist organization. These facts indicate that the political centre of gravity was clearly on the left.

In Euzkadi the anti-republican right was very strong in Navarra and carried some weight in Alava, though much weaker in the other Basque provinces. The hegemonic nationalist organization, the PNV, can be considered a "centre" party, with all the ambiguity this term conveys. The hegemonic organization in the workers' movement was Prieto socialism, which can likewise be considered as in the PSOE "centre". Its

general line identified with a project of reform within the limits of republican legality and was decidedly opposed to the revolutionary left, at that time a tiny minority in Euzkadi. In this situation the centre of gravity was much farther to the right than in Catalonia.

I think that this is the starting point for the social and political dynamics of the civil war, so different in the two cases.

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II. July-October 1936 : Rebuilding of Republican Power

"There was thus an uprising against the republican constitution of 1931, of which, it must not be forgotten, the autonomous governments were a fundamental component... for the Basques the defence of republican legality meant at one and the same time a fight to preserve democracy and to defend autonomy" [1.21-22] Tuñón's interpretation of the uprising (*alzamiento*), and the reaction it provoked, in my opinion pose serious problems for the understanding of the civil war in general and, more specifically, for the events which unfolded in Euzkadi and Catalonia.

I think that the underlying motive, the common denominator of the social, political and military forces which took part in the uprising was to prevent a socialist revolution which they saw as on the verge of victory in the Spain of the Popular Front. (Obviously their conception of this revolution, which they variously termed Marxist, anarchist, Bolshevik or communist, was not very important). In this sense, it was a counterrevolution. It overturned the existing regime everywhere it triumphed, but its true enemy was much more than just the Republic.

It is significant that the coup failed everywhere it confronted a revolutionary process, which often emerged in an uneven fashion but was always based — with some minor exceptions, like Biscay — on militias created by the workers' movement. In the days which followed 18 July, there was an erosion of the republican regime in all places where the uprising failed. It is in this framework that later events must be analysed.

Now, as Granja remarks, if the national question was not the "determinant cause" of the civil war, it was without doubt an essential element of the ideology of the military coup for some time before it came into the forefront. "Spanish nationalism", a fundamental element of the right's cultural tradition, is thrown into special relief both by the reactionary wave sweeping Europe provoked by the rise of the fascists, and by the central role of the army and the need to give an ideological discipline to the disparate forces involved in the coup. The hostility of the military towards Basque and Catalan nationalism, including their most moderate forms, manifested itself from the outset. But it should be pointed out that even on this terrain, the enemy of the "Spanish fatherland" was identified as a "communist" rather than a "separatist" or a "republican". The celebrated phrase of Calvo Sotelo, "better a red Spain than a divided Spain" says more about its author's legendary demagoguery than about any real conviction, at least as far as political actions are concerned.

At the same time, the Republic's destiny and that of the statutes of autonomy were intimately linked. When

the republican regime foundered, as in Catalonia, the autonomous institutions were weakened in parallel. Consequently both in Catalonia and in Euzkadi the reconstruction of republican power rested on the restoration or installation of autonomous regimes. It is interesting to analyse — as we shall try later on — the contradiction in relations between the central republican government and the autonomous governments both on the juridical as well as the political terrain: whereas on the juridical terrain a certain complementarity had been established between the two powers, on the political plane the central Republic government was re-enforced at the expense of formally-recognized autonomous governments.

Finally, the revolutionary movement of the first weeks of the war, which defeated the military rising, had very little to do with national demands and the defence of "republican legality". The subsequent role of the national question in the struggle against the *coup d'Etat* was very complex and, yet again, very different in Euzkadi and in Catalonia.

Euzkadi

As I have already indicted, when the war broke out the Basque statute was in the last stages of its approval in Madrid. The basis had therefore been laid for overcoming the conflicts which marked the relations between the PNV and the Republic since 1931. Here I refer to politico-institutional conflicts, because there was still much mistrust of the Popular Front government and some ideological distance from it. However, there were still no autonomous institutions and, consequently, republican institutions remained very weak in those territories subject to the statute. In Navarra they were more or less shorn of legitimacy.

These were the general conditions prevailing in the Basque country on 18 July. The uprising triumphed in the province of Navarra and Alava and failed in Biscay and Guipuzcoa. As Granja stresses, the Basque country had its own civil war. To this one can add that there was a civil war in the PNV too.

In reality, the explosion was so shattering that above and beyond the fundamental division into two camps, each province had its own political situation. Thanks to *Comunión Tradicionalista*, the uprising found its broadest and best organized base in Navarra. Here, the coup's victory was overwhelming and met only feeble resistance — nevertheless engendering brutal repression, a fact which has been ignored until very recently. In Alava, the putschists met a certain workers' resistance and the victory of Alfonso Vega was owed more to military factors than real popular support, which much weaker than in Navarra.

In the province of Guipuzcoa, after having stopped the troops of Carrasco Amilibia taking part in the coup, the Republic forces immediately had to face the military units sent by Mola from Navarra.⁶ Here the workers' militias, notably the communists and anarchists, were the main instrument of military resistance, but proved incapable of organizing a political power, even embryonic, capable of structuring itself and centralising itself at provincial level: from this point of view local juntas were insignificant. Perhaps the communists, who included militants sensitive to the national question — Astigarrabia and Larranaga, who replied to Calvo Sotelo rather oddly for this current: "A red Spain is a broken Spain" — perhaps they had political designs in this direction (although no precise documents have been found to prove it), but they were too weak to carry them out. The lack of political leadership in military strategy appeared very clearly in a book written by the anarchist militant Chiapuso who refers to the retreat in the following terms: "We acted as if we were coming back the next day" [11.28]. Even if his alternative model was the traditional anarchist scorched-earth policy, his judgement gives some idea of the level of disorganization, as do other testimonies.

The course of events was more confused in Biscay. In general historians treat the situation before the government (*Junta*) was formed in a very superficial way. It is surprising that no-one has taken into account the point of view of José Maria Arenillas, who was definitely a militant in the POUM, almost non-existent in the region, but who was very well-placed to follow events thanks to his position as secretary of the government of Biscay. In one of his articles [10] he describes a very different situation from that described in the best-known researches on the war in Euzkadi. The most important elements of his analysis are:

1) Biscay also witnessed a collapse of republican power. The governor, Echevarria Novoa, had no effective authority until the constitution of the Junta on 12 August. As for the loyalty of the military garrison, it was above all a product of the relation of forces imposed by the workers' mobilization. There was even an attempt at an uprising by sectors of the garrison and the *guardia civil*. Arenillas is not specific about the date and gives little information on these attempts. This analysis coincides with Chiapuso's account when he mentions the "flight" of the army officers and the *guardia civil* to the enemy lines [11.44].

2) From the start of the uprising workers' militias were formed for the defence of the town threatened by troops from Vitoria. In the town itself patrols for vigilance and control were created as well as popular tribunals. This movement culminated in what Arenillas calls the "committees" (*Las Comisarias*) in the plural, a

6. Army colonel in Guipuzcoa province, close to the rebels but hesitant to pass to the act. He did not have confidence in Mola who had sent general Muslera to lead the coup d'état. He was shot by the popular forces.

"sort of power" in which the governor played no active role. The committees sent delegations to the provincial villages. Arenillas calls the leading body of these institutions the "council of committees", while Fusi calls them "committees for the defence of the Republic" [5] and Garmendia speaks of a "*Junta* around the civil governor". According to Arenillas, this council was formed by representatives of the parties of the Popular Front and of the CNT; according to Fusi however the committee was composed of representatives of the Popular Front and the PNV. Garmendia seems to support this latter interpretation when he notes the appearance of a "sort of national democratic front", [7.20] a term which other historians reserve for the constitution of a Basque government, as we shall see later on.

3) Whether or not the PNV was present within this body has some importance. According to Arenillas the PNV's policy was expressed in pressure on the governor for him to wind up the committees and create a "government of defence" which came into being, effectively, on 12 August. As an example of the "political normalization" that this government represented, Arenillas cites the fact that the banks granted new powers of credit to it that they had refused to the committees.

4) Finally for Arenillas the formation of this government marks the beginning of the integration of the PNV into the apparatus of the state being reconstructed. It explains why "as if following a preconceived plan, the great majority of the bureaucrats belonged to the PNV" [10.15]. We shall return to this point.

It is hard to decide whether Arenillas' version of events corresponds to reality, or whether his viewpoint was overinfluenced by his revolutionary aspirations. But it is astonishing to note how little attention other authors have paid to the weeks which preceded the formation of the government. It was to be sure a brief period but also one of the most revolutionary points of the civil war.

To conclude this point, we could say that the political situation in the republican Basque country was very fragmented. In contrast to Catalonia, the workers' movement was very active in the streets but proved unable to impose itself as a hegemonic force and provide an institutional solution to the crisis of power. In Euzkadi the anarchists and communists were relatively weak. The POUM hardly existed and the crisis of republican rule deprived the socialists, who were the hegemonic working class force, of their basic instrument. In this context the PNV played a decisive role.

At first sight, if the situation immediately before the outbreak of war is considered, it seems absurd that the insurgents could have nurtured illusions in the possible neutrality of the PNV. Tuñón's interpretation of the war, which we have already mentioned, puts forward the idea of a clear, unequivocal and unhesitating adhesion to the republican camp by the

nationalists as the product of a natural tendency. The reality, however, is well expressed in Ajuriaguerra's very explicit words: "I was hoping for the news which would relieved us of the need to choose; that one or other of the parties had already won [6.66]". These words reveal a striking distance from the war, confirmed in other testimonies from the nationalist camp [6.260]. It seems logical to me that, sunk in such a mood, the PNV should have adopted an initial attitude determined by the relation of forces: where the uprising triumphed it adopted a rather euphemistically entitled "neutral" stance; where the uprising failed it stayed in the republican camp, maintaining a number of distinctive positions which we shall deal with shortly.

It is interesting to stress certain aspects of the PNV's position in Navarra. Here, the position made public on 23 August leaves no doubt and, according to Garmendia, it was not the result of pressure from Mola: this declaration involves an explicit rejection of the position adopted by the BBB⁷, which we shall discuss further on and whose content takes up a position tending towards "critical support" of the insurgents rather than neutrality (that, at least objectively, is the sense to be attached to the words about "passionately catholic ideology"). Such a "neutrality" was impossible elsewhere from the moment that the uprising triumphed. True, in Alava there were definite pressures on the content of the ABB's note; but there were also very distinct pressures visible in the note from Landaburu to Aguirre, all the more because the latter was pressurized by the military authorities.

It is certain that in both provinces the uprising's victory was an accomplished fact and it was not possible to organize a resistance which could change things in the short or medium term. But this in no way excuses the politically and morally unjustifiable attitude of the PNV.

7. *Bizkaia Baru Batzar*: the executive leadership of the PNV in Biscay. EBB, ABB, GBB and NBB stand for the executive committees of Euzkadi, Alava, Guipuzcoa and Navarra. Later in the same paragraph there is mention of the letter which the nationalist deputy Javier Landaburu sent to Aguirre on 3 August 1936.

8. The statement says "Faced with the events which are taking place in the Spanish state and could have direct and painful repercussions on the future of the Basque country, the Nationalist Party — mindful of its beliefs, which it solemnly reaffirms today — states that in the conflict between legality and fascism, between the Republic and the monarchy, its principles certainly push it onto the side of legality and the Republic, in accordance with the democratic and republican regime which characterized our people during the centuries of their liberty."

9. Ajuriaguerra says "The right was completely opposed to any idea of an autonomy statute for the Basque country. The Republican government on the other hand had promised it to us and we knew we would get it. At six in the morning, after a sleepless night, we took a unanimous decision. We would make a public statement of support for the Republican government. This decision was taken without enthusiasm, but in the knowledge that it was the most favourable choice. Otherwise the rank and file would not have followed us."

The situation in the provinces of Guipuzcoa and Biscay was very different. On 18 July, although the situation in Guipuzcoa was not yet clear, the nationalist deputies in the Irujo and Lasarto Cortes affirmed their loyalty to the republican cause without any nationalist nuances. But this standpoint seems to have been a bit of an exception amongst the nationalists. In the light of the PNV's subsequent attitude, it must be concluded that the BBB's declaration (normally attributed to the EBB⁸) is much more representative. Even if it reaffirms republican loyalty, it introduces a national Basque reference in the final sentence. It is relevant to clarify this official position with the statements of Ajuriaguerra, Biscay's main nationalist leader, which we mentioned below.⁹ Three aspects of these declarations must be stressed:

a) the distinction between the two camps' positions with regard to the statute of autonomy. The experience of the events following October 1934 and the negotiations with the Popular Front government on the statute of autonomy, from this viewpoint, have a determining influence;

b) the "unenthusiastic" nature, to use Ajuriaguerra's words, of the decision, taken for strictly nationalist reasons. In the later part of this study we shall see how Ajuriaguerra never dropped this standpoint, even under more dramatic circumstances;

c) the reference to the fact that the PNV's base "would have opposed" any other decision.

This last point seems very interesting to me. It seems that in Alava and Navarra the position adopted provoked no significant reaction from the base. Perhaps it pushed a few people into the arms of the insurgents. If we accept that pressure existed in Guipuzcoa and Biscay — and Ajuriaguerra is not a man to invent arguments to justify his political behaviour — this could be explained by the party's large popular base in these regions. Perhaps there were links of solidarity with the working-class sectors of the left since 1934; perhaps the impact of the Popular Fronts election campaign in 1936, which explicitly included the demand for the statute, continued to exercise some influence. All this, obviously, under conditions created by the setbacks suffered by the uprising. Characterising the PNV's early position Granja speaks of a "tactical convergence against something" as opposed to a "genuine alliance on the basis of a common programme" [1.79]. He quotes nationalist documents which confirm this interpretation. My impression is that, even without a "common programme" there was nevertheless more than a simple "tactical convergence". I am struck by the resistance to the pastoral *Non Licet* whose effect amongst nationalists must have been enormous (not forgetting that the nationalist militants, including the priests, had not yet suffered military repression).¹⁰ To this must be added the pressure exercised by the Vatican, which was considerable even if it was not yet as strong as it was to be later on. In this context, and given the fact that considerable sectors of the Basque clergy close to nationalism supported the position of

the PNV, and also the document sent by Onaindia to the Vatican [4. 97-98], I think that more than "tactical convergence" was involved, insofar as it reveals a degree of solidarity and political agreement with the other forces of the republican camp.¹¹ In any case it is clear that the situation was profoundly different before and after the establishment of the Basque government.

The political support conceded to the republicans did not, however, mean any real involvement of the PNV in the military effort. The delay in forming militias in Guipuzcoa, where the need for effective military participation was a life or death issue, at least suggest the word "passivity" was appropriate. Other examples could be taken. But, from the moment the PNV began to play an active role, it manifested a notable feeling for the state structure, for creating the conditions for its own power which were far from the "provincial party" image which numerous historians have implicitly attached to it. For example, to fix on the preservation of public order "seriously threatened by the red peril" [1.80] is not only consistent with the need to give its own base a sense of security and of political identity, but also meant a battle with the left wing of the popular movement, notably the anarchists, which turned out very useful in opening the way for a future nationalist government. The creation of its own channels for buying arms, like its direct diplomatic relations with the Vatican, went in the same sense.

It was to be expected that the intensification of the war would exercise pressure within the PNV for the creation of a government, above all if one takes into consideration the fact that the process of applying the statute of autonomy was completely paralysed. Orzi refers to pressures in this direction from the militia from the beginning of September, and even mentions a proposal from Irujo to form a government based on the *Juntas* — a proposal which does not seem very reasonable, given the completely minority role played by the nationalists in these institutions [2.180].

In any case the formation of the Largo Caballero government radically changed the situation. Fusi correctly establishes a parallel between the government of Largo Caballero and the future Aguirre government, stating that it meant the "reappearance of state power, the restoration of the authority of

governmental institutions as well as the reestablishment of the functioning of public institutions" [5.153]. The very particular attention which Largo Caballero attached to re-establishing a "normal" state functioning explains his desire to respect all the regulatory formalities for the approval of the statute of autonomy, in spite of the urgency and the difficulties of the situation in the North of the country.

What characterises the statute is not its formal content, but that it signifies the transfer of power to the PNV. Koldo San Sebastian repeats the view of the historian Garcia Venero, of doubtful reliability, according to which the designation of Aguirre as president was "decided" in Madrid [1.97]. Arenillas, however, thinks that the Aguirre government was born of an agreement between Prieto and Aguirre himself [10.106]. There is no doubt that there were negotiations and a certain consensus. But the basis of the consensus was a recognition of the leading role of the PNV in the government, which was particularly important since the war situation itself conferred on the Basque government greater powers than the formal statute.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the PNV presented the statute to the Basque people in its own ideological framework ("an accidental stage, a step towards liberty") and went on to proclaim its hegemonic aspirations ("it is not a nationalist aspiration... but the work of all").¹² The competitive reference to the Catalan statute is of anecdotal interest for historians.

With the proclamation of the Basque government, republican power was rebuilt in a Euzkadi reduced to the territory of Biscay alone.

Catalonia

During the three days of July which were decisive for the defeat of the *coup d'Etat* and opened up three years of civil war, a completely different situation arose in Catalonia from that in the Basque country. The difference between the "political centre of gravity" in the two nations which we spoke of earlier expressed itself on the social, political and military terrain.

On the military plane it is significant that the head of the uprising in Catalonia had to be brought in from the Balearics. It was no accident that Llamo de la Encomienda, Captain General of Catalonia — whom we shall meet in the next chapter, trying to run military operations in the North — was loyal to the Republic, since the existence of the *Generalitat* government itself

12. We read here "The Basque statute, which is very wide-ranging, much more so than the Catalan one, although bestowed in a much more difficult situation, represents a reality that we should recognize despite everything. The statute — a stepping stone to freedom — implies a Basque government, a Basque legal system, a Basque social life. As we have said many times, it is not a nationalist aspiration but a minimum on which all the Basque people agree."

involved particular attention to the nomination of the military. Llamo played a decisive role in frustrating general Goded's plans. Moreover the *Generalitat* was charged with the maintenance of public order and the Escofet, the Commissioner in charge of the police, had for a long time been taking measures against a threatened *coup d'Etat* which proved very effective. Even if the uprising was crushed in Catalonia thanks to the popular and workers' insurrection, there is no doubt that the attitude of the police autonomous assault squadrons and civil guards led by Colonel Escobar was very important in determining the speed of events and the scale of the Francoist defeat. But the decisive element was clearly the insurrection, that is to say the very broad arming of the masses thanks to the barracks and arms depots which were taken by storm, in spite of the *Generalitat's* efforts to stop them. This is the key to understanding later events, both political and military.

As for the social support for each of the camps, the striking thing is the extreme weakness of the military insurgents. According to the historian Pelai Pagès, *Comunió Tradicionalista* offered Goded 700 men for Barcelona and 5000 for the whole of Catalonia to support the coup, while CEDA (The Autonomous Spanish Confederation of Rights) would have offered 200 and the Falange a hundred. The principal force of the right, the *LLiga*, was not considered trustworthy by the insurgent military and would have had difficulties taking part on their side. It was looking, rather, for a compromise with Companys. In the other camp was to be found the great majority of the Catalan people, both urban and rural. The gyrations surrounding the law on the cultural contracts had radicalised the Catalan peasantry, which not only mobilised massively against the military uprising but bypassed its traditional political leadership, the ERC.¹³

Finally the war profoundly altered the political relation of forces and political institutions. Since February 1936 the ERC saw its social base decay even though it remained predominant in the *Generalitat*. The radicalization of the *Unió de Rabassaires*, which I referred to above, was the best expression of this. The

13. The law on farming contracts was the first social reform voted by the Catalan parliament in April 1934. Its content did not go further than then limits of a modest reform in favour of peasant tenants. But the *Lliga* opposed it, appealing to the Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees which was controlled by the right and annulled the law in June on the pretext that the Catalan government was "not competent" to legislate in the agricultural domain. The Catalan parliament voted the law again, which was supported by big peasants mobilizations. Negotiations then started between the Madrid and Catalan governments as well as between the *Lliga* and *Esquerra*. A compromise seemed to be taking shape in summer 1934, but the intervention of the main centralist rightwing organization CEDA, prevented its completion. In the following period, the Contracts law became a demand of the Catalan people's movement. After the victory of the Popular Front during the 1936 elections and the re-establishment of Catalan autonomy, the *Generalitat* decreed the immediate implementation of the law. But the peasant organization, of 500,000 members, had moved strongly to the left and was no longer controlled by the *Esquerra*.

exceptional popular legitimacy which characterised the *Generalitat* weakened following the political and social polarization in Spain in the first months of 1936.

Confronted with the threat of a coup, Companys reacted with effective but parliamentary measures. For its part the CNT, through its Committee for Federal Defence, in which its most important leaders took part, was preparing an insurrectional extraparliamentary response to the coup. The POUM, with weaker forces but with considerable political weight, took the same orientation. Over and above military tasks, these two organizations proclaimed that, faced with the threat of a coup, the only response could be "revolution". But the word "revolution" did not have the same meaning for the CNT and for the POUM, and neither of the two had a clear concept of the tasks of the moment, with one exception, flowing from the experience of 1934: to make a revolution the people must be armed.

Through the hard practical experience of the three July days, the insurrection triumphed, that is to say the extraparliamentary road, based on the armed power of "the streets". This is why the CNT, the organization which played the central role on the streets, found itself at the centre of the political scene while the *Generalitat* crumbled.

The country was on the threshold of revolution in the strictest sense of the term: the passage of power from one class to another. But the threshold was never crossed. For two months there was "dual power" of an absolutely exceptional type.

I think that to understand the facts one must first see how this "dual power" was institutionalized. We follow the historian Bolloten who, to my knowledge, provides the best documented account.

On 20 July a CNT delegation, "armed to the teeth", turned up at the palace of the *Generalitat* at Companys' invitation. According to Garcia Oliver, a CNT delegation member, Companys offered them these extraordinary words: "Today you are the masters of Catalonia... I hope you will not think ill of me if I remind you that you did not lack the support of the loyal men and guards of my party... You have won and power is yours. If you don't need me or if you don't want me to be the President of Catalonia, say so now, and I shall become a simple soldier in the war against fascism. If, however, you think I and the members of my party could be useful to the struggle in this position... you can count on my human and political loyalty, the loyalty of a man convinced that today a suffocating past is dying and who sincerely desires to see Catalonia march at the head of the most socially advanced countries". There are polemics about the authenticity of this declaration but it seems to me that the testimonies which Bolloten offers are convincing and, above all, that these words are consistent with subsequent events. The CNT accepted that Companys, and the *Generalitat* with him, should stay in place and, what is even more extraordinary, Companys himself proposed the creation of an organism to centralise the new power, the Central Committee of Anti-fascist Militias. This proposal was accepted by the CNT and

announced on 21 July in the official bulletin of the *Generalitat*. As a result, there were effectively two powers in place, objectively incompatible with each other as soon became clear, but with a strange relationship, a relationship which refutes any theory that "power comes from the barrel of a gun". For those who held the arms and the effective power of decision accepted the maintenance of an alternative power, one at that time purely nominal — reduced, as has been said, to "a rubber stamp" which Companys would place on all the militia committee's decisions, an apparently formal and innocent gesture but one worth an entire treatise on the state — and which was soon to propose the form of organization its adversaries should adopt. In reality there was a deadly struggle for power, but only one of the protagonists had understood what was at stake.

Dual power

It is very difficult to define the CNT's role. According to Ucelay, "The CNT believed it was leading a process of social transformation, spontaneous and natural, when in fact it merely presided over it" [15.162]. In my opinion, in spite of its strength and its majority character, the CNT did not lead this process, in the sense that it never had a politico-military project, nor a clear understanding of the fundamental tasks and goals of consolidating a revolutionary power. Bolloren quotes two sentences, illuminating and pathetic, which help us to understand the nature of the problem. The first comes from Abad to Santillan: "We could have declared our dictatorship absolute, declare the *Generalitat* finished and install in its place a true popular power, but we didn't believe in dictatorship since it had been used against us and we didn't want to use it against others. [We decided] to keep the *Generalitat* in place with Companys at its head". The second from Helmut Rödiger, representative of the AIT in Barcelona: "those who say that the CNT should have established its own dictatorship in 1936 don't know what they were demanding. The CNT would have had to adopt a programme for government and the exercise of power, an authoritative plan for running the economy and a experience in running the state. Now, if the CNT had such a programme before 19 July, it would not have been the CNT but a Bolshevik party. The application of such a policy would have dealt anarchism a mortal blow".

We therefore end up with a completely asymmetric dual power: the strongest on the social and military terrain was politically the weakest; the socially and politically weakest power was politically the strongest. This same situation was reproduced within the Marxist forces who supported both camps. The POUM was probably the best equipped theoretically to understand the situation. In the desert of Spanish Marxist thinking, Andreu Nin was one of the few rare exceptions. This is why it is even more shocking that, in a discourse given in Barcelona on 6 September, Nin defends a position on the state much closer to the anarchist point of view than the Marxist: "What is the dictatorship of the

proletariat? It is authority uniquely and exclusively exercised by the working class, the suppression of all political rights and all rights to freedom of the representatives of the enemy classes. If this is the dictatorship of the proletariat, I affirm that in Catalonia today there is the dictatorship of the proletariat" [19.182]. Leaving aside what Nin attributes to the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as regards rights and freedoms, it is obvious that he avoids the central problem of political power, which began to resolve itself some twenty days later through the formation of the Tarradellas government, but in a very different direction to that envisioned by Nin, through the formation of the Taradellas government. "Authority" in Catalonia was not exercised "uniquely and exclusively" by the working class, nor the organism that represented it — the Central Committee of the Militias; another power, another state seeking to impose its unique and exclusive authority was set in place. The POUM, whose political line consisted of trying to influence the CNT to win it to its own positions, adapted — not just on this occasion — to the CNT's confusion on the problem of power.

For its part the PSUC (Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia), which had just been founded, had much clearer ideas. Its efforts led in the same direction as Companys', though with less authority and tactical intelligence. The PSUC supported all efforts by the *Generalitat's* governments to supplant the Central Committee of the militias, beginning from the Casanova government of 31 July. From August onwards, it launched a ferocious struggle against the POUM (taking its condemnation of the first Moscow trial as pretext). Its real target was the revolutionary orientation taken by the civil war.

A number of concrete problems of the Catalan situation in this initial phase merit attention because they throw into relief the important differences with events in the Basque country.

First of all, the organization of revolutionary power itself. Some historians have tended to underestimate the role of the committees. Vilar, who in my view correctly refuses to identify these organisms as "soviets", compares them rather with the "juntas of 1808, or the fragile cantonal system of 1873".¹⁴

Broué, Ucelay and many other historians correctly specify the difference between the Committees and soviet-type bodies. We should be precise on this point. The committees were unitary organisms formed by the

14. Juntas (councils) was the name given to the different political organizations which waged the war against the French invasion (1808-1814). This name covered a lot of very different organizations: the local juntas were often formed under the pressure of popular mobilizations, but they were led by army chiefs or high-ranking ecclesiastics, with the small or non-existent popular presence. The higher up in the hierarchy the greater the presence of notables. The central Junta was led by count Florindablance, an old conservative politician. The "cantonalist" movement was formed by federalist provincial organizations which were formed in several towns during the first republic (1873-74). They embodied the popular resistance to the republican movement, but their revolts were militarily crushed.

representatives of different organizations, according to a proportion adopted by agreement and which could not be changed. These were not councils elected from assemblies and therefore susceptible to reflecting the changing relations of force at the base of the movement. Ucelay justifiably stresses that this structure was used to "bar the road to the POUM, which was a minority force". This is also why they could be dismantled in four days with no significant reaction from the base. But Vilar's analogies do not convince me. The Central Committee of the Militias set up a network of local and departmental committees which organised the social, economic and political life of federation during the civil war. Above all at the military level, the war sub-committee, created by the Central Committee, was the fundamental authority, responsible for dealing with organizational and logistical problems, problems of forming cadres in the Popular School for the War, and so on. The committee was also responsible for repressive functions which we shall return to. It is true that this structure functioned for only two months, but it nevertheless represented a form of popular power, enjoying great authority among the population and which profoundly reorganised institutional forms of conduct. Its protagonists may often have had a weak and confused idea of what they were doing but this in no way detracts from the nature of the organization. Its disappearance marked a profound turning point in the catalan situation. I do not think it helps our understand them to compare them with "Juntas" or "Cantones".

As regards the military situation, it seems important to me to stress the speed with which a military force of considerable size (reaching 20,000 men in Aragon according to an average estimate) was built. There was also a remarkable effort to build a "new" army consistent with the revolutionary project. The bulk of this project was equality. "Doubtless the equality was not total", says Orwell in *Homage to Catalonia*, "but it was at a higher level than ever before seen, and above all at the highest level conceivable under war conditions". The attempt to establish discipline on a rational basis to replace classical military discipline was to engender numerous conflicts and practical problems. Nonetheless it was certainly not the fundamental cause of the military weaknesses of the republican camp, as the PCE-PSUC leaders were later to claim in their battle for a "regular" army. The organization of militias on the basis of party columns, following a tradition stretching across the whole of republican Spain in 1937, was certainly an element of weakness. Attention must also be drawn to the lack of a hegemonic revolutionary project capable of understanding the military necessities of war and establishing an agreement on centralization between the various forces. Finally, the militias were an "expeditionary army" (concentrated on the Aragon front, because of the defeat of the attempted expedition to the Balearics) for which the whole of Catalonia was the rearguard. The rear was heavily armed, not just through the general conditions of war, but also because

arms were an essential element — as everyone more or less intuitively understood — of the power of the Committees in a dual power situation. This situation was to explode in May 1937, but it had for a long time been a source of conflicts, notably since the stabilization of the Aragon front. The slogan "all arms to the Front", accompanied in the PSUC press by "jokes" about militiamen parading calmly down the Ramblas with their arms, beside a dramatic presentation of the situation at the front, provoked one of the hardest debates of this period. As in all political propaganda battles marking the struggle for power, a real problem — the disequilibrium between the armament of the rearguard and that of the front — concealed a deeper political debate. The PSUC's goal was to disarm the committees and leave the regulars of the *Generalitat* in place as the only armed forces of the rearguard.

The problem of repression in the rearguard represents the other major element of polemic in the experience of revolutionary Catalonia. The figures are conclusive on the executions of religious personages: during the war, the total number of dead in the whole of the state was 6,844, of which 2,437 were in Catalonia. In spite of the importance of this figure, we have to insist on the "uncontrolled" character of a considerable part of this repression. Pagès cites documents of the POUM and the CNT which strongly opposed "uncontrolled" repression from the outset. On the 31 July *Avant*, the POUM journal, wrote: "extreme measures must be adopted, without hesitation, to put an end to acts which dishonour and compromise the revolution" [20.59]. Though it had a genuinely "uncontrolled" aspect — in contrast, Vilar remarks, to the repression of the military insurgents which was totally "controlled" — this repression was ferocious and was pursued even after the Committee of Militias formed "control patrols", and on many occasions was conducted by them.

A revolutionary process of necessity develops mechanisms of coercion, which can be very severe during a period of prolonged civil war. But outside of the collective necessities of the revolutionary process, there inevitably arise sentiments of vengeance, of replying to the humiliations and repressions suffered over the years, both collective and individual. It requires a concentrated effort by the revolutionary project, in which human rights must take their legitimate place, to keep these mechanisms of coercion under control. Unfortunately this was not the case in Catalonia. But it must be added that these raw figures do not adequately convey the reality. They do not convey popular memory: from the "Tragic Week"¹⁵ up

15. The "Tragic Week" was the popular rising which started in Barcelona on 26 July 1909, to protest against the sending of troops to Morocco. The movement remained isolated and was massacred by the army, but it marked the start of anarcho-sindicalist hegemony in the Catalan workers' movement. The CNT was formed the following year.

to the repression which followed October 1934. Nor do they convey the role of the curates in agrarian Catalan society, their identification with the bosses and landowners.

For an entire century the parish priest was the first target of all popular Catalan revolts. This is explained by the social and political role of the church. In a situation of popular power such as existed in Catalonia, the news of an agreement between the church and the military insurgents could not but

engender the sentiment of popular vengeance, fruit of accumulated humiliation for generations.

I shall deal with the problem of collectivizations and, more generally, of the revolution's economic-social activities in the next chapter, the better to develop the comparison with the Basque country. This will also allow us to study the evolution of political economy before and after the formation of the Taradellas government, which put an end to the situation of dual power.



this period was marked by expropriations of food from the shops and stores, carried out by the CNT unions.

The military problem and that of public order was even more acute. Proposals to militarize the militias in 1936 had not advanced much in spite of the support of the CNT's main leaders, as a result of opposition from the base. One could say that only in Spring 1937 was a truly "regular army" established according to the norms established by the republican government.

On this there were no relevant conflicts. However on the organization of public order, the problems were serious and constant, notably after the appointment of Rodríguez Salas in December 1936. The most dramatic moment after the May crisis came about at the end of February when the security council of the *Generalitat* ordered the dissolution of all the vigilance patrols and the unification of all police bodies. Some days later the *Generalitat* demanded the return of all arms and explosives in the rearguard. None of these measures were accepted or carried out by the CNT and the POUM. Meanwhile armed confrontations between CNT militants and the *Generalitat* forces were multiplying. The sharpening of this whole range of conflicts further polarized the political alternatives. During the first months of 1937, the POUM's youth organization (the JCI) and the Young Libertarians (*Juventudes Libertarias*) were creating the Revolutionary Youth Front with substantial mass influence, and radically opposed to the JSU, the youth organization of the PSUC (let us add, in parenthesis, that this was the last chance for a change in the relation of forces in favour of the revolutionaries, but after the May events the front divided in two and the young libertarians came closer to the JSU again) The Front's fundamental orientation was "the defence of the revolutionary conquests and the liquidation of the survivals of the bourgeois past". The JSU's orientation, according to a document published in April 1937, was the following:

- a) defend the Democratic Republic...;
- b) to be the "governmental" youth, supporting the legitimate government of the Republic;
- c) defend the unity of all antifascists to guarantee national independence (of Spain, not Catalonia) and oppose ultrarevolutionary "Trotskyist" phraseology [16.199].

This was the cauldron which boiled over in May.

Rodríguez Salas's decision to retake the telephone exchange, which was under CNT control, does not have to be explained as a plot. It was a marginal operation, but completely consistent with the attempts to sap the base of the revolutionary movement, which still disposed of considerable forces. Perhaps he did not foresee the sudden and massive response of CNT and POUM militants, on which this action served as a spark added to the serious accumulated tensions of the previous month. There was the chance of a compromise, via the replacement of Salas by councillor Aiguadé. The compromise was rejected because it would have meant a victory for the revolutionaries and a setback for the objective of confirming the

Generalitat as the sole political authority. The rejection of this compromise unleashed the barricades.

The May crisis was a very unequal confrontation between a revolutionary process which was losing steam and on the defensive against a process of "democratic counter-revolution" on the offensive. The CNT and the POUM were not fighting for power and could not have taken it. The goal of the POUM and CNT militants was to defend existing revolutionary conquests and, in their most optimistic moments, they nourished illusions of being able to reorient the political process, even within modest limits. In the POUM's name Juan Andrade proposed to the FAI leadership to take the *Generalitat* palace in order to establish "a pact, stipulating guarantees and occupy positions which would not be a simple capitulation". This proposal was not accepted. Perhaps it was an exaggerated response, reflecting the desperation of the moment; but in my view the objectives it set out were the most reasonable under the circumstances. The CNT-FAI leadership once again placed its trust in Companys' promises that there would be no reprisals, and deployed all its efforts to convince the militants to abandon the barricades, without the slightest guarantee that they could attain their goals. It was in fact a capitulation. There is no basis for seeing it as inevitable. However, in my opinion, one cannot consider the May events as a missed chance to relaunch Catalonia on a revolutionary path, as was claimed in particular by the Trotskyist militants — a very small minority — and taken up in Felix Morrow's book *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Spain*, a journalistic reportage whose revolutionary spirit is equalled only by its lack of political and historical interest.

On May 5 the central government, with Company's express support, took over the functions of public order and the defence of Catalonia. On 7 May 12,000 men were sent by the central government to take control of the situation. The revolutionary process was definitively defeated, in spite of the POUM's declarations, taking its illusions for reality, in which it obstinately portrayed the outcome as a "partial victory for the proletariat". Some weeks after, the party was illegal and its militants persecuted or, as in Nin's case, assassinated. Bilbao fell within days.

The causes of the defeat in Euzkadi

The offensive launched by Franco's troops towards the end of March in the North gave Euzkadi a decisive role in the war's future. The struggle which unfolded over almost three months was marked by the crushing military superiority of the francoist troops. The truly heroic capacity for resistance of the military and popular forces of the republican Basque Country served only to delay the defeat. For the Republic the importance of this defeat, symbolised by the fall of Bilbao on 19 June, explains the bitterness of the polemic on the causes (Garmendia's quotations from

Largo Caballero government and, more generally, the policy of the Popular Front.

From the standpoint of its composition, the Aguirre Government was founded on the absolute hegemony of the PNV, which held all the decisive economic, political and military posts. The representatives of the Popular Front parties had secondary responsibilities or, when they held formally important positions (like, for example the Ministry of Labour, headed up by Juan de los Toyos from the PSOE), they carried out unimportant tasks following the discipline which Aguirre had established. On the other hand, Aguirre found pretexts to exclude the CNT — which could have become a source of indiscipline — from the government. (There is a debate between various anarchist currents as to whether or not there were negotiations on this question. Chiapuso thinks there were.) This total PNV hegemony determined the government's programme — in Fusi's words "it was what could be expected of the PNV: a well-considered, serious and democratic programme", — and its practice. But we should also note the status and support accorded to Aguirre by the central government and all parties of the Popular Front, which allowed him to play a "presidential" role.

Effectively the Basque government adopted the orientation which "could be expected of it". Only the CNT claimed publicly that the support given Aguirre by the parties of the Basque Popular Front represented a capitulation by the Socialist Party [11.61], and even then conceded a two-month truce with the government, during which it abstained from any criticism [11.68]. The so-called "Guernica" pact can be characterized as "moderate" in comparison with the programme of the Taradellas government, which we shall study shortly. This characterization becomes more of a moot point if comparison is made with the programme and practice of the central republican government. This will be studied from a series of angles.

Koldo San Sebastian highlights the role ascribed by Aguirre himself to "public order" and "the religious question". We have already seen that the PNV considered as its priority task, before serious military engagement, as the preservation of "order" in the face of threats from the activities of the more radical sectors, notably the CNT. It was natural that once installed in government the PNV should follow the same orientation and with the same goals: to reassure its social base and stop the government being outflanked by radical sectors. Aguirre and Monzon, when they reorganised the police, adopted methods which shed light on the PNV's general orientation. The police was a "unitary" force, formed from people chosen by the parties, and by a "party" body, the *Ertzaña*, which allowed the PNV to control the whole police apparatus.

As for the religious question, the protection which the government guaranteed to the practice of Catholicism was an exception in the republican camp. Symbolic decisions of some impact were made. For example, Aguirre tells how "traditional holidays were

dropped, but with exception made of holy Friday, as a mark of respect for the Catholic conscience of the Basque people" [9.953]. He adds, with more than a hint of malice, that the question at issue was a proposal from "a socialist councillor, which yet again emphasises the delicacy of the question". In fact the religious policy of the Basque government became a central element in the diplomacy of the Republic. Aguirre himself, who was conscious of this "usage", encouraged it, knowing that it gave him a certain weight in the conflict-ridden relations with central government.

These conflicts showed up above all on military matters. The Guernica programme agreed to establish a single command and militarize all the militias rapidly. It contained no details concerning military relations with the Army of the North. This posed serious problems which we will analyse later.

The militarization of the militias ended up as the creation of party battalions, in the tradition of the republican camp. Only on the eve of defeat did anything that might be called a regular army make its appearance. This was not specific to the Basque country. What was specific was Aguirre's attempts to favour his own party battalions at the expense of those of the left, which Arenillas points out [10.108]. Provisions such as the right of recruits to choose their battalion cannot be explained except in this perspective. [3.186, 10.114]. The same could be said of the refusal to accept political commissioners, which almost brought on a political crisis in the government, a refusal motivated by the desire to impose the party's military power, without any interference from external political forces or institutions.

But the most serious conflict originated in the de facto sovereignty which the Basque government assumed in the leadership of the war in the North. Aguirre never accepted the existence of an "Army of the North" and consequently never recognized the authority of Llamas de la Encomienda, who was appointed military head of the region by the central republican government in December 1936. Paradoxically Aguirre was able to base himself on a declaration by Largo Caballero in which he said that this army "did not exist" [1.26], a declaration which was expressed in practice, militarily, in an attitude of tolerance towards the sovereignty of the Basque government in military matters. In this respect it is interesting to recall a proposal from the ANV¹⁶ — the nationalist component of the Basque Popular Front — to submit the leadership of the Basque army to the

16. *Accion nacionalista vasca* (Basque National Action) formed as a centre-left party in 1930, evolved leftwards while retaining its nationalist identity. It made an alliance with the anti-monarchist bloc in 1931. Later it broke its alliance with the left because of its disagreement on the statute, but in 1936 it participated in the Popular Front coalition in the Basque country. It played an important role in combatting the coup d'état in Guipuzcoa and Biscay. One of its members, Gonzalo Nardiz, was minister of agriculture in the first Aguirre government.

control of the central staff [1.56]. To my knowledge this was the only attempt at compromise to co-ordinate military operations in the North within the spirit of the statute of autonomy.

The most significant attempt at military collaboration between the republican command and the army in Euzkadi was the Villareal operation, whose failure in Fusi's opinion, brought about a decisive deterioration in these relations. Garmendia offers a very interesting explanation for the different significance which the Villareal operation had for the republican command (a diversionary operation to relieve the Madrid front) and for Aguirre (to conquer Vitoria and then to advance to Guipuzcoa — a veritable "reconquest" of Euzkadi) [7.30]. This difference in objectives throws light on the lack of political and military coordination between the central and Basque governments. Aguirre was to complain bitterly at the failure of Villareal, ascribing responsibility to Captain Ciutat, head of operations in the North, who was supposed to coordinate with the Basque military leadership (Aguirre alludes to the "influence on him of certain political currents" — undoubtedly the PCE).

After the Villareal defeat there were other forms of military cooperation in the North — sending Basque battalions to Asturias and participation by troops from the Army of the North in operations in Euzkadi. But one could say that up until the arrival of general Gamir, towards the end of May 1937, relations between the Basque army and the republican command were dominated by mistrust.

Fusi attaches enormous importance to what he calls the "military fractionalization of the North", which he considers "one of the main causes of defeat". He also criticises implicitly the approval of the statute of autonomy: "The Largo Caballero government had conceded the autonomy of the Basque Country since the pressing and fundamental necessity of winning the war called for confirmation of the authority of the state, as well as submission to it by the territorial and local powers where the republican zone was fragmented" [5.156]. The idea that the statute of autonomy or the sovereignty of the Basque Country was an obstacle to military unification is defended by many other historians. To me this view seems debatable. In my view the problem was not the sovereign character of the Basque government which, among other things, represented the sole condition for drawing the broadest possible layers of the Basque people into the military effort. If, for example, Largo Caballero had not "conceded" Basque autonomy, the result would probably have been catastrophic and would certainly not have helped military centralization in the North. The problem was on the one hand the political line with which the Basque government exercised this autonomy, and on the other the political orientation of Largo Caballero, that is to say the political conditions which facilitated or obstructed military coordination.

I think that the most fundamental differences

between Basque and central government policy were on socio-economic questions, and on the general approach to the conduct of the war.

On the economic front, the Guernica pact involved commitments to co-management, which was consistent with the PNV's ideology but played a largely formal role: they were never put into practice. On the contrary, respect for big finance and industrial capital was absolute, and even the possibilities of "confiscation and socialization" envisaged in the pact were renounced. In this instance decisions dictated by the specific interests of the PNV entered into direct contradiction with the fundamental demands of the war. The results were inevitably catastrophic: on the one hand these decisions made possible the bosses' sabotage [7.79], and on the other hand made possible the immediate reconversion of industry for the use of the insurgents after the fall of Bilbao, which was to be decisive for Franco's victory. In his important researches on the economy of Euzkadi at the time of the civil war, Gonzales Portilla singles out the fundamental responsibility of the Basque government for the paralysis of the engineering industry of Biscay, whose consequences for military supplies can easily be imagined. It seems important to me to stress that in this case the basic reasons for the government's attitude were not ideological (rejection of any form of confiscation or collectivization) but above all political. Aguirre wanted to maintain good relations with the Biscay bourgeoisie which, as was to be expected, did not thank him for his gesture. Arenillas relates an anecdote about this. One of the first measures taken by the Aguirre government was the restitution of 25 million pesetas to a proprietor who had been fined by the defence Junta — a good illustration of the situation.

One can see the obvious difference between this and the policy of the central government, which was ferociously opposed to collectivizations at the start of the war and even decided on very broad privatizations, but which worked hard to secure an efficient war industry.

This difference was a source of conflict and became a key element in the critique addressed by the various republican forces to the Aguirre government after the defeat. But it must be remembered that Aguirre practiced this policy for several months, not only without meeting any criticism but even being eulogized by the left.

In any case one could say that the ambiguous formulas coming from the left leaders could be interpreted as direct support for the economic policy of the Basque government. Thus Aguirre recalled a comment of Prieto's when he was defending municipal control against the nationalization of *Altos Hornos* of Biscay ("I have a lot more confidence in Baracaldo than in the state"). Obviously Aguirre used this comment to defend his policy of opposing nationalization ("which would have been seen as the fruit of vengeance and improvisation") [9.955].

In general the left forces conducted a policy of uncritical support for Aguirre, with the exception of the

Company's objectives). But even so we should point out that the arguments used to justify this political decision revealed dramatic confusion about the respective roles of the committee and the Generalitat. People talked about the "duality of functions" and not of powers, and to the *Generalitat* is ascribed the "level of administrative and executive decisions" (which does not correspond to the experience of the previous months, during which the committee had functioned with full executive powers). This same confusion appeared in another well-known argument put forward not just by CNT leaders like Garcia Oliver, but even by Andreu Nin — seeking to justify the formation of the Taradellas government: it was a question of "legalizing the conquests of the masses". This idea of the need to "legalize" these conquests with a republican institution is very revealing of the political weaknesses of the "revolutionary power" which I have already referred to. This question was to provoke a debate in the POUM, which we know thanks to the writings of Juan Andrade. According to him the determining argument in reaching this decision, adopted with only his weak opposition in the party executive, was the feeling of powerlessness, the fear of being isolated and the possible consequences for supplying the party columns, and also the fear of a more and more probable campaign from the PCE to outlaw the POUM. Without doubt these risks were real: the problem is to know how the decision made by the POUM could have helped avoid them.

In any case Nin posed two conditions for his participation in the government: a majority of workers' organizations and a programme of "socialist orientation" [18.291-292]. It is surprising to see how a Marxist like Nin could propose such conditions, which he should have considered completely secondary in defining the government's role. Even more surprising is to note that he was to play a decisive role in the dissolution of the committee of Lleida (led by the POUM, and which Companys feared would receive anyone coming to dissolve it "with gunshots") [18.298]. Probably it is not by chance that the dissolution of the central committee of militias happened 24 hours after Nin had persuaded his Lleida comrades to do likewise. Nin's words when he took over cannot but engender a certain perplexity: "I come with a mission to legalize and recoup what the working masses have already done in the streets". The reality was different: the revolutionary power had recognised the legitimacy of republican power and in so doing committed suicide. Treball, spokesperson of the PSUC, put things very clearly in an editorial on September 30 itself: "the government has the duty to rescue Catalonia from the swamp into which irresponsible acts, dictated by puerile revolutionism, have precipitated it" [18.294].

But one cannot explain the rapid dissolution, without resistance, of such a broad political structure as the committees, simply as a product of the failures of the organizations most closely identified with it. The "political counter-revolution" of which we spoke, was

presented to the mass of workers as a formal administrative changeover and not as a rupture in the revolutionary dynamic which had existed since July. The continuation, in the Taradellas government, of the same relation of forces between organizations which had existed in the central committee of militias, contributed to this appearance and obscured its deeper meaning. Moreover on October 24 the government adopted a decree-law on the collectivizations and on worker control, as the expression of continuity with revolutionary Catalonia (which distinguished it radically from Euzkadi). Here we encounter a very controversial subject which calls for some attention.

To understand the problem we have to return to the first weeks of the war. Collectivizations and self-management, very widespread in Catalonia — notably Barcelona — since July, were spontaneous, imposed by the war situation. After the military revolt was crushed, the workers who came back to their factories found that the bosses had fled; as a result collectivization and self-management became the preconditions for restarting production. Thus, as frequently happens during revolutionary processes, the dynamic of the social forces unleashed went beyond the economic programmes envisaged by the revolutionary organizations. It should be remembered that on July 24, the POUM distributed its economic programme, whose most radical demands were for workers' control of production and the distribution of the large landowners' lands to the poor peasants. For its part the CNT had formally renounced "libertarian communism" and was outflanked by the dynamic of collectivizations. But once the process had begun, the CNT unions were to play an important role in extending them rapidly and not just to big industry but also into commerce and entertainment and, less intensively, to the agricultural regions.

In a developed economy such as Catalonia, and under the pressure of war, wide-ranging collectivizations that do not lead in the short term to some form of planning, run the risk of creating a chaotic situation which disorganizes the productive system and provokes severe social problems. That is what happened in Catalonia. On the one hand, each CNT union practiced collectivization according to its own ideas, which were unbelievably confused [6.I.290 ff].¹⁹ Even within the revolutionary camp criticisms of the CNT's orientation in this sphere were very sharp. For example Juan Andrade went as far as to describe the CNT as "trade union capitalism", an exaggerated

19. We should emphasise what Pérez Baró said: "The attitude of many skilled workers of the CNT could be summed up in the phrase 'Ja està bé!' (It's already OK) The revolution's happened.' And they expected manna from heaven. The most militant workers' committees ran the enterprises as if they owned them while others simply considered the owners as 'managers'. But there were also committees which, using a demagogic measure enacted by the Generalitat allowing for reimbursement of strike days from 19 July, presented their pay slips to the Generalitat which paid up without checking whether or not the enterprises had restarted production."

expression but indicative of the kind of criticisms being voiced.

Social problems were as important as economic ones. The "middle classes" which Vilar referred to were a fundamental social component of Catalonia. Imposing measures of collectivization on them was not just irrational from an economic viewpoint like for example in small commerce or the service sector — there are many anecdotes about collectivized hatshops, hairdressers and theatres — but also created serious conflicts with the popular base of the revolution and alienated the support of these social layers. The PSUC understood the problem very quickly and based its growth among these sectors of the petty bourgeoisie, notably the urban sectors, which found it a strong and effective leadership in the face of revolutionary currents.

In such a chaotic situation, strong pressures developed for an efficient reorganization of production. Companys once again took the initiative vis-a-vis the committee, and on August 11 created the Economic Council of Catalonia as a body of the *Generalitat* charged with "restructuring and normalizing the Catalan economy in an adequate manner" [20.71]. In its conception and composition, the council was the precursor of the Taradellas government which was to be formed in the succeeding months. It also reflected an evolution in the "dual power" situation in a direction favourable to Companys' interests.

The council elaborated a text containing elements both of a programme and of a plan of immediate action. Its name, "Plan for the Socialist Transformation of the Country", bears witness to the dominant ideology of the time, but was equally consistent with the type of measures which it undertook: collectivization of industrial property (large and medium), of agrarian property and workers' control of the private sectors of the economy. Although the plan for the most part stayed on paper, it is important to draw attention to its content to arrive at an objective evaluation of the process of collectivization, which other historians such as Enrico Ucelay tend to distort quite seriously; I shall return to this subject.

The real legal instrument employed to reorganize the Catalan economy was the decree on collectivizations and workers' control adopted by the Taradellas government. This decree was presented by the CNT and the POUM as the proof that the Taradellas government remained in the framework of the revolutionary dynamic of the preceding period. In reality it began to limit this dynamic significantly using three main measures: the decision to limit collectivization to factories with more than 100 workers (the CNT and POUM proposed 50, the PSUC and ERC 250), which excluded a large sector of medium-sized property and considerably reduced the weight of the public sector, given Catalonia's economic structure at the time; agreement to indemnify the "Spanish" shareholders of the collectivised

factories (the CNT and POUM had accepted, for diplomatic reasons, the indemnification of foreign shareholders but opposed the adoption of this measure); the refusal to establish a monopoly of external commerce, demanded by the CNT and the POUM as an indispensable complement to the policy of collectivization; finally, a new credit system (via the institution of a public bank) proposed by the CNT and POUM never saw the light of day, which provoked enormous difficulties for the functioning of the collectivized factories.

In summary the decree corresponded to the general line of the Taradellas government: on the one hand it effectively "legalized" revolutionary conquests, but on the other it tried to limit them and control them to contain their socio-politically revolutionary dynamic. Nevertheless collectivizations took on considerable proportions: Pagès cites figures given by Pujol, according to which at the end of the war there were 2,000 collectivized enterprises in Catalonia by the end of the war, between 5,000 and 6,000 grouped into 600 co-operatives of various types and around 4,500 under workers' control. In the countryside the figures differ according to the authors, but we could estimate around 400 collectivized factories.

It does not seem right to be to make a summary balance sheet of this experience adopting a purely political criterion (that is, asserting its "revolutionary" character and then judging it according to one's opinion of "revolution") or a purely economic one (that is, assigning it responsibility for the deterioration of the Catalan economy). This experience took place in dramatic conditions, because of the turmoil which the war produced in an economy founded on exports, but also because of the boycott by the central government and the open hostility manifested by a number of Catalan political forces which played a more and more important role — notably the PSUC. I would not claim to sum up in a few lines the complexity of this frustrated revolutionary experience. I have only pointed up the problems which in my view have to be taken into account to understand what was going on.

One final word on this question. Enrique Ucelay has recently added his interpretation of the collectivizations to the many others extant. It does not lack originality. In his view, what was involved was a "Catalan form reflecting the tendencies of our epoch towards the welfare state" [15.168]. This characterization seems to me a purely intellectual abstraction, which flows from an incomprehension of the strivings of the Catalan people to transform their society in a revolutionary manner. Without this striving one cannot properly understand the role played by Catalonia in the civil war. Ucelay develops a detailed critique, on a number of interesting aspects, of the mistakes and setbacks which accompanied the collectivizations. But I cannot share his conclusion, which completely ignore the significance attributed to the collectivizations by the workers themselves (which had nothing at all to do with the capitalist state, even

under the form of the welfare state).

The PSUC and the POUM

As we have seen, economic policy was radically different in Euzkadi and in Catalonia, even in a period where the two countries underwent a process of reconstructing the republican regime — which is why we designate this as a process of “convergence”. Another radically different element was the seriousness of the internal political conflicts in Catalonia, which form a striking contrast with the broad consensus around Aguirre which was to be found in Euzkadi until the phase immediately preceding the fall of Bilbao. The most serious of these conflicts, which led to the most tragic events of the civil war, was the conflict between the PSUC and the POUM. It was determining for the course and outcome of the situation in Catalonia. This calls for some reflection before closing this chapter.

This was the only confrontation in Western Europe between two communist organizations, the one Stalinist and the other anti-Stalinist, with approximately equal military forces: by the end of 1936 the two organizations each had several tens of thousands of members (The POUM claimed 30,000 and the PSUC 60,000). The result was not a foregone conclusion, because of a crushing relation of forces, which was the case in other European countries or, during the civil war, in Madrid.

Within the limits of this work we can only make a summary characterization of the two parties. We would say that the POUM represented the continuity of the Catalan communist tradition from the creation of the Catalan-Balearic federation and subsequently the workers’ and peasants’ bloc, whose best known leader was Joaquín Maurín. It was a party whose composition was essentially working-class, with a certain influence in the peasantry, notably in Lleida, and which hardly existed at all outside Catalonia. It did not belong to any international current: its description as “Trotskyist” was part of the battle waged against it by the PSUC. In reality the Trotskyist organizations and Trotsky himself criticized it violently from its inception. In spite of all the contradictions of its practice, the POUM always defended a strategy of socialist revolution, conceived as the necessary road to win the civil war. Once of the characteristics of its tactics was to try and influence the CNT and win it to its own policy, believing this to be an indispensable condition for victory. The POUM was, therefore, the weak link of the revolutionary camp. The PSUC attacked it very effectively.

The latter was a party only from the start of the civil war, arising from a fusion of socialists and nationalists around the Communist International. It did not enjoy a significant working-class base and this situation was to persist until the end of the war. This is not just the view of its political enemies but also of Togliatti who was very well placed to know [17.182].²⁰

20. “The Party is not as strong as comrades think. It is not very great above all because the grassroots organizations remain passive. The

From its foundation the PSUC defended, with remarkable audacity and firmness, an explicit line of reconstructing republican power and of radical opposition to the revolutionary dynamic supported by the CNT and the POUM. The official history of the party attributes to this line the spectacular growth which it went through during the first months of the war: conversely this growth is presented as the proof that its line was “correct”. This assertion deserves to be analysed. In reality at least three elements lie behind the PSUC’s growth: a systematic effort to organize petty-bourgeois sectors disturbed by the revolutionary course of events (for whom the GEPCI*21 was the main organization [13.525]); a systematic effort to occupy the national and local apparatus of the *Generalitat*, deployed with particular intensity after the formation of the Taradellas government (Togliatti, who in general was very critical of the PSUC, praised it on precisely this point: “The party must lead a consistent struggle to enlarge and re-enforce its positions in the army, the police and the state apparatus” [17.135]; the use of Soviet aid in its favour, representing a central element of its activity from October 10 when the supply boats began arriving. In my view this third factor was decisive.

The battle against the POUM was indeed unleashed by the Soviet ambassador. The POUM had denounced the soviet interventions which sought to prevent its entry into the Junta for the defence of Madrid at the end of November. On the 28th, the Soviet consulate published a note from Treball accusing the POUM’s newspaper, *La Batalla*, of “being part of the international fascist press”. Immediately the PSUC seized the occasion to lead a campaign to expel the POUM from the *Generalitat* government. A few days sufficed. On December 17 a so-called “trade union unity” government was formed from which the POUM was excluded. This fact testifies to the enormous influence acquired by the soviet consulate and the PSUC. But this measure could not have been taken without the approval of the CNT, which did not even understand that it was the ultimate target of the conflict between the PSUC and the POUM. The CNT justified the composition of the new government with a declaration which does not belong to the most glorious pages of Spanish anarchism: “We hope that this solution to the crisis will bring forth neither complaints nor reproaches. The POUM and the PSUC, the two adversaries whose conflict has provoked the present situation, are excluded from the council of the *Generalitat*. The two are represented in the UGT (the declaration forgets to mention that the three

Party’s positions in the factories are weak, especially in the war factories and particularly in Barcelona. The party cadres are mainly petty-bourgeois.”

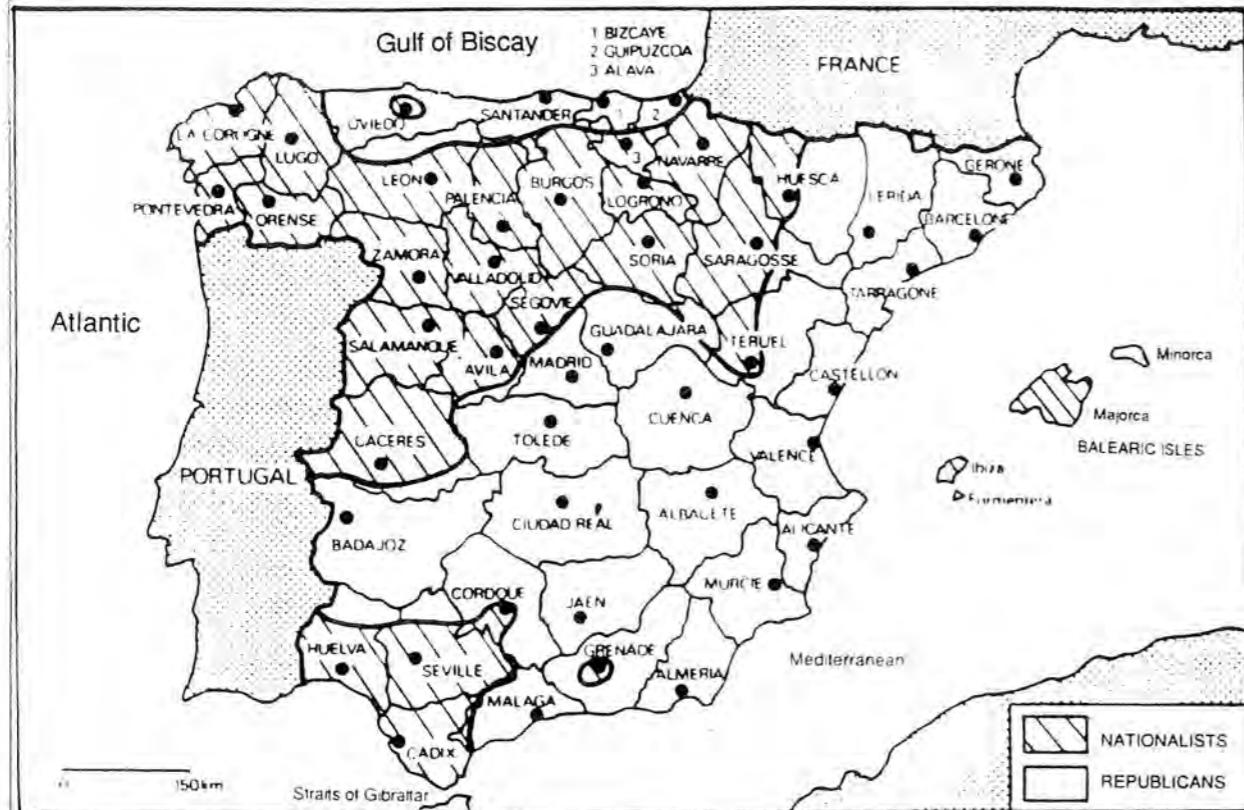
21. Name of the Catalan Federation of Corporations and Units of Small Traders and Industrialists in which the PSUC organized more than 18,000 people. The CNT called certain of its members “intransigent and determinedly anti-worker bosses”.

‘representatives’ of the UGT in the government were well-known PSUC leaders) and have the same ideological roots, even if minor tactical differences continue to divide them. Neither one nor the other has the right, in our view, to make an outcry” [13.539]. The POUM’s outcry resumed with the following notice: “after having obtained this immediate result, does anyone think that the party in question will renounce its aims? With our elimination, it has won the first round. For the moment it does not feel it has the forces to go further” [13.538]. Subsequent events confirmed this judgement. While the campaign against the POUM continued confrontations, including armed ones, mounted between the forces of the *Generalitat* — over which Rodríguez Salas, PSUC leader,

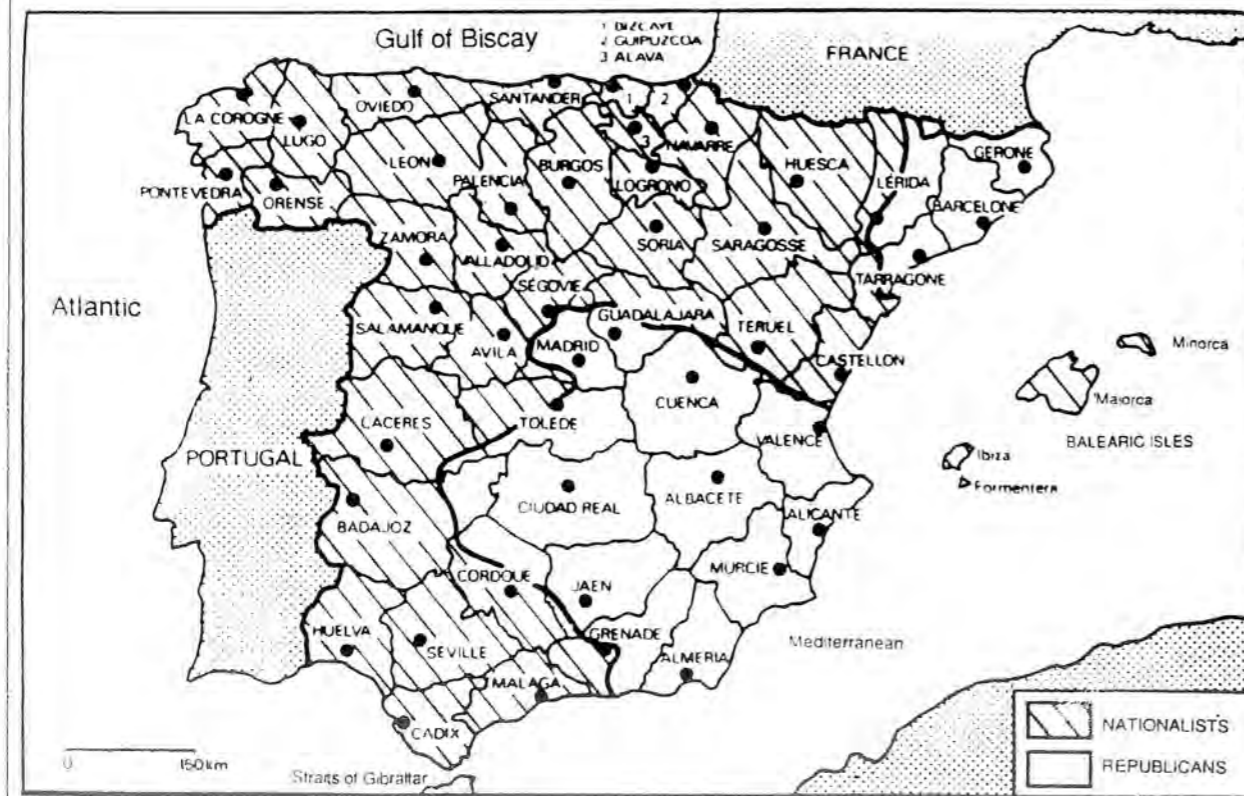
exercised growing control as Commissioner for public order — and groups of CNT militants. In reality, they were putting into practice the measures of reorganization and control of all armed bodies which the different *Generalitat* governments had tried in vain to do since September.

The CNT did not understand the political aspect of the problem of power, but its base knew, or had a presentiment, that giving up their arms meant the suppression of all revolutionary conquests. That is why the many attempts of the *Generalitat* governments remained on paper. But from February 1937 onwards the phase of decisive confrontation began, which I shall try and analyse in the next chapter.





Division of Spain at the end of July 1936



Division of Spain, July 1938

IV. Spring 1937 : Defeat

It is a quite striking fact that two such extraordinary victories as the defence of Madrid and the battle of Guadalajara did not have the positive effects which might have been expected — neither in the sense of political clarification nor on the morale and unity of the republican camp. This was a good indication of the crisis tearing it apart to the point where it was so absorbed by the conflict between different political organizations and strategies that it could hardly even learn lessons from popular struggles. Above all Madrid, but also Guadalajara, proved the efficacy of the methods of popular revolutionary war in the face of the Francoist troops. Yet these victories were to have no appreciable effect on the events to come in Euzkadi and Catalonia.

The Francoist camp, on the other hand, proved perfectly capable of learning lessons and making a turn in military tactics to serve its interests. On March 21, Franco decided on an orientation to a prolonged war and fixed his first objective as the conquest of the North. The offensive which he launched several days later and pursued throughout the tragic spring of 1937 was to decide the course of the war. This period was marked by the military defeat of Euzkadi and the definitive political crushing of the revolutionary process in Catalonia. I am not claiming there is a parallel; the two very different processes developed with a large degree of autonomy. But together they provide the essential data needed to understand both the situation in the republic camp at this precise moment and the almost inevitable course which the war then took until the final defeat.

The events which we are going to deal with now are only the development, to their ultimate conclusion, of the problems we have already seen in the preceding chapters. This is why the clearest approach is to show how this happened without following a strictly chronological order. We begin with the May events.

Catalonia: the May events

A civil war within the working class, in the framework of a second civil war in which the mass of working people found their own fate at stake in the face of a powerful reactionary force, is such a complex and dramatic phenomenon that it explains why, more than fifty years after the end of the civil war, polemics on its interpretation are still raging. It is less easy to understand, however, that the polemic continues to affect the facts themselves. Thus, if I restrict myself to the bibliography used in this work: Tuñón says "In Barcelona it was the most extreme anarchist sector which, in the senseless attempt to precipitate their revolution, destabilized the republican state" [1.131].

Garmendia refers to the "May events in Barcelona, with the insurrection of the POUM militias and a part of the anarchosindicalists" [7.40]. Ucelay presents the facts with the following words: "The incident (the assault on the telephone exchange) laid bare the internal conflict between the various anarchist groups, of whom some were trying by means of street violence to take the initiative which the FAI-CNT had lost during the preceding summer and autumn. At the same time the POUM (which also had its internal debates) sought to impose a Leninist leadership on what it saw as libertarian incoherence, and so "save the revolution" [15.170]. Finally Pierre Vilar presents a list of "party interpretations" of the different "provocations" ("For the POUM the provocations came from Moscow, via the PSUC; for the PSUC from Berlin via the POUM; for the CNT they were a Catalanist plot from Paris; for Franco from thirteen of his agents in Barcelona...") and does not feel the need even to comment on those which no serious historian today pays any attention to (that is, all except the first, which was not the POUM's view and is in my view incorrect, but at least bears some relation to the facts. The efforts of the Catalan historian Manuel Cruells to establish an honest and documented version of the facts seem to have been in vain. I know of now well-grounded refutation of the facts established by Cruells, so I shall take it as my point of reference. In reality, to understand the May events, it is better to leave the search for plots on one side and look for the origins of the deepening Catalan crisis in the events of the previous months.

We should therefore recall the PSUC campaign against the POUM, its accusations of "fascism", of playing the role of the "fifth column", etc, as well as the conflicts and divisions which they engendered in the organizations of the popular masses. This conflict reflected, in an exacerbated form, the strategic battle between revolutionary positions and those which were fighting for a complete reconstruction of republican power. But this conflict was to grow sharper on other terrains where the main power blocs were present: on the one hand the CNT was directly touched by it and, on the other hand the institutions of the *Generalitat* were a component part of the struggle.

Since December a conflict over supplies had been brewing between Councillor Comorera and the CNT unions which held him responsible for the lack of food. The PSUC responded by raising the stakes in the conflict and mobilising the popular sectors which it controlled under the slogan "Fewer Committees, more bread and only one government: the *Generalitat*". These demonstrations, which proved that the PSUC was perfectly conscious of having failed in its goal of stopping the revolutionary process, continued throughout the early months of 1937. At the same time

III. October 1936-Spring 1937 : the Task of National Governments in Republican Spain

Coming within the space of about a month, the constitution of the governments of Largo Caballero, Taradellas and Aguirre was a major turning point in the unfolding of the war. In the last analysis these three governments have a common significance: the reconstruction of republican power. However, they acted within very different political and social situations. Each followed its own road, in the framework of a situation which had changed globally, marked by contradictions and conflicts of a different nature: if in the previous phase the "divergences" between Catalonia and the Basque Country were dominant, in the second phase the "convergences" tended to impose themselves.

A decisive common element, of a political and ideological character, is the absolute priority given to the objective of "winning the war". From autumn 1936, the strategic debate in the republican camp for the first months after the uprising — whether to make revolution in order to win the war, or win the war by renouncing revolutionary social and political objectives — was practically resolved. The formula attributed to Durruti "renounce everything except victory" is a good summary of the turnabout made by the main revolutionary current. The POUM alone continued to defend a revolutionary line, under conditions which we shall see later on. "Winning the war" meant four things in essence: re-establishing republican institutions as the sole political authority; organizing a regular army under a single leadership; an end to the collectivization policy, confining nationalization to that strictly necessary for the conduct of military operations; and presenting the war as a national-democratic struggle against fascism to facilitate the national alliances needed for its pursuit. This is the general framework for studying the course of events in Euzkadi and Catalonia.

Euzkadi

The varying interpretations of the political significance of the Basque government represent, in my opinion, the best starting point for analysing this period. Garmendia says that "The Popular Front disappeared behind what one can term an antifascist national front under PNV hegemony" [7.27]. Tuñon has a similar position. Fusi approaches the issue from another angle which brings to light a very important question. In his view after the Aguirre government was formed the war in the Basque country took on "the character of a Basque war against external aggression" [1.46]. This interpretation, which raises a series of problems on the analysis of the war in Euzkadi, including the explanation for the defeat, merits a more detailed treatment.

Let us briefly recap the conditions under which the Largo Caballero government was formed. It was called the "Popular Front Government" to stress the "left turn" which it represented in relation to its predecessor, the Giral government. It is undeniable that its composition expressed a shift in the balance of forces within the Popular Front coalition towards the workers' organizations, both in the weight of the socialists and in the entry of the PCE; and the later entry of some CNT ministers further reinforced this. But this does not suffice for a political characterization of a government. In reality, the fundamental difference between the Largo Caballero and Giral governments is that the latter was a phantom without the slightest authority, whereas the former attempted to mobilize all possible forces to build an effective political authority within a republican framework. On the other hand, the designation "Popular Front Government" is insufficient to characterise its political line and fails to distinguish it from others. An effective summary of its line can be found in the speeches of José Diaz, the general secretary of the PCE, which was a minority force but which from 18 July onward was the most consistent defender of the policy of "winning the war". In a speech to the *Cortes* on 1 October 1936 Diaz said: "We, the Communist Party, say that everyone, workers and democrats, must travel a long road together, and that our common interests will strengthen our bonds of solidarity and fraternity... some have tried to characterise our government as communist, socialist or seeking particular social goals. In all seriousness we reply to those who spread such ideas by explaining that the present government is just a continuation of the preceding one: it is a democratic republican government by whose side we have fought in the past and shall continue to fight until we defeat the enemies of the Spanish Republic... We, who can count not only on the support of 90% of the population, but also on the assistance of the whole of international democracy, say: in spite of this support and knowing what it means for the pursuit of the war, we democrats, workers, republicans, we Basque nationalists (who fight with us because they are true Catholics and democrats), we shall win, because we fight for a just and legal cause" [12.238-240]. This is the ideology which imposed its hegemony on the republican camp in spring 1937, but was already on the march and which marked the policy of the Popular Front from autumn 1936 onwards.

It would be an arbitrary simplification to identify the Aguirre government with this orientation. Granja rightly characterizes it as a coalition between the PNV and the parties of the Popular Front. Formally, one could define it as a national front government. However, one has to be careful to spell out the political distinction between the Aguirre government and the

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Salas Larrazabal and Thomas are indicative) [7.34-35].²² I shall deal with this from different viewpoints.

No-one disputes the crushing superiority of the military forces at Mola's disposition, notably his air forces, which represented the central element in the strategy traced by the Northern offensive [1.29ff]. Tuñon mentions the very interesting testimonies on the destructive capacity of aerial armaments, not only materially but on the morale of the Basque troops: the impotence expressed in Ciutat's letter to colonel Rojo is striking [1.37].²³ It remains to be assessed whether the problem was materially soluble or not — that is, whether the republican government would have been capable of sending sufficient aerial support to Euzkadi, but refused to do so through bad faith or a major tactical mistake by the general staff. According to the telegram sent by Ajuriaguerra to Irujo on June 13, the Basque Country was "unable to defend itself" because of "open betrayal" by the republican government. On the other hand, if one believes the defenders of the central government, the defeat was a consequence of the military errors of the Basque government.

In a report cited by Azaña, Martínez Cabrera writes: "contrary to the statements of the Basque government, a real army was never organized, even though the necessary personnel and materials were available. What was lacking was discipline, leadership, unity of action, the will to co-operate to reach a common goal" [7.38]. We have enough information to hand to formulate a reasonable judgement on these polemics on the military problem. We shall deal with the polemics on political issues later.

The nationalist accusation, reproaching the central government with having abandoned, does not seem to have much foundation. In particular as far as aviation is concerned, there is documentation enough to attest what was tried and achieved by the Largo Caballero government, and the even more intense efforts of the Negrin government, with Prieto at the head of the whole defence policy. The truth is that the Republic was not in a position to give effective support to Euzkadi, faced with the power of Italian and above all German aviation. Organising a military resistance crowned with success in such conditions was a fundamentally political question.

Moreover the main military errors of the Basque government were prior to the spring offensive: the refusal to conduct an effective purge; to put industry on a war footing, which was both necessary and possible; and so on. These very grave errors were

22. According to Sala with the fall of Bilbao "there was a definite shift in the balance towards the anti-republican side". Thomas adds that half the explosives for the whole of Spain were produced in Biscay.

23. Ciutat described the reaction of the soldiers to the bombs in these terms: "During the night we tried to strengthen morale and raise spirits, but as soon as the sun appeared the fear of facing fourteen hours of light was so strong that positions were abandoned on the slightest pretext."

tolerated, if not encouraged by the republican authorities. The criticisms appeared only with the defeat.

As for the bad relations on the military terrain between the republican commanders and the Aguirre government, the latter made every effort to ameliorate them from the onset of the Francoist offensive. It should be recalled that Aguirre took command of the army just after two successive failed attempts to give it to generals Pozas and Asensio, key men in the republican central military apparatus. It was the government of Largo Caballero who refused to send these generals to Bilbao. On the other hand Aguirre only held his command for a few weeks, before passing it to Gamir and his officer corps, who arrived in Bilbao several days before the defeat.*²⁴

Finally, other important problems in the military organization of the Basque troops, like for example the central role played by the columns and battalions of the party, were not so much an exception as the rule within the republican camp in this period.

In conclusion, I think that the military problems cannot be singled out as the fundamental cause of the defeat, neither in the Basque government's version nor that of the republican authorities.

The fundamental problems were of a political nature, which is normal in a civil war, that is to say a military conflict in which politics is always in command. Obviously there are many political issues related to this question; I shall take up those that seem to me the most important.

I have already cited the historian Fusi, who declaims in eulogistic terms, when referring to the Guernica programme, that it was "what could be expected from the PNV". We can always add that the Aguirre government led the war exactly as "could be expected". I think that the only chance of resistance in the framework of such unfavourable relations of forces was to use the methods of popular revolutionary war. In this sense, those who proposed to defend Bilbao using the methods of the defence of Madrid were perfectly right. The purely technical response of Leizola, who claimed that the narrow streets of Bilbao made such a thing impossible [7.34], was completely out of place in dealing with a decisively political issue of this type.

The catastrophic decision to leave the Bilbao factories intact, in spite of the possibility indicated by Rubial that they could be rendered useless without destroying them [6.II.151] was excused with the argument that "we believe and expect that we shall return". One could also "expect" this from the PNV, not only because of the experience of the battle of Guipuzcoa, where similar arguments were used but also because it was logical that a party like the PNV should consider as an essential objective that the factories of the Biscay bourgeoisie should remain intact, even if it was conscious of the imminent risk that they would fall into enemy hands.

Finally, the terrible wave of desertions and demoralization which wracked the republican troops

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during the later phases of the war — confirming the cynical and bitter judgement of Azafia [7.73] was once again what “could be expected” from the absolute hegemony accorded the PNV in the leadership of the politics of the Basque Country.²⁵

In conclusion we should recall what we said in the last chapter. The PNV was able to govern almost without opposition. Fraser refers to a critical document from parties of the Basque popular front which was made public just before the Francoist offensive. But his account calls into question the consistency of these criticisms with the practice of these parties [6.II.135].²⁶ The criticisms, when they arrived, were far too late. The December 1937 Euzkadi Communist Party document cited by Garmendia sounds more like a settling of accounts than a self-criticism. The Euzkadi Communist Party, like the Spanish Communist Party, did not have the slightest legitimacy in criticizing those who sought to “gag” the proletariat or in its assertion that “the active intervention of the masses in political life will impose a change in the political orientation of the government”. A month after the May events these words seem almost sarcastic.

The Pact of Santoña

All the same, if it is fundamental to understand “why” the battle for Euzkadi was lost, it is also important to see “how” it was lost. It is only recently that the reports of the Basque government commissioners.

Lejarcegui and Ugarte have been published. They explain in detail to their superiors the organization behind what has gone into history as the Pact of Santoña. Unfortunately the length of these documents does not permit us to reproduce them. I shall confine myself therefore to a brief summary of these facts, according to the account given by José Maria Garmendia.

On May 11, the Italian consul Cavalletti met with Onaindia and informed him of Mussolini's willingness to intervene as the guarantor of the surrender of Bilbao. He recommended if possible an official request from the Basque government, preferably in the form of a telegram from Aguirre to the Duce. Aguirre would hear nothing of surrender and expressed his desire to try and defend Bilbao. But towards the end of May the situation became desperate. Aguirre was removed from the leadership of operations (for reasons which are not

clear) and replaced by Ajuraguerra.

On May 16, he ordered Onaindia to convey to the Italian consul the wish that “if Franco's troops enter Bilbao, the Italians, conscious of our problems, would guarantee the safety of the civil population, with the assurance that would remain until the end to avoid disorder”. It was at this point that the Pact of Santoña began to take shape.

On June 19, Bilbao fell: the PNV took responsibility for freeing Francoist political prisoners and from preventing any damage to buildings and industrial installations — which did not stop the bombardments from the Francoist air forces. Ajuraguerra charged Onaindia with informing the Italians of this.

The demoralization in the nationalist battalions was total. Ajuraguerra met with the military chiefs to organise the surrender and sent Onaindia to Italy to inform the Italian government of the characteristics of the Basque people, of their nationalist ideology; an issue which as might be expected found Count Ciano, Mussolini's Minister of Foreign Affairs, completely indifferent — and to express “the hope that the Duce would support our aspirations”.

Mussolini informed Franco of the PNV's positions and gave his opinion on the opportunity to reach an agreement which would commence with the fall of the Northern Front and would safeguard “the moral aspect of the Catholic world when the struggle of the Basque Catholic people ended”. Franco accepted, while fearing that the military forces would not obey their commanders. But there was a misunderstanding with severe consequences. Mussolini thought there would be a public surrender. But what the PNV wanted was a farce (“surrender must take the exact form of a military operation: it must appear as an “Italian” victory and not the result of diplomatic negotiations”).

The performance would serve to hide the reality from the republican government, in which the nationalist leader Irujo continued to take part, and would absolve the PNV and the Basque government of all responsibility. This could be very important if the Republic retook the offensive and won the war (it should be remembered that in winter 1937, the outcome of the war was by no means certain). With the aim of the performance established, what was now needed was the staging.

On June 20 the PNV leadership told the war commissioners of the party about the project. Two of these, Lejarcegui and Ugarte, produced the report which has made it possible to establish the facts with more precision. According to the report, the plan was based on the following idea: “The Basques will stop fighting and will stay in defensive positions without abandoning the Euzkadi front; that is, they will not collaborate in any way with the Army of the North”.

To bring this plan about, the party battalions had to be strictly controlled. That is why, when general Gamir tried to dissolve these battalions to form a regular army, the PNV organised a veritable rebellion, which forced the national units to leave the front. Gamir

25. See note 18.

26. The Popular Front parties in Euzkadi demanded the fusion of the militias into a people's army subject to the single command of the Army of the North. They also asked for the nomination of political commissars, the “energetic elimination” of the enemies remaining in the republican territories, the nationalization of the banks and the war industry, workers' control, etc. But the PNV representative in the government, Gonzalo Nardiz, said that he did not remember big political differences in the government up to the last stage of the defence of Bilbao. This opinion is coherent with the facts and the conduct of these parties from the formation of the Aguirre government.

retreated and left the PNV's hands free. Throughout July, acts of insubordination and indiscipline by these battalions multiplied. Lejarcegui and Ugarte state that “our role is likely to antagonize not only the military heads but also the political and trade union organizations of Euzkadi and the North... because our role is that of veritable agents provocateurs who work as much for the enemy as for the ‘antifascist cause’”. This did not stop them adding, to prove their loyalty to the PNV, that during this time “the attitude of the chiefs, the commissioners and the officers of the nationalist battalions has been praiseworthy and dignified”.

As a consequence of the application of the plan the PNV decided to boycott an important offensive launched by the Northern army, and to this end launch an appeal to disobey the detention orders directed against them by general Gamir.

On August 17, Ajuraguerra met with the Italian military chief at San Juan de Luz, to inform him on the exact intentions of the nationalist troops and reach an agreement on the conditions for the evacuation of the military and political officials of the PNV.

On the 14th the Francoist offensive on the Asturias began. Nationalist battalions which risked isolation were ordered to desert. As Lejarcegui and Ugarte say: “all our efforts were directed towards two objectives: first, to avoid any participation in battle by our troops, and second to demobilise the front so that the ‘Italian’ divisions could move in”.

On the 23rd, all nationalist units managed to concentrate on Santoña, leaving the republican troops completely isolated, which was necessary for the success of the plan. Ajuraguerra asked for a delay of 48 hours in the date fixed for surrender: 24 August.

From this moment things began to go wrong. Failures in communication with the Italian general staff led him to think that the terms of the surrender had not been respected and, consequently, that the agreement no longer held. The boats charged with the evacuation did not arrive. Ajuraguerra tried to initiate new negotiations with general Mancini which led to no practical result. Finally the boats arrived but the intervention of the Francoist marine held back the evacuation. A last-minute agreement with Mancini envisaged that the nationalist political and military leaders would gather in a building surrounded by Italian troops, who were to guarantee their safe evacuation. Ajuraguerra and the other nationalist leaders chose the El Dueso penitentiary which was controlled by Italian troops, next to the concentration camp of Castro y Laredo, where there were nationalist soldiers as well as civilians. But on September 4 the Italian troops were replaced by the Francoist army.

On October 15, 14 political and military leaders of the PNV were shot. Ajuraguerra, who had been condemned to death, saved his skin thanks to pressure from the Italian general staff. He later reappeared on the political scene after Franco's death as a significant political leader of the PNV. Until his death, he jealously guarded the true secret of the Pact of

Santoña. It was not until 1983, after the publication of Onaindia's book, that the truth about the facts became known.

The Pact of Santoña was not really a pact. It was an open and scrupulously organized betrayal. I cannot understand how Fusi can reduce it to a simple “result of Basque particularism” [5.160]. Even from the point of view of the PNV's own interests, leaving on one side the moral repugnance evoked by knowledge of the true facts, the Pact represented a politically absurd decision which could only lead to catastrophic results for the nationalists themselves.

It seems interesting to me to refer to the way José Antonio Aguirre presents, or rather “alludes to” this problem, since his was to be the official version of events in nationalist milieus until the fraud was discovered [9.973]. Aguirre presents the pact as a justifiable consequence of the republican government's rejection of his plan to send 40,000 Basque soldiers to Catalonia across France. Aguirre presents his senseless plan as the proof of his will to military resistance, which never materialised because of the choice made by the Republicans, and the pact as the means of avoiding “a useless and stupid sacrifice”. But this version of events, made in 1956, contradicts chronology: the decision to prepare the pact was adopted by the BBB, with Ajuraguerra at its head, on 16 June, before Aguirre made his proposal. Objectively, at the very least Aguirre's testimony is a gigantic falsification of history and an affront to the memory of the Basque people similar to the report of October 4 1937 [7.62].²⁷

These were the practical results of Ajuraguerra's criterion for absolving the Basque government or the EBB of “any level of responsibility” in the surrender [7.55]. Put more crudely, “A regiment which cannot fight surrenders; a government, never” [2.210], to take an expression of Iturralde which claims to be worthy but in its concrete context is simply hypocritical.

In conclusion I should like to deal with a rather unclear political issue. The prospect of a “separate peace” was an element of the PNV's politics from the outset, and the basic instrument was the Vatican. This

27. The report is a concentration of untruths aiming to present the surrender of the Basque army as the result of the situation of the Basques (that is to say the nationalists) prepared to struggle until death for “Right and the freedom of their race, the only one faithful to the principles of Christ among the cowardice and treason of the other republican forces.” Lejarcegui and Ugarte developed this to justify the “surrender” to the republican government.

28. The content of the telegram was the following: Franco and Mola state that if Bilbao surrenders they undertake to preserve the town, to guarantee respect of people and property as well as of the soldiers who lay down their arms, including the leaders, except for those who are guilty of criminal acts; they also promise administrative decentralization and “progressive justice” according to the principles of the *Reserua Novarum*. The text ends in affirming that the “Holy Father exhorts Your Excellency to examine these proposals attentively and rapidly with the aim of seeing this bloody conflict finally come to an end.” The telegram was intercepted by the Republican government and never arrived at its destination.

was the objective of Cardinal Pacelli's intercepted telegram of May 12 1937 [7.45].²⁸ Garmendia interprets this telegram, as well as the contacts made at the same time between the spokespeople of Mussolini and Franco with Onaindia, as initiatives corresponding to an interest "which could be nothing other than the interests of the Vatican". Why could not this interest also have been Franco's, with the Vatican's complicity? I see no reason to exclude this possibility.

During the whole of the civil war, Francoism played very effective "politics" with excellent results. In the situation in the Basque country towards mid-May, to advance the notion of a "separate peace" was a time bomb with potentially demolishing effects. Perhaps, in the battle for the North, Franco possessed more than superior aircraft and artillery: perhaps his political superiority also contributed in a decisive manner to the catastrophe at the end of June.

Garmendia asks why no-one called Aguirre to account after the defeat and his installation in Catalonia [7.63]. In my opinion there are two reasons: the first, of a diplomatic character, is that "Negrin's efforts to reach an 'honourable peace' whilst denouncing foreign fascist aggression, fit perfectly with the presence in his government of a Catholic political formation enjoying broad political sympathy in Europe"; the second, directly political reason, was "the mutual interest in formally preserving the alliance of 1936".

I believe that the key to the matters dealt with in this work is to be found in this alliance and that it was not merely formal, but included decisive strategic and political elements common to all who collaborated in the reconstruction of the republic during the first revolutionary weeks of the war. The Negrin government, in the face of conflicts with the PNV and *Esquerra* in August 1938, constituted the clearest incarnation of "republican unity" in a strategy which led, by different paths, to defeat.

29. On 5 August 1938, Negrin proposed to the council of ministers measures that were intended to transfer all the war industries of the Generalitat to the control of the Republican government. In reality these measures were consistent with the general attitude of the government which aimed to eliminate all residues of the Generalitat's autonomy. But this was the straw that broke the camel's back by provoking the resignation of Aiguader and, in solidarity with him, of Irujo, the two representatives of the PNV and the *Esquerra* in the "national unity" government. According to the socialist minister Zugazagoitia, Negrin was a fervent Spanish nationalist to whom he attributed the following words: "There is no longer a Spanish nation! Before allowing nationalist campaigns which would lead to our break up, which I could in no way allow, I would leave power to Franco without any other condition than that he breaks from the Italians and Germans. On the question of the unity of Spain I am unmovable." Negrin would have been able to formulate in his own fashion Calvo Sotelo's phrase "Better a black Spain than a broken Spain."



Appendices

I. The Spanish proletariat before the advancing revolution

by Andreu Nin

Comrades: the Spanish army, renowned for its incompetence, is famous not for its victories but its defeats. At most it can boast of successes against the working classes inside the country. But whenever it has taken part in military actions it was always systematically crushed. We knew that the Spanish army hierarchy was cowardly and incompetent, but experience had yet to prove that it was also unbelievably stupid.

Imagine the idiocy of the Spanish military which, after laborious preparations, launched an uprising on 19 July, a revolt seeking to finish off the workers' movement, suppress its conquests, and destroy their organizations — in brief, to install a bloody dictatorship in our country like those to which the Italians, Germans and Austrians are subject.

The military wanted to crush the workers' movement. We have never doubted the proletarian character of the Spanish revolution, but it took a military as stupid as the Spanish to accelerate the revolutionary process with the rising of July 19, provoking a proletarian revolution deeper than the Russian revolution itself.

The proletariat does not fight for the democratic republic

Workers of Barcelona, you have heard us several times at this tribune during this revolution, and it is with pride that I can now say that events have fully confirmed our party's predictions, predictions which made us less than popular when the popular front triumphed on the back of the working masses of Catalonia and Spain. On the very eve of the elections we said from at this same tribune that bourgeois democracy could not resolve Spain's problems because a left republican government would be worse than its predecessor, not for lack of good faith but because only the proletarian revolution can attack the privileges of the exploiting classes. A bourgeois government, even the most advanced, could not accomplish the tasks of the working class, which does not hesitate like the petty bourgeoisie.

After the victory of 16 February, we said that the revolution was not finished, that the struggle was not complete, that the struggle would continue, because at stake was not a conflict between bourgeois democracy and fascism, but between fascism and socialism, between the bourgeoisie and the working class. Facts, comrades, have proved us completely right. On 19

July, the working class, arms in hand, barred the way to fascism in Catalonia and forcefully posed the question of power.

The struggle continues throughout Spain. Should the working class now defend the bourgeois republic arms in hand? Are the Catalan workers, are the Spanish workers, making these enormous sacrifices, shedding their blood to return to the republic of Senor Azana?

The working class of Catalonia and Spain does not fight for the democratic republic. Until now, the spanish democratic revolution had not yet been carried out. Five years of the republic have resolved none of the fundamental problems of the Spanish revolution. The problem of the church, of the land, of the army, of the purging of the magistrature and the catalan question have not been resolved. Well, comrades, all these concrete objectives of the democratic revolution have not been realised by the liberal bourgeoisie, which has shown itself incapable of realising them for five years now; but by the working class, which realised them, arms in hand, in a few days. You already know how the problem of the church was resolved: not a church remains in Spain. The problem of its wealth, of its economic power, was resolved by pure and simple expropriation. The problem of the land was resolved because the peasants waited neither for the law of contracts on culture nor for the measures of the Institute for Agrarian Reform, but expelled the owners and seized the land.

There was another problem, that of the army. We heard endless talk about purging the officer hierarchy. The working class has already purged the army by destroying it and creating militias, which have been transformed into a veritable red army. We will accept no pretext for watering down these workers' militias, even the pretext of creating an army of volunteers to replace the old permanent army. Comrades, these workers' militias should not and will not be the army of the democratic republic, but the red army of the working class.

And this army, comrades, will not betray us. This army is the flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood, and in it there is no place for suspect officers, This army is and will be led by the sons of the working class, which will never betray.

There remains, comrades, the problem of Catalonia, and I invite you to reflect on the fundamental difference which exists between the way this issue was posed before 19 July and today. The hegemonic class in the Catalan nationalist movement was the petty bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeois parties were the most authentic representatives of this nationalist movement and the facts, comrades, have shown that once again we were right. Today, the Catalan problem is resolved, but it was resolved by the working class, which

organised in Catalonia and acted as a completely autonomous state. The working class has resolved all the fundamental problems of the democratic revolution. Today, the slogan "defend democracy" has no more meaning. Comrades, on 19 July, Spanish feudalism, clericalism and militarism perished, but not only Spanish feudalism, clericalism and militarism. The capitalist economy also perished, for ever.

The revolution and the war are inseparable

We are now told that we have an immediate goal: the battle on the front. We are told that the war must first be won, and then we shall see.

But these two questions cannot be separated. Pure technique cannot win this war. Otherwise, given its superiority in armament and discipline, the military would have won on July 19th. Why didn't they win? Because we have what they do not: hope for a new society, which we oppose to those fighting for a society which is inevitably condemned to disappear.

This is why, at the height of the struggle, social and political conquests are as important as military victories.

If we finish capitalism off, if we lead the revolution along the socialist road, then we will create, and are already creating, a movement in Spain which is so powerful, and a revolution which is so deep, that all attempts to impose a monarchist, fascist and reactionary rabble can only break apart upon it.

This is why we say that each concession, each step backwards is a present to the enemy.

What does the antifascist struggle mean? There is no such thing as an abstract antifascist struggle. What is fascism? Fascism is the bourgeoisie's last resort to conserve and consolidate its domination. Capitalism can no longer resolve its contradictions and has no other option than fascism. This is why we said from this same tribune that, even if there was a temporary success for the republican left in Spain, the petty bourgeoisie would prove unable to resolve its own contradictions and the victory of fascism would be inevitable. There is only one effective form of struggle against fascism: proletarian revolution. If we heeded the beautiful phrases of the left republicans, if we believed that our interest was right now to defend the bourgeois republic, we would only prepare, sooner or later, the victory of fascism. I therefore reiterate once more, in the name of our party, that only the Spanish proletariat today possesses the key to the situation: the proletarian revolution to install a socialist republic in our country.

We cannot return to where we were before.

The bourgeois democrats dream, naturally, of returning to the old situation. However, many of them have failed to understand what has happened in our country, have not understood that nothing remains of

the old situation and that we are actually living through a period of profound dislocation. These gentlemen dream of a return to the old situation, for example that of the parliament of 16 February which is rightly dead and buried. This parliament reflected the reality of the time, but do not forget, comrades, that the fascists and all the reactionary sectors of the country, who unleashed the civil war, were represented in that parliament. We say that to a new situation correspond new institutions. If they want to keep the parliament of 16 February, let them put it in a museum.

From now on, a parliamentary system like the old one will not satisfy us. We are not for freedom for everyone; in the present situation, we deny salt and bread to the reactionary elements and the bourgeoisie, to whom we concede not one political right. New institutions, born of revolution, must be created, worthy of the aspirations of that revolution and of the working masses who are struggling even now throughout Spain for a better society. In this sense, it is obvious, comrades, that the 16 February parliament does not meet today's needs. A new legislative body must be created, and we believe that it will be necessary to convoke constituent assemblies to forge the basis of a new Spanish society. In these constituent assemblies, as I have already said, the bourgeoisie and the exploiting classes cannot be represented. They must be formed by representatives of workers' committees, of peasants and combatants, that is to say by those who have made the revolution, who fight the enemy today and are forging the new Spain of tomorrow.

For a workers' government

Obviously, comrades, we must confront immediate problems. We need a strong government, that is the general view of the popular masses of the country. We need a strong government, but not with the meaning that bourgeois elements gave this term in the past. We need a strong government, founded on the highest authority - that which flows from the confidence of the workers - and which is ready to fight to the end. Who can provide such a government? The one just elected in Madrid? We honestly don't think so. The working class needs far more than a ministerial declaration from a government chosen by the president of the republic. Any of the old left governments, presided over by any old Giral, could have made such a declaration. It was a government which aspired to represent all Spaniards, a government riddled with democratic bourgeois prejudices, a government completely incapable of measuring up to the needs of the situation. We say that in this situation, the only adequate government is a government with no bourgeois ministers, a purely workers' government. It should not represent simply the workers' interests but those of all layers of the Spanish proletariat. In fact the revolution we are participating in today is not the revolution of a party or of an organization but of all the working class, made by its parties and its



organizations. No-one should lay exclusive claim to this revolution because it belongs to everyone, to all working people.

The present government represents, without any doubt, a step forward compared with the previous one, but it remains a popular front government, that is a government which arose from the situation before 19 July and the workers' insurrection. It represents a step forward in relation to the former government but a step backward in relation to the current situation. There is therefore no other solution outside of a workers' government. The slogan of the entire working class in the days to come is the following: bourgeois ministers out of the government, long live the workers' government!

Today, it is more necessary than ever to unite our efforts. The struggle at the front is very hard. We would not be true to our revolutionary conscience if we said that the struggle and the victory will be easy. No, comrades, the battle is not easy; victory is certain, but it will cost us great sacrifices. We will do our best not to shed the blood of the working classes and to hasten the proletariat's inevitable victory. One of the main obstacles which impedes the organization of victory and the triumph of the workers' militias, is the lack of a unified command which can direct all operations. Under the present circumstances, the Madrid government cannot accomplish such a task. In Catalonia, we have created the central committee of the workers' militias, which in reality centralises all political actions, and our party proposes the immediate

constitution of a national defence committee (*Junta Nacional de defensa*) which, like the central committee of workers' militias, could centralise all actions and lead the war through to a definitive victory.

At this point I should add that this point of view is fully shared by the workers of the Levant. I do not know if you are all familiar with the situation there. In the Levant, there is a situation very similar to ours. There also, from the first days of the movement, the republican government tried to create a sort of delegation of the Madrid government so as to hold back the revolutionary movement. The workers of Valencia accompanied Señor Martínez Barrio and Señor Espla to the station where they sent them back to Madrid, and, in place of this delegation from the government of the capital, the workers of Valencia created a popular executive committee which is in reality no less than the government of the proletarian revolution in the Levant.

That is why, comrades, the popular executive committee of Valencia shares our point of view. We can now say that Valencia and Catalonia form the vanguard of the Spanish revolution and will lead it forward

The CNT, the FAI and the problems of the revolution

At a moment of such great historical responsibility, the proletariat must march forward as it has done up until now. There is no hiding the fact that the future of the revolution, in our opinion, depends to a large degree on the attitude adopted by the CNT and the FAI. These two organisations enjoy immense support from the working class. We have profound ideological differences with them, but we can state that, in the present situation, they manifest a clearly revolutionary orientation and a much more developed understanding of proletarian reality than other workers' organisations. In these circumstances, the future of the revolution depends on whether or not other working class forces can reach agreement with the CNT and the FAI. We are not fighting simply to preserve our organisation. We are proud of our organisation, proud of our name. But we want, in the light of actual experience, to see if convergence is possible. I can confirm, comrades, that today we find full agreement with the CNT comrades on fundamental questions which previously divided us.

Let us look, for example, at the question of the army, on which we had profound disagreements with the anarchists. They said that it wasn't necessary to build an army and that the spontaneous action of the masses would suffice. Today we have all contributed, with the same enthusiasm, to building an army: the workers' militias. On this point, the need for an arm, we all agree: communists, socialists and anarchists.

The anarchists always used to speak of proceeding to the immediate establishment of libertarian communism. Today, the CNT and the FAI understand that it is in fact impossible to proceed directly to

libertarian communism and that the situation obliges us to pass through several transitional stages, which means that now the CNT and the FAI recognise the need for political power. I think, comrade anarchists, that we can perfectly easily reach an understanding on this point. You could, for example, have refused to enter a government, because the name makes you take fright. For our part, we say that what counts is not the form but the content. If you do not want to characterise this absolutely vital leadership body as a government but as an executive committee, then let's call it an executive committee, or a revolutionary committee, or a popular committee, but let us do our duty and constitute it.

It is obvious that in Spain today we have a political system which does not correspond to the present situation, and that it is absolutely incomprehensible that in these circumstances there should be in Catalonia a government formed by representatives of the republican left, just as it is incomprehensible that today there should be a Spanish government with bourgeois minister. There is another problem on which we had differences with our anarchist comrades. This is the problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat. What is the dictatorship of the proletariat? It is authority exercised solely and exclusively by the class of workers, the suppression of all political rights and all freedom for the representatives of the class enemy. If that is the dictatorship of the proletariat, comrades, then I declare that the proletarian dictatorship exists in Catalonia today.

Since we have no other differences, we can perfectly easily find agreement with the CNT comrades. If you prefer it, let's not speak of the dictatorship of the proletariat. We can give it any name you please. What counts is to agree, ourselves and the anarchists, that in the present period there can be neither political rights nor freedoms for the bourgeoisie, but only for the working class.

Some days ago, the CNT published a manifesto in which it stated that it wanted to oppose any proletarian dictatorship exercised by a party. As for ourselves, comrades, we declare here that for us the proletarian dictatorship is the dictatorship of all the working classes, of all popular classes and that no trade union or political organisation has the right to impose its own dictatorship in the name of the interests of the revolution. And, in this sense we should add that if the CNT, the socialist party or the communist party claim to exercise an exclusive monopoly of the revolution, they will find us ranged against them. The dictatorship of the proletariat is workers' democracy exercised by all workers without exception.

We also oppose any attempt to install a personal dictatorship. We consider the proletarian dictatorship the most advanced expression of democracy. Bourgeois democracy is simply a cover for capitalist dictatorship, for capitalist exploitation. This is the dictatorship of a minority of the population, of the minority of the exploiters, over the immense majority. The dictatorship of the proletariat suppresses political rights, but only



those of a tiny minority, the exploiters. This is the government of the immense majority of the population against this group of exploiters.

Let us set to and create this workers' democracy. Here as elsewhere, our party is ready to fight side by side with the CNT and with the working class as a whole, against any attempt to transform the dictatorship of the proletariat into a dictatorship of a party or person.

Forward to the socialist republic

I shall conclude, comrades. We are living in the middle of a decisive stage of the revolution. Shame on us if we cannot profit from this conjuncture! History rarely offers such opportunities.

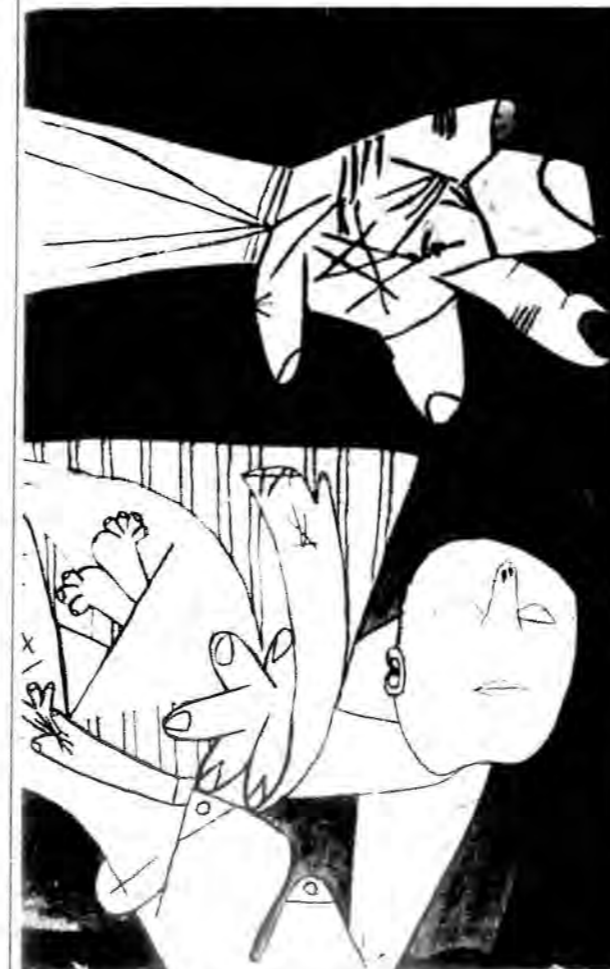
We find ourselves in a unique situation. The Spanish workers are armed. In previous experiences, here as in the rest of Europe, the liberal bourgeoisie and the demagogic petty bourgeoisie disarmed the working class to crush it later. But we say, comrades, that in the present situation the proletariat must accomplish an elementary duty: it must not let itself be disarmed. The workers must keep the weapons with which they go to the front so that they can use them against the rule of the bourgeoisie when they come back.

Comrades, there is a hard struggle ahead of us, but we have already won some important successes. During the last few weeks that Catalan working class has proved its spirit of sacrifice and organizational capacities. Do you think it means nothing to have

destroyed, in a few weeks, an entire army with its arms and its discipline, and to have built a new army? Does it mean nothing that despite economic chaos the workers have triumphed in the enterprises, restored to the public services, and that life develops with the normality that you see around you? Comrades, I tell you that the spectacle which the working class offer us today gives us cause for great hope. This is a working class prepared to lead the struggle for victory or death, but which understands the needs sacrifices imposed by this situation. It understands that to defeat the enemy, to finish off fascism, to build the socialist society of tomorrow, still more sacrifices will be demanded. The working day will have to be raised and wages will have to fall temporarily. Our working class is ready for such sacrifice; for the exploiters it would not have made them, but for the society of tomorrow it will.

The struggle must be continued without ever stopping, and without being deceived by democratic legalities. In Spain we do not fight for the democratic republic. There is a new dawn in our country's skies. It is the dawn of the socialist republic. Workers of Barcelona, fight for it to the end!

[Text of Andreu Nin's speech in Barcelona on 6 September 1936. Published shortly after in the form of a pamphlet by Editorial Marxista, it is reprinted here from the collection of articles and speeches by Nin entitled *Los Problemas de la revolucion española* Ruedo Iberico, Paris, 1971, pp 175-184]]



II: Extracts from the POUM programme

The present stage of the Spanish revolution represents a moment of transition between fascist counter-revolution and the democratic socialist revolution.

This situation has existed since 1931 and can be maintained for a certain period with oscillations, sometimes to the left and sometimes to the right. However, there is only one choice in the last analysis: socialism or fascism. We have on the one hand the example of the Russian revolution and, on the other, that of Italy and Germany. Either the counter-revolutionary forces of the big bourgeoisie and the feudal layers will triumph, imposing the most implacable and unbridled fascism, which will mean the organic disappearance of the workers' movement for an entire period, or the class of the working people will win, establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat which will accomplish the democratic revolution betrayed by the petty bourgeoisie, in order to pass directly to socialist revolution. The character of the revolution in our country is not simply democratic, but democratic and socialist.

In our epoch, the democratic revolution is tightly linked to the socialist revolution and can only be completed if the proletariat takes power. It can no longer be maintained on the basis of democracy. It evolves more or less rapidly, according to circumstance, towards a dictatorship of the fascist type, because fascism is the political manifestation of the decadence of the bourgeoisie.

The working class is the only guarantee of an authentic democracy. Thanks to its resolute defence of democratic demands which the bourgeoisie fears (the left bourgeoisie) or destroys (that of the right) the working class will come to take the road of socialist revolution.

The proletariat must transform itself into the true herald of democratic conquests. It must become the great liberator, bringing long-awaited answers to the problems of the democratic revolution: the problems of land, of the nationalities, the structure of the state, the liberation of women, the destruction of the power of the church, the suppression of parasitic castes, and the material and moral amelioration of the workers' conditions.

The dictatorship of the proletariat, which is transitory and persists only until the withering away of classes and class differences, will not destroy democracy, but will consolidate it even further by creating a genuine democracy, workers' democracy.

The workers' party thinks that the fundamental premises for the unification of revolutionary Marxists are the following:

1) the Spanish revolution is a revolution of a democratic and socialist type. The dilemma is: socialism or fascism. The working classes cannot take power peacefully, but only through armed revolution;

2) once power is taken, the dictatorship of the proletariat must be established during a phase of transition. The organs of power of this dictatorship presuppose the broadest and most thorough workers' democracy possible;

3) A workers' alliance is needed both nationally and locally. It must inevitably pass through three phases' first it must be the organ of the united front, leading offensive and defensive legal and extra-legal actions, and then it must become an insurrectional body, and finally an organ of power.

4) the problem of nationalities must be recognised. Spain must be transformed into an Iberian union of socialist republics;

5) after the first phase of the revolution, a democratic solution must be given to the problem of the land. The land to those who till it;

6) in case of war, the imperialist war must be transformed into a civil war. No confidence should be placed in the League of Nations, the united front of imperialism;

7) the unified party will remain outside the second and third internationals, which have failed, and will pursue its fight for world revolutionary socialist unity on new bases;

8) the USSR must be defended, without supporting its policy of compromise with the capitalist states but rather through international revolutionary action by the working class. The right to criticise the policy of the leaders of the USSR that are prejudicial to the advance of world revolution;

9) our unified party will be permanently based on democratic centralism.

Contrary to what might be thought, our interpretation of the popular front does not contradict our signing the platform which served as the basis for the elections of 16 February 1936. This was a simple accord of an electoral character, whose main goal was amnesty. On this occasion the POUM developed its propaganda in full independence, making clear that the agreement was purely and exclusively electoral.

As already indicated, the POUM does not reject contacts and alliances with the petty bourgeoisie, but these pacts and alliances must always deal with concrete and limited questions.

The popular front is another thing. Revolutionaries cannot accept it.

Lenin's death coincided with the change of orientation of the Communist International. In 1924, a new course was initiated in the Third international. Internal democracy disappeared. Bureaucratic

leadership was imposed. The Russian section became hegemonic. Other national sections were completely subordinated or, to put it bluntly, colonized. The policy of the Communist International was either "Putschist" (Estonia, Bulgaria, China)¹ or completely opportunist. Its previously revolutionary line was completely broken. It went from one extreme to the other in a completely empirical fashion, totally abandoning the essential principles of Marxism.

This wrong orientation, whose most important consequence was the defeat of the Chinese revolution, continued to worsen after 1928 with the so-called "class against class" and "social-fascist" policies. The Communist International, already totally dominated by the Russian section, ceased to be a revolutionary instrument and gradually transformed itself into an instrument of the soviet state. Between 1928 and 1933, the Communist International and its sections underestimated the imminent fascist danger, supporting the thesis that to destroy fascism, it was first necessary to finish off social democracy. This sectarian and anti-Marxist attitude contributed to the triumph of Hitler in Germany. The Communist International carries as much responsibility as the Second for the catastrophe undergone by the working classes of Germany and the entire world. With their abject policy, the Communist International and the social democracy made Hitler's victory possible (with different starting points but a convergent trajectory). After thus aiding the creation of an anti-soviet regime in Germany, serving as the vanguard of all the USSR's enemies, the Communist International changed tactics with a turn undertaken in August 1935 at its seventh congress.

The seventh congress represented the liquidation of the Communist International both as an international and as a communist movement. All socialist perspectives were abandoned. The choice was a drowned the revolutionary movement, the Third International lost the trust of the world working class and now seeks support above all in the sectors of the bourgeoisie who, for one reason or another, do not oppose the USSR. The policy of the popular front, which has been most fully concretized in France, is based on class collaboration and on "Millerandism", which has always been considered opposed to the principles of Marxism.²

The Third International has practically ceased to exist as a revolutionary organisation of the proletariat. Today, the policy of Moscow is to the right of that of the social democracy.

The POUM does not take part in the Third International. The POUM identifies with the principles which inspired the first four congresses of the Communist International and rejects its present policies, which are false and which, together with those of reformist opportunism, risk destroying any revolutionary perspective for a prolonged period.

The POUM is convinced that, after the failure of two internationals, it must create powerful revolutionary socialist parties on which the future

revolutionary unity of the world proletariat must be built.

In this perspective, the POUM belongs to the International Committee for Revolutionary Socialist Unity, whose centre is to be found in London, which regroups the independent socialist and communist parties who are outside the Second and Third International.³

The International Committee for Revolutionary Socialist Unity is not the embryo of a new International, but the centre of convergence of the revolutionary socialist parties who fight for the construction of world revolutionary unity on new bases.

III. David Rousset's testimony

The Spanish civil war included a colonial problem which could have been decisive for the revolution: that of the Rif territories. An uprising in the Rif would have had immediate military advantages: it would have squeezed Franco in a vice by removing his base of operations, thus favouring a victory of the republican forces. Negotiations had taken place between the Moroccan nationalist movement and the Spanish authorities, which had no outcome because of the attitude of the latter. To clarify this unknown and hidden page of the history of the Spanish civil war, we think it is useful and interesting to publish a transcript of the oral testimony of David Rousset, who was present at the start of these negotiations.

I was at the time a member of the political bureau of the Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste, the POI, the French section of the Fourth International. It was in this capacity that I found myself in Morocco in August 1936. My task was to organise a French section in Morocco and a Moroccan section of the Fourth International within the framework of the POI. I was for this reason in contact with the Moroccan Action Committee which represented the Moroccan nationalist movement and which was at the time still a unified movement.

The main personalities with whom I found myself in contact at the time were Al Fassi, who took part in all the discussions, always speaking in Arabic, and Mohamed Hassan Wazzani.

It was principally with Wazzani and Omar Abjelil that we had held these discussions and the decisions were taken in my absence in the plenary meetings.

Finding myself in Fez in August 1936, I had a new perspective on the Spanish civil war, which is to say, I realised that if there was a military uprising in the Spanish Rif, Franco would be caught in a cleft stick and that, moreover, a very difficult situation would be created in the ranks of Franco's Moroccan troops. As a result, the object of my stay in Morocco was changed, in that I added this new goal to my primary initial objectives and negotiated with the Moroccan Action Committee around the possibility of a military intervention in Spain.

My principal difficulty was the lack of direct relations in Spain and notably with Barcelona. When I left Paris this problem was not posed, and we had therefore not discussed this in the Paris leadership. Jean Rous was, at that time, in Barcelona, and he was, as goes without saying, in close contact with the POUM. But should we wait for Jean Rous? Now at that time Robert Louzon, who was in contact with Jean Rous, was in Barcelona. The latter, moreover, was in contact with the CNT and the FAI.

Jean Rous had also thought about the question of Spanish Morocco while in Barcelona, but he had no contacts in Morocco, and it was at that point that he

1. In Spring 1974, following the directions of the Communist International, the small Communist Parties of Bulgaria and Estonia undertook totally minority and adventurist insurrections in Sofia and Reval which ended in crushing defeats and brutal repression (see Pierre Frank, *Histoire de l'Internationale Communiste 1919-1943*, La Brèche, Paris, 1979, Vol I, pp 344-351, 392-394).

The Canton insurrection (December 1927) was started by the Chinese Communist Party on Stalin's order, when the revolutionary wave had already died down. The turning point had been the previous year in Shanghai when the workers' movement had been crushed by the Kuomintang (KMT), the national organization of the Chinese bourgeoisie. The IC considered the KMT as a revolutionary force and had obliged the Chinese CP to follow it (see Harold Isaacs *La tragédie de la révolution Chinoise 1925-27*, Gallimard, Paris 1967).

2. Named for Alexander Millerand (1859-1943). Leader of the French social-democratic right. He became minister in a coalition government with the bourgeoisie (the Waldek government in 1899). This provoked a discussion on "Millerandism" within the Second International.

3. The International Committee for Revolutionary Socialist Unity, known as the London Bureau, was a product of the IAG (*Internationale Arbeitsgemeinschaft — International Workers Community*). This grouping of left socialist and communist opposition organizations founded in 1932, was represented in Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Poland, Norway, Austria, France, Italy and Spain (first by the Iberian Communist Federation of Maurín, then by the POUM). For a brief period in 1933-34 it drew closer to the Fourth International. It did not survive the war.





suggested coming to see me in Fez. So it was that one day in August I saw Robert Louzon arrive in Fez. I had put him in contact with the moroccans and we had then gone through a long process of negotiation with the members of the Action Committee. Of course there were many problems: first of all political ones, but also of security, of caution, and notably the fact that the Moroccans obviously feared repression. They were already part legal and part illegal in the French Zone, in case an open military struggle broke out in the Rif.

Eventually these negotiations, which lasted almost the whole of August, lead to an initial agreement: the moroccans decided that they would separate diplomatically and actually, to a certain extent, the French Zone and the Spanish Zone of Morocco — that is that the military operation envisaged would not touch the French Zone. They would confine it to the Spanish Zone. They designated Wazzani and Abjelil to accompany me to Barcelona.

At that point Robert Louzon left us and went back to France and I came to Spain with the two Moroccan leaders.

We arrived in Barcelona. My only contact in Barcelona was the POUM. Therefore with my two Moroccan leaders, via the intermediary of Jean Rous, we entered into contact with the leadership of the

POUM who welcomed us. But in reality at that time the POUM in Barcelona was not the decisive element. The decisive element was the Central Committee of Militias which was dominated by the CNT and the FAI. Therefore, for the negotiations to succeed, they had to be held with the Central Committee of Militias. The latter, informed of our presence and our objectives, came to visit the POUM. As always at that time operations were carried out in a singular way. One day an armed group arrived opposite the POUM building. There were rather curious exchanges between the POUMists, the CNT, and the FAI, and we went off, arms and all, with the CNT and the FAI. We had been received by the Central Committee of the Militias. I don't remember the names; in any case they were the leaders of the Central Committee of Militias.

They gave us a villa in Barcelona where, for the whole of September, the negotiations were carried out. I played the role of an adviser to the Moroccan delegation, that is of course I hid myself behind the Moroccan delegation. That is, the POI played no role in this affair, it was a diplomatic negotiation between the authorised Moroccan representatives of the Action Committee and the authorised representatives of the Central Committee of Militias. But as an adviser, I took part in editing the fundamental elements which finally constituted the draft of a treaty of independence. The moroccans posed the following principle: we are ready they said to start a military uprising in the Spanish Zone in the Rif, but we will only do it on one express condition: that you recognise our independence. Nevertheless the draft treaty followed the main lines of the Franco-Syrian treaty which had been signed in that period. Therefore we had a text, which whilst recognising independence, maintained close links between the former metropolis and the former colony. At the end of September, the terms had been definitively settled. The Central Committee of Militias approved the draft and we passed to the second phase.

The draft was submitted to all the delegations, without exception, of the Catalan parties. The Catalan parties, all without exception, approved the draft treaty of independence, even the Communist Party. And then we passed to a third phase: the Generalitat government had to approve the text of the treaty which would then become an official treaty between the Moroccan delegation and the Generalitat government. There was a ceremony with signatures, photos, films, etc. ... So it was a rather official event. Relations had already been created with the Moroccan tribes in the Rif. The question of money and arms had been settled, and practically (this is by no means an optimistic view; it is an absolutely realistic estimate) military operations could have begun quite rapidly. However, the Generalitat was not able to take decisions in the place of the Spanish Republic. Therefore we passed to a fourth stage: that is to say direct negotiation with the Madrid government. At this point I was removed from the negotiations. It was clear that the Spanish did not at all want to see a French Trotskyist too mixed up in

things. They had not been able to avoid it in Barcelona where things were posed rather differently, but they didn't want it to continue for too long. So, Wazzani and Abjelil went to Madrid alone, and I was not able to take part in the conversations. I therefore report what they told me. They found themselves face to face with Largo Caballero who was, of course, subject to very strong pressure from Paris and London. Paris and London had been informed — how I don't know! but it was obviously natural and inevitable — about this project and were absolutely hostile to it. For Paris, it was understandable since the Leon Blum government obviously wondered what would happen if this ever led to independence for the Rif. As a result, the Spanish government explained to the Arab delegation, to the Moroccan delegation, that they could not countersign the Barcelona treaty but that they were ready to give money and arms so that operations could begin. There we came up against the conduct of the Moroccan delegates. If I had been there, I must say

that I would have advised them to accept the means to act, but that didn't take place. They conducted themselves as a delegation representing a bourgeois movement, which did not want to undertake operations without the requisite political guarantees. They explained to the Spanish government that they were not agents of the Second Bureau (the Secret Service!) that they were ready and that it was possible to begin operations forthwith, but on one condition only: that of the Barcelona treaty, which, it must again be stressed, was a treaty of the Franco-Syrian type.

The break came at this point. They came back to Barcelona where they rejoined me and we went back to France. Shortly after their return to Paris they themselves met Leon Blum, with whom they had a rather rushed interview. I am ignorant of its content. Then they returned to the French Zone of Morocco.

That's the story of this negotiation with the Central Committee of Militias.

David Rousset, Paris.



Names and abbreviations of organizations

AIT (*Asociación internacional de trabajadores*, International Workers' Association): the International of the anarcho-syndicalist tendency, reconstituted in Berlin in 1922 by the various libertarian organisations, of which the CNT was the most important.

BOC (*Bloque Obrero y Campesino*, Workers' and Peasants' Bloc): founded by J Maurin in 1930 with the aim of creating a "broader" organization than the Catalano-Balearic communist federation which split from the Spanish Communist Party. In 1932, it was integrated into the Communist Group of Madrid, in which Juan Portela and Julian Gorkin, two former founders of the Spanish Communist Party, were active. Beforehand it had already been strengthened through the adhesion of the Catalan Communist Party (*Partit comunista Catala*), led by Joaquin Arquer. Its press organ was *La Batalla*.

International Brigades: military units formed from foreign antifascist militants who came to Spain to defend the republic. Altogether the international brigades brought together around 40,000 militants as follows: between 10,000 and 15,000 French, 5,000 Germans and Austrians, 3,350 Italians, 2,800 Americans, 2,000 British, a thousand Belgians, Canadians, Yugoslavs, Hungarians and Scandinavians and 5,000 volunteers of various nationalities. Among them were 3,000 Jews, sometimes organised in their own columns. The international brigades left the country at the end of 1938.

Carlism: the name given to the monarchist current which claimed allegiance to Don Carlos as against king Ferdinand. One of the main components of the nationalist forces during the civil war. Its militias were called *Requetes*.

CEDA (*Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas*, Spanish confederation for autonomous rights): a conservative, anti-republican and anti-democratic political formation led by Gil Robles. Its youth organization, led by Ramón Serrano Suner, joined up with the Falange in 1936. In 1934 Gil Robles publicly displayed his admiration for the fascist Dolfuss regime which crushed the Austrian workers' movement.

CNT (*Confederación Nacional de Trabajo*, National Confederation of Labour): the historical anarcho-syndicalist centre, with majority support in the workers' movement. At its 1936 congress it adopted a resolution which called for the immediate installation of a libertarian communist regime in Spain.

Central Committee of Antifascist Militias in Catalonia: a body created to give continuity to the workers' counter-insurrection in Barcelona. It was formed by militants of the entire left, with a natural hegemony of the anarchist current (attenuated, at the leadership level, by deliberate choice)

Condor: the name given to the division sent by Nazi Germany to Spain to help Franco "try out" modern war. 16,000 strong, it played an important role above all thanks to the strength of its aviation. Its name remains indissociably linked to Guernica.

CTV ("Voluntary" troop formations): Italian military units sent by Mussolini to Spain to fight on Franco's side. By 1937, they consisted of 48,000 men, with considerable

armament.

Cortes: the Spanish state parliament.

Comunión Tradicionalista: Traditionalist Communion, the main right wing, Catholic and anti-republican force in the Basque country.

ERC (*Esquerra republicana de Catalunya*, Catalan Left Republicans): a left nationalist movement with a petty-bourgeois and popular social base which, as against the *Lliga Catalana*, became the main Catalan political force during the civil war.

FAI (*Federación Anarquista Iberica*, Iberian Anarchist Federation): founded in 1927 in collaboration with the Portuguese anarchists (which was quite powerful before the Salazar dictatorship), it represented a sort of "anti-party" within the libertarian movement. During the republican period it followed an insurreccional line whose principal theoretician was García Oliver.

Falange (Falange): a minority organisation before the uprising, founded by Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera along European and above all Italian lines. It acted as a counter-revolutionary vanguard, adopting a demagogic political language.

GEPCI (*Gremios y entidades de pequeños comerciantes e industriales*, Associations and units of small merchants and industrialists): an organisation of the small and medium catalan bourgeoisie which was used by the PSUC in order to counteract the revolutionary potential of the working class.

GPU: the Soviet political police, which managed to insinuate itself into the heart of the republican administration (in the bureaucracy, the army and the police) above all thanks to the PCE's influence

ICE (*Izquierda comunista Española*, Spanish Left Communists): the left opposition group led by Trotsky on an international level. It published a highly prestigious theoretical review, *Comunismo*. Entering into disagreement with Trotsky, it fused in 1935 with the BOC to form the POUM.

Lliga catalana (Catalan League): the association of the Catalan right wing

PCE (*Partido comunista de España*, Spanish Communist Party): founded in 1921 through the fusion of a group coming from the young socialists (Andrade, Portela, etc) with the PCOE, which came out of the PSOE. In Catalonia the Revolutionary Syndicalist Committees were set up and became the Catalan-Balearic Communist Federation.

PNV (*Partido Nacional Vasco*, Basque National Party): an organisation of a conservative and catholic orientation founded by Sabino Arana. In 1936 it took the republican side after much hesitation.

POUM (*Partido obrero de unificación marxista*, Workers' Party of Marxist Unity): born in 1935 after the fusion of the BOC of J Maurin with the ICE of Andreu Nin. This fusion was the product of a process of regroupment of the organisations of the radical left after the insurrection of Asturias. Though its implantation was essentially Catalan (the fief of the BOC) it also secured substantial influence in Valencia, Madrid, in Extremadura and Asturias.

PSOE (*Partido socialista obrero español*, Spanish Socialist

Workers' Party): founded in 1879 on the French guesdist model, this party was profoundly divided between a republican right (Prieto and Basteiro) and a left (Largo Caballero) who tried to channel the radicalization of very broad sectors of its base. Within the workers' movement it provided the main support for the various Azaña governments.

PSUC (*Partido socialista unificado de Catalunya*, Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia): coming from the same process which led to the creation of the POUM, the formation of the PSUC was the work of the supporters of Caballero (Vidiella), of Catalan social democrats (Comorera), of nationalists and of the Catalan section of the PCE which got it to join the Third International.

STV (*Solidaridad de los Trabajadores Vascos*, Basque Workers' Solidarity): a Basque trade union of catholic orientation, founded in 1911 and linked to the PNV.

UGT (*Unión General de Trabajadores*, General Workers' Union): founded in 1879 by García Quejido and Pablo Iglesias. During the civil war it was the second largest trade union in the workers' movement after the CNT.

Glossary

Abad de Santillán, Diego (1879-1983): anarchist leader and theoretician. He began his militant activity in Madrid, when he was a student. In exile, he belonged to the Argentine FORA where he became the theoretician of the "trabazon" (the bond) which forbade militants to participate in any political institutions. A militant of the FAI when he returned to Spain, he became the main economic adviser to the Generalitat and was the main theoretician of the official positions of the CNT-FAI.

Aguirre, José Antonio (1904-1981): principal leader of the PNV during the republic, the war — he was the first president of the autonomous government — and in exile.

Andrade Rodríguez, Juan (1898-1981): communist leader who played an important role in the Spanish left and animated the review *Comunismo*. He belonged to the Young Socialists and then took part in founding the PCE. He was imprisoned several times during the 1920s. He was one of the founders of the Left Opposition and then of the POUM. During the war he was known for his daily column in *Batalla*. He remained faithful to his positions whilst in exile.

Arenillas, José Luis (1904-1938). Leader of the Left Opposition and then of the POUM in the Basque country. Collaborator with *La Batalla* and author of numerous works on the national question in Euzkadi. Organized the first column of militias in Bilbao in 1936. Executed by the Francoists at the end of the civil war.

Arenillas, José-Maria (1906-1938) POUM leader in the Basque country. Secretary of the "Junta de Comisarias de Vizcaya" in 1936. Assassinated by the Stalinists in Asturias in 1938.

Astigarrabia, Juan (1902-1984): founder of the Communist Party in the Basque country. Minister of public works in the Aguirre government, he was expelled in 1937 because of his attempt to create an autonomous party from the PCE and because of his "taulism" towards the PNV. On his return from exile he joined Euzkadiko Eskerra, a

nationalist organisation of a social-democratic character.

Azaña y Díaz, Manuel (1880-1940): the main liberal and republican bourgeois figure. A writer and a remarkable political man, he was prime minister in 1931 and president between 1936 and 1939.

Calvo Sotelo, Jose (1893-1936): former minister under the dictatorship and the principal spokesperson of the right. On the 13 July his assassination — a reprisal against others perpetrated by the Falange — transformed him into a martyr and was the pretext for the 18 July uprising.

Carillo, Santiago (born in 1915): leader of the Young Socialists and a supporter of "Bolshevizing" the PSOE in the mid-1930s. In 1936, on his return from a trip to Moscow, he managed to win the majority of the United Young Socialists, which was one of the PCE's pillars of support. After the war he was the PCE's main leader before falling "into disgrace" after Franco's death.

Casado Lopez, Sigismundo (1893-1968): officer of the republican army, mainly responsible for the coup d'état against the Negrín government, which marked the final act of the war without any concessions by the insurgent troops.

Cásares Quiroga, Santiago (1894-1950): republican leader and Galician regionalist. Several times Prime Minister, he is renowned for his frivolous comments about the uprising.

Companys Jover, Lluís (1883-1940): lawyer. Close to the CNT in the twenties, successor to Macia in the leadership of the ERC, he was at the head of the popular action in 1934 but stopped halfway. President of the Generalitat in 1936, he showed his abilities by integrating the anarcho-syndicalists into the government. Imprisoned by the Gestapo in France, he was shot at Montjuich by the insurgent troops.

Díaz, José (1896-1942): former CNT leader, he became general secretary of the PCE in 1932. Exiled to the USSR in 1938, he committed suicide in unclear circumstances.

Durruti, Buenaventura (1896-1936): legendary figure of Spanish anarcho-syndicalism. Under the dictatorship he took part in numerous assaults, was imprisoned in France and then freed thanks to an international campaign. He moved to Latin America and on his return, when he was already a mythical figure, incarnated the insurreccional line. Leader of the popular mobilisations during the July days, he formed the militias which fought first at Aragon and then on the Madrid front. His burial in Barcelona was the greatest gathering ever seen in Spain.

Franco y Bahamonde, Francisco (1890-1975): main leader of the colonial army, absolute head of the "movement" after Sanjurjo's death.

García Oliver, Jose (1901-1981): anarchist leader, representing the revolutionary line before yielding in the commission which offered power to Companys. Minister of justice in the Largo Caballero government, he was one of the defenders of the official line.

Gil Robles, Jose Maria (1898-1980): a conservative political man, leader of the CEDA. He sympathized with the Dolfuss coup d'état in Austria and proclaimed his willingness to liquidate the republic. After the war he was ex-

iled to Motril and became the legal spokesperson for Christian democracy under the Franco dictatorship.

Giral y Pereira, Jose (1880-1962): a political man from the Radical Party, of the centre-right. He was the Prime Minister in the popular front government between July and September 1936. Goded Llopis, Manuel (1882-1936): commander of the Spanish army, he took part in the Francoist uprising of July 1936 in Barcelona, where he was executed.

Gorkin, Julian (1902-1988): one of the founders of the PCE, very active as an essayist and a translator. In spite of his heterodox attitude from the end of the 1920s, he became an important leader in the POUM. He led enquiries into Trotsky's death and joined the PSOE in France.

Irujo, Manuel (1891-1981): PNV leader. In 1931, he opposed the republic but in 1937 replaced Garcia Oliver, who had proved incapable of resolving the problem of Nin. In exile he played a leading role in several republican governments.

Largo Caballero, Francisco (1869-1946): former leader of the UGT, he was imprisoned during the general strike of 1917. A very moderate socialist under the dictatorship, he became minister of labour in the first republican government and then established himself leader of the socialist left. Prime Minister between September 1936 and May 1937, he represented a balance between the revolution and restoration, paving the way for the latter. After the war he experienced the Nazi concentration camps.

Lerroux, Alejandro Garcia (1864-1949): historical leader of the Spanish "radicals". On the eve of "Tragic Week", he tried to derail the Catalan workers' movement with powerful anti-clerical and anti-Catalan demagoguery. Minister of the first republican government, he evolved towards the extreme right, up to the point of supporting the military coup d'etat.

Maurín, Joaquín (1896-1973): one of the representatives of the CNT at the founding congress of the Red Trade Union International, he took part in the creation of the PCE, from which he was expelled in 1930 when he refused to "condemn Trotskyism". Uncontested leader of the BOC and the main animator of the Workers' Alliance, he was captured in Galicia in 1936 and was able to survive thanks to a series of favourable circumstances. In exile he became a social democrat.

Mola Vidal, Emilio (1887-1937): general in the Spanish army. One of the "brains" of the military conspiracy against the republic, he led the Francoist troops' military and repressive operations in the North.

Negrín López, Juan (1889-1956): doctor and "notable" of the PSOE, he became head of the government, thanks to Prieto, replacing Largo Caballero. To him is attributed the idea of continuing a "numantine" war, awaiting the outbreak of World War II. His involvement with the PCE could appear as a total identification, but in reality he had his own project. At the end of the civil war, Casado's coup d'etat interrupted his growing conflict with the PCE.

Nin Perez, Andreu (1892-1937): militant from his early youth, he was a federalist-republican, an internationalist socialist, an anarchist in the period of the bosses' repression and finally, in Moscow, a member of the Moscow soviet and secretary of the ISR. After joining the Left

Opposition, he returned to Spain where he led the ICE until the POUM was founded. The main leader of this party in Maurín's absence, he became Minister of Justice in 1936. The next year he was kidnapped and killed by the GPU. He has left us an important historical legacy.

Orwell, George (1903-1950): Pen name of the British writer Eric Blair, sympathizer of the Independent Labour Party, who joined the POUM militia and lived through the war and events of May 1937 in its ranks. Author of the very fine reportage *Homage to Catalonia* (1938).

Pacelli, Eugenio (1876-1958): cardinal, secretary of state of the Holy See during the Spanish civil war (became Pope Pius XII in 1939).

Prieto y Tuero, Indalecio (1883-1962): "socialist because profoundly liberal", in his own words, he opposed the dictatorship intransigently and was one of the key figures of the Second Republic. He opposed the radicalisation of Largo Caballero and, during the war, supported and profited from the support of the communists against the revolution. In exile, he tried to convince the United States to oppose the Franco dictatorship.

Primo de Rivera, Jose Antonio (1903-1936): son of the dictator of the same name, he was the founder of the Falange. In 1935 he wrote to Franco to ask him to take power, explaining that Trotsky himself had inspired the Andalusian insurrection. He was shot by the republicans in Alicante.

Primo de Rivera, Miguel (1870-1930): classical representative of Spanish militarism. Prime Minister under the monarchy of Alphonse XIII, he became dictator between 1923 and 1930, combining the typical traits of the dictators with those of fascism.

Robles y Quinones, Jose Maria Gil (1898-1980): leader of the extreme conservative catholic right (CEDA). Minister of war in the Lerroux government in 1934, he took part in the repression of the Asturian insurrection.

Rojo, Vincente (1894-1966): general of the Spanish army, conservative and friend of Franco, he nevertheless remained faithful to the Republic during the war, up to the point of joining the PCE. An important and prestigious strategist.

Taradellas, Juan Jose (1898-1988): one of the main ERC leaders. Inspirer of the policy of "integration" of the revolution, he was Prime Minister in the Generalitat in September 1936. He also presided over the political manoeuvres of the "transition".

Togliatti, Palmiro (1893-1964): founder of the Italian Communist Party and subsequently leader of the Communist International. He became a Stalinist after being linked to Bukharin. One of the principal representatives of the Communist International in the Spanish state during the civil war.

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Miguel Romero

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This issue of the *Notebooks for Study and Research* is not a new historical summary of the Spanish Civil War on which there is already very extensive literature. Miguel Romero is not a historian but a revolutionary activist who questions conventional history and tries to look at it from the point of view of the defeated and oppressed. Leaving aside all revolutionary rhetoric, the basic methodological starting point makes it possible for him to show that the defeat of the revolutionaries in the Republican camp (particularly in Catalonia in spring 1937), paved the way for Franco's victory.

The originality of this study is the way in which it integrates the national question into its analysis of the civil war. In the Basque country and in Catalonia, defence of the Republic, revolutionary mobilization of the workers and the anti-fascist struggle took place in different and specific national contexts. Miguel Romero develops a comparative analysis of the civil war in the two countries. He notes that the shared tragic conclusion to the conflicts should not hide the very different dynamic of the social and political forces in the two situations.

Miguel Romero was born in 1945 in Melilla in Spanish Morocco. A revolutionary and a Marxist, he started his political activity during the Franco dictatorship. Between 1966 and 1971, he was a member of the *Frente de Liberación Popular*, a revolutionary organization of Guevarist orientation. A member of the *Liga Comunista Revolucionario*, the section of the Fourth International in the Spanish state, since its foundation in 1971, he is currently editor of the fortnightly *Combate* newspaper and the Spanish edition of the *Inprecor* magazine.

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