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## THE REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION

THOSE WITH A CURSORY knowledge of social theory often sneer at “outmoded conceptions of the barricades”, etc. when such conceptions are (if one may coin a word) hardly ever *in*-moded. The view of anarcho-syndicalists has always been that the essential social transformation is that which takes place at the point of production. This may well be accompanied outside by clashes with authority. Such is unavoidable, but it is not the revolution; indeed the clashes can come without any revolution taking place, as has often been the case in France, for instance.

What is in fact the revolution is the occupation of the places of work, and the lock-out of the employing class, so that production continues according to the wishes of those engaged in the industry. This is the general strike as a revolutionary weapon. A general strike can serve many purposes, such as being the last stage of a sympathetic strike, or for the enforcement of social or economic demands. As well as strikes against lowered living conditions, or for the defence of living standards, there have been general strikes for the defence of civil liberties or against militarism or dictatorship. Naturally the general strike is not something that can always be invoked like “abracadabra” nor have Anarchists ever suggested this to be the case.

A recent criticism I read of Anarcho-Syndicalism suggested that we believed in the myth of a General Strike like a Messianic change that would alter all society for evermore. Yet nearly twenty years ago this was cited as follows: “The ridiculous claim, which is so often attributed to the Anarcho-Syndicalists, that it is only necessary to proclaim a general strike in order to achieve a Socialist society in a few days, is of course, just a silly invention of evil-minded opponents bent on discrediting an idea which they cannot attack by any other means”. (R. Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice*, 1936.) This view of anarcho-syndicalism and the general strike belongs to the fabrications of Parliamentary Socialists in the pre-World War I years. We

do not say that any general strike can lead to revolutionary change, but that in order to have a revolutionary change, social transformation—by means of a general stay-in strike—is essential.

However, in order for this transformation to take place, it is first necessary for the workers to want the change, and consciously to organise the change-over. The essential task of the moment, therefore is the building up of an industrial organisation, which should not be directed by any party or group, but come spontaneously from the workers at the place of work. Once such a task has begun, there is no need to deplore lack of any revolutionary situation, for such opportunities come frequently without the “plots” beloved of the writers of criminal romances. Since the war we have seen such situations existent in many countries: first of all, Italy after the fall of Mussolini, when the workers were occupying the places of work; then Rumania and Bulgaria before the grip of the Red Army became too strong; Poland, where the workers had once attempted to seize control of the factories while the Nazis were still there; France in the post-war crisis; finally Korea, where some occupation of the workshops took place before the two rival imperialisms set out to fight each other and, incidentally, destroy the Koreans.

In all these cases, had there been a revolutionary movement able to seize the economy at the critical moment, the governmental authority might have been resisted whether they labelled themselves “democratic” or “new democratic”. At the moment there is more possibility in this country that we shall be faced with a revolutionary situation than there is the possibility that at such a moment the workers will be ready to respond with a general stay-in strike with the clear-cut objective of a free society.

But this *can* happen and it is the aim of the Anarcho-Syndicalists that it *will* happen.

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## SPECIAL ON ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM

## **WHAT IS ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM?**

### *What is Anarcho-syndicalism?*

SYNDICALISM IS A METHOD of industrial organisation which goes away from all the traditional conceptions of authority and government, of capitalism and the state. While communism in abolishing individual capitalism, creates a worse monster in its place in the form of the economic state, syndicalism leaves all the patterns of administration which have in the past resulted only in the oppression and exploitation of man by man, and sets out to build an organisational form based on the natural needs of man rather than on the interests of ruling classes, based not on the dictates of authority, but on the voluntary cooperation of free and equal individuals in satisfying the economic needs of the men who form society.

Syndicalism is the industrial manifestation of anarchism. Anarchism itself is a doctrine which teaches the necessity of a society without government... Anarchism advocates, instead of the governmental coercion of the individual, which exists in the most democratic society that still retains the state, a society based on the free co-operation of individual men and women for the fulfilment of their social and economic needs. Organisation on a voluntary basis is necessary for the operation of the means of production and the desirable public services, but no kind of superior body of authority, with its parliaments, police, bureaucracies, codes of law, taxes, armies and secretive intrigues in internal and foreign politics, has any place or value in a society based on justice and reason. In anarchy a man, once he has fulfilled his contractual economic functions, can live as he will, providing he does not interfere with the freedom of his fellows.

Anarchists believe that the means of production should be the property of society, held in common, and that only by such an arrangement will the restricting influence of private property be removed and the resources of nature and science be used to their full extent for the benefit of humanity. In order that there may be no possibility of such private interests arising, they advocate that, once the means of production have been taken out of the hands of their usurping controllers, they shall be run not by any authority or elite or leaders, but by the people who are themselves concerned in production, i.e. by the workers in each industry.

Syndicalism is, as I have already said, the method by which such control by the workers would be organised. It is, moreover, the method by which the workers under a property society would organise themselves for the attainment of the free classless society.

The syndicate is a form of union which differs from the ordinary trade union in that it aims, not only at the gaining of improvements in wages and conditions under the present system, but also at the overthrow of that system and its replacement by the free society by means of social revolution based on the economic direct action of the workers. This is not to say that it ignores the day to day struggle, but its members recognise that only by a complete destruction of the structure of property and authority can justice and security ever be attained for the workers.

The syndicate differs also from the ordinary trade union in its method of organisation. The ordinary trade union follows the pattern of governmental society in that it has a centralised form, with authority at the centre and a permanent bureaucracy, who, like any other bureaucracy, rapidly gain privilege and power and rise into a class with an economic position considerably higher than that of the workers who pay them and whom they are supposed to serve. The syndicate, on the other hand, is based on the organisation of workers by industry at the place of work. The workers of each factory, or depot or farm are an autonomous unit, who govern their own affairs and who make all the decisions as to the work they will do. These units are joined federally in a syndicate which serves to co-ordinate the actions of the workers in each industry. The federal organisation has no authority over the workers in any branch, and cannot impose a veto on action like a trade union executive. It has no permanent bureaucracy, and the few privileged officials are chosen on a short term basis, have no privileges which raise their standard of living above that of the workers, and wield no authority of any kind.

The syndicate being actually governed from below and being untainted by the idea or the institution of authority, represents more truly than any other type of organisation the will of the workers and the good of society. Its lack of centralism and lack of bureaucracy, of any kind of privilege or vested interest in the present order of society, give it a flexibility of action and real solidarity which make it the ideal instrument for canalising and influencing in the right way the spontaneous revolutionary activity of the people.

In the social revolution the syndicates will play their part by organising the economic direct action of the workers. On the railways for instance, they will lead the workers in the expropriation of the lines, stations and rolling stock, and their use only for the purposes of the revolution and not for those of the dispossessed masters.

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After the revolution the syndicate will form the framework on which the first phase of the free society will be built. Anarchists do not make any plans for the free society in its maturity, as they believe in the free and continual growth of social institutions, and recognise that any hard-and-fast plan of development will create only a sterile society. Nevertheless they recognise that after the old society has been abolished some kind of social structure must be built immediately to take over the means of production and change the economic basis of society from that of a class society to that most appropriate to a free society. This means of organisation they find in the syndicate.

The organisation of industry, transport and farming under the syndicates will follow exactly the same lines as that of the organisation of the workers in the days before the end of the property society, except that now, instead of organising for struggle, the workers will organise for the construction of the economic basis necessary for the achievement and maintenance of true freedom and justice.

Each working unit, a factory or a railway yard, will be run by the workers who actually operate it. There will be no authority, no management, and each worker will be jointly and equally responsible with the rest for the proper functioning of the industrial unit in which he works.

It should not be assumed that the syndicalist regards the operation of industry as a simple matter. On the contrary, he knows from experience its complexity, and regards a bureaucracy divorced from the actual work as being incapable of operating to its maximum efficiency so involved an organisation as that of a railway. The workers are the men who have the knowledge of the actual operating of the railways, and if they were to study the problems of operation and of the co-ordination of their functions they would be able to work the railways far more efficiently than the bureaucrats. The opportunity of gaining this knowledge is, of course, kept from the ordinary railway workers. (Instead, the companies prefer to work the other way round, by instituting classes to teach bureaucrats in an academic manner the elements of train working or signalling, usually with little success.) In this connection of course, I am using the word 'worker' in a broad sense, to include technical staff associated with civil engineering and locomotive construction, and also the sections of the clerical staff concerned with co-ordinating train operating, as these are both vitally necessary for the proper working of the railways and upon their direct co-operation with their fellow workers, eliminating the bureaucrats, will come a real workers control of railways. It is therefore

vitally necessary that such men should be brought into any industrial movement along with the railway men.

The various units will be joined in federations which will co-ordinate their work throughout the country and make arrangements between the sections to ensure that each industry is properly co-ordinated. The industrial federations or syndicates will in turn be united in a national federation of industry which will act as the means of co-ordinating the activities of the various industries.

The old motives of profit and self-interest will cease to dominate economic life. Instead the incentive will be the good of the members of society, without distinction. In such circumstances there will be no impediment to the exploitation of the resources of nature and science to the full extent to which men desire it. Men will decide the standard of life and will work to get it. It is hardly to be supposed that they will be content with what they endure today, and the possibility of better circumstances, together with man's natural desire for work will ensure that the workers left to themselves, will find the means to operate industry a good deal more efficiently than has been the case under capitalism... The methods of hierarchical management would cease. Instead, the functions of administration would be vested in the workers themselves and, wherever it was impossible for the workers all to take part directly in administration, by delegates chosen directly from among the workers who would administer the functioning of the various services in accordance with the wishes of the workers. These delegates would have no authority, nor would they make any decisions on questions of policy. Their job would be merely to co-ordinate the work of the railwaymen, which would be carried out entirely on a voluntary basis.

Such delegates would be in no way superior to their fellow workers in power, privilege or position. Under anarchism the wages system, one of the prime means by which the rulers coerce the workers, would be abolished, and the workers, giving in labour what was necessary for the carrying on of the function of society would in their turn receive the goods which they found necessary for a happy life. No worker would get more than his mate because tradition said that his craft was worth twice as much a week, and there would be no railway directors to live in high luxury while their lower paid employees starved on 60 shillings a week or less. Men would get not according to their worth, for social worth cannot be estimated, but according to their need, which is the only just means of sharing the goods of society.

from "Railroads & Society" George Woodcock 1943

## Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalism, 1868-1936

THE SPANISH BRANCH was numerically the most substantial section of the International, with its 50,000 members and it trod the paths of Bakuninism laid down by the Italian delegate Fanelli, Bakunin's envoy. But in the wake of the Paris Commune, in Spain (as everywhere else in Europe) there was a government crackdown and the Spanish branch, the FTRE (Spanish Regional Workers' Federation) was forced underground. In 1873 certain local sections had fallen in with a Republican uprising, a fact of no great importance in itself, were it not for the fact that it furnished the pretext for a typically odious pamphlet from Engels, *Bakuninism in Action*, a sort of marxist diatribe against anarchism, translated into all sorts of languages. In it one finds a repetition of Engels's historical absurdities wherein he contrasts the well-organised activity in Cadiz with the pathetic activity of anarchists in Alcoy, oblivious of the fact that both of the aforementioned sections were anti-authoritarian and that at no time did the FTRE participate in the rising which it regarded as political and thus of no relevance. But slander has always been a typical feature of the style of Marx and Engels (and what are Leninism and Stalinism but slander made system?)

We also touched upon the poignant problem of the *Mano Negra* which pointed up the contrast between two conceptions of the struggle in two very different Spains: violent struggle in Andalusia and a sort of legalistic syndicalism in Catalonia

The scars left by these conflicts endured for a long time. The Socialist Party's trade union appendix, the UGT was set up in 1888 with 3,500 members and it was to be the only nation-wide union up to 1911, such was the aftermath of the *Mano Negra* episode of 1883.

By 1900 the UGT had expanded its membership to 15,000 and Spanish anarchism could be divided into several branches: some purely anarchist propaganda groups of somewhat individualistic mien with considerable impact upon artistic and literary circles (as in France around the same time); some groups eager to trigger a revolutionary upheaval by means of violent *attentats* (as was to be seen in 1894 in imitation of the bombs of Henry and Vaillant, followed up by a wave of

torture employed against activists in the Montjuich fortress in Barcelona) and some groups of industrial and/or rural workers with strong regional footholds (such as the ones described by Diaz del Moral in the Córdoba region).

A campaign to resurrect the FTRE was launched. Soon it had recruited 52,000 members but it was short-lived. A novel branch of anarchism put in an appearance in 1901 in the shape of Francisco Ferrer y Guardia's "modern" schools. Here again it was a question of Spaniards acting upon ideas that had originated in France, in this case with Paul Robin. But those ideas were to be implemented on a broad scale, much more some after Ferrer's execution.

Between 1901 and 1904 one finds a first attempt to captivate the anti-authoritarian masses through Lerroux's verbally extremist election campaign in Barcelona. This was only a flash in the pan but the idea continued to be mulled over in the tortuous minds of Catalanist and marxist politicians even afterwards.

In fact, with hindsight we can see that there was a serious attempt to organise in the shape of the *Solidaridad Obrera* [Workers' Solidarity] group in Catalonia which sought to apply the ideas behind French revolutionary syndicalism. It should be noted that initially and for a long time thereafter socialists and anarchists were to be found side by side in this union with its anti-authoritarian motifs. Come 1907, Catalonia was racked by the events of the 'Red week' in Barcelona and in 1909 there was a spontaneous uprising by conscripts sent off to repress the Moroccans, Republicans and anarchists together took on the police and army. Repression smothered the revolt but created a martyr by having Francisco Ferrer shot as the spiritual instigator of the rising. All that he was guilty of was wanting to see the youth completely liberated through co-educational schools, science education and intellectual and manual work informed by an appreciation of the class nature of real life.

In 1910 a union was born in Catalonia: by 1911 it had spread to the rest of Spain, taking as its name the National Confederation of Labour (CNT) and amassing 30,000 members as against 50,000 for the UGT.

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Since Spain was a non-belligerent in the Great War, the country enjoyed a measure of prosperity and pay rises (10%) 'matched' by rising prices, e.g. the rents for workers' accommodation soared by 100%-300%. In 1917 there was the first link-up between the UGT and the CNT aimed at orchestrating a general strike against the high cost of living. But it was a case of two outlooks side by side without mutual understanding. The UGT struck, only to return promptly to work, while the CNT strove to progress towards an uprising. There was a falling out which persisted until 1937.

One might wonder what were the features that accounted for the persistence of anarcho-syndicalism in Spain. Indeed in a corrupt country, where the Socialist Party had a deputy elected only by resorting to bribery on his behalf (Pablo Iglesias), the moral and revolutionary fibre of the CNT meant that it attracted all radical elements en masse. It might be mentioned that in Russia, radicals were split between anarchists and SR's [Social Revolutionaries], but in Spain revolution was red and black. Furthermore, anarcho-syndicalist propaganda (e.g. a pamphlet by Galo Diez, 1920) insisted upon anti-authoritarianism in trade union life and in personal affairs connected with women and children. By offering literacy courses, contraceptive advice and a universal alternative ranging from anti-Catholic forenames (Floreal, Germinal, Alba, Aurora, Acracia) to vegetarianism, natural medicine and schools along Ferrer's lines, the union was also a proletarian university.

Finally and above all, the CNT was able to come up with an adapted and affective tactic thanks to its Catalan organisational set-up (remembering that the CNT was a confederation of autonomous sections). The congress of Sans registered 70,000 members for Catalonia. There it was decided to set up a single union (*Sindicato unico*) i.e. to embrace everybody's interests along the lines, somewhat, of 'all for one, and one for all!' Indeed, instead of unionising and organising along trade lines - as the UGT did - struggles were waged by galvanising also the seemingly uninvolved trades who would wade in out of solidarity.

The *La Canadiense* strike is a fine example of this tactic. In January this Canadian-financed (hence the name) electricity plant announced that 8 workers were being dismissed from its maintenance department. On 5 February the 140 workers of that

department struck and were joined on 8 February by the bulk of the plant employees. On 17 February, 80% of the workforce of the Catalan textile industry came out in solidarity and also demanded recognition of their union and introduction of the 8 hour day. Other electricity plants struck and demanded a wage increase to boot. By 21 February there was a general strike by power workers and this led to the closure of 70% of firms in Catalonia. On 7 March, the government introduced a state of emergency and conscripted the workers into the army. Some 3,000 arrests were made. The print workers imposed a 'red censorship'. On 15 and 16 March, negotiations opened between the employers and the unions (CNT). Salvador Segui, the CNT's Regional Secretary, demanded the release of detainees and issued a call for a general strike, which took place on 24 March, lasting until 1 April. On 14 April the strikers' demands were accepted by the employers.

At its Madrid congress in 1919, the CNT had 755,000 members as against 208,000 for the UGT (i.e. it had about 10% of the active population, and this at a time when it was a dangerous business being a union member). The congress agreed to switch over to the *sindicato unico* arrangement, with libertarian communism being adopted as the union's ultimate goal. There was to be only one paid official - the general secretary, so one can see the difference between this and revolutionary syndicalism, and the implementation of Malatesta's observation at the Amsterdam congress of 1907 that an anarchist who held a union post was lost to anarchism. In addition, this rejection of paid officers and the obligation upon union post-holders to bear for themselves the costs of correspondence and travel made it possible to avert bureaucratisation in the marxist and political sense of the word.

But the revolution in Russia, plus the strength of the CNT meant that the employers resolved to eradicate it by force in Catalonia (the cradle of the organisation). This was the era of the gunmen, with hired killers [*pistoleros*] in the pay of the bosses and charged to slay union leaders. Obviously the CNT had to take counter-measures (with activists armed and under escort, and counter-attack squads, etc.) The Contest lasted from 1919 to 1923 (when the military coup arrived) though it eased in 1922 due to the intervention of Madrid which realised that a more thoroughgoing solution was necessary (in the shape of the coup d'état). The outcome for the CNT was



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two-pronged: A) there was a haemorrhaging, with more than 1,000 members gaoled (See Buenacasa *El Movimiento Obrero Español*) and a list of at least 84 dead B) the creation of armed groups dependent on the CNT and certain of which were to lapse into criminality pure and simple. An exception must be made of the *Solidarios* (later *Nosotros*) group made up of Ascaso, García Oliver, Durruti, etc which carried out an astounding series of hold-ups between 1920 and 1929 while scrupulously surrendering the proceeds to the CNT and expending them on ventures such as the publication of Sébastien Faure's *Encyclopédie Anarchiste*, or defraying part of the costs of the premises of the 'Librairie Internationale' in Paris, etc.

We have to be very clear about the relations between the CNT and Moscow. The Russian revolution had been greeted with interest at the CNT's 1919 congress and - for want of information - the CNT opted to affiliate provisionally to the Red International (of Labour Unions) and to dispatch a delegation. The first delegation comprised Nin and two of his friends, as marxist as he was; the second was made up of Angel Pestaña, a friend of the murdered (by *pistoleros* of course) Salvador Seguí, and Gaston Leval (a French activist conscientious objector who fled to Spain during the 1914-1918 war). Pestaña and Leval collected first hand information from Kropotkin and Russian anarchist comrades and this put paid once and for all to relations between the CNT and Moscow. (See 'The CNT and the Russian Revolution' Ignacio Llorens, KSL, 1997).

However the activities of the *pistoleros* had exhausted the CNT which opted to disband in the face of the 1923 military coup. The PSOE and the UGT promptly played the collaborationist card in the hope of outmanoeuvring the CNT. In 1924 Largo Caballero, the UGT's general secretary, became councillor of state at the Ministry of Labour. This prostitution was not long-lived, partly because the socialists realised that the State was offering only crumbs and partly because the labouring masses failed to follow the UGT which declined from 211,000 members in 1923 (219,000 in 1926) to 210,000 in 1928.

The period 1923-1931 was marked by a number of developments which altered the character of the CNT. There was a certain conspiratorial activity and contacts with politicians (1924, Vera de

Bidasoa, San Sebastian Pact in 1930). The FAI came into existence (Iberian Anarchist Federation, in that there were two Portuguese delegates) which grew from a centre of liaison between anarchist activities to become an anarchist platform dedicated to resisting any possible deviation of persons regarded as unduly syndicalistic (like Pestaña). There was a lack of analysis of the political situation in the country as with the repression of a local, pro-Republican and quasi-anarchist army revolt in Jaca in December 1930 and the king's peaceful surrender of power on 14 April 1931 which obviously indicated that the authorities had opted for a tactic of unexpected non-resistance, doubtless with the specific aim of offering power to the Republicans so that they might be discredited by the effects of the world crisis.

This passed unnoticed, as did the matter of propaganda in favour of independence for the Moroccans (something that Pestaña wanted to broach and to escalate in the CNT). Even more seriously, when spontaneous revolts were spreading through the countryside and the people felt that the time had come for thoroughgoing reforms for which they had been waiting since the Middle Ages (Spain having experienced no real bourgeois revolution), the CNT was split by a tactical issue and personal frictions between those who wanted revolution by first organising along union lines (like Pestaña and Peiró), and those who were itching for insurrection and a sort of 'revolutionary gymnasium' (to borrow Malatesta's unfortunate phrase) i.e. believed that gradually these insurrections would culminate in revolution. The latter were represented by Durruti, Ascaso and García Oliver.

This lack of vision and division which reached hysterical proportions of verbal violence was highly damaging; the UGT had 1,000,000 followers primarily hungry for land and thus revolutionaries. In 1931 the CNT had 535,000 members and 800,000 cards in circulation. There were 600,000 unemployed in 1934 and by 1935 the figure had risen to 1,000,000 so the circumstances were set to favour a rapprochement between the CNT and the UGT.

But the divisions ensured that insurrections appeared only in certain regions and then were poorly co-ordinated, which ensured a succession of failures; January 1932, January 1933 (Casas Viejas) and December 1933 following the abstentionist campaign which opened the way to the right and provided a fillip to the revolution (Durruti). The Socialist Party then

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set about doing the same along with the Catalanists in 1934, in the October rising. Whereas the Catalanists mounted a half-baked rising in which the first move was a ban on the CNT (the only force which could have supported them), in Asturias the socialists armed only that region in the hope that a bridgehead there would enable them to negotiate their way into the government. Luck was against them. The right in government sent in the army and the Moroccans (elite troops) to crush the revolt in Asturias.

But fortunately, with the climate being a revolutionary one, each setback raised higher the expectations of the next one being the revolt to galvanise the young. 1935 was a year given over to reflection and preparation for the elections in February 1936, which no-one boycotted. The semblance of Republican victory made it possible to release the political prisoners (30,000 of them) who were spontaneously freed by the masses. The CNT managed to heal its rifts at a congress in Zaragoza in May 1936, but Pestaña had formed his own libertarian political party and become an elected deputy. Contacts with the UGT were still very slight. The notion of UHP (*Union de Hermanos Proletarios* - brother proletarians united), a cry launched in Asturias was very much alive at street level among the grassroots but still sounded strange to the ears of the apparatchiks, including the CNT's and the FAI's.

*Paul Sharkey.* Taken from an account of a lecture/debate at the Max Nettlau Centre 25/2/83

### Latest publication

The latest publication of the KSL is Umberto Marzocchi's *Remembering Spain: Italian Anarchist volunteers in the Spanish Civil War* It's available either from ourselves at the address below or from AK Press of Edinburgh and San Francisco, price £1.50 including postage

Our next publication will be on Anarchists in the struggle against fascism on Italian soil - including material on the assassination attempts on Mussolini.

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### Cesar Terron Abad

In the end the band was tracked down to the Villar de Otero hills and a heavy gun-battle erupted. Cesar Terron died when a bullet struck him in the head. This was on 21 July 1940. His comrades got away.

Cesar Terron carried on him a notebook in which he used to jot down the operations of his band and this was seized by the Civil Guard when he was killed. It must be filed away in some Civil Guard archive collection and access to it would make it possible to reconstruct his entire guerrilla career.

El Maestro then took command of the band. On 18 February 1941, there was a battle in a pinewood in the vicinity of Caneda (Leon) in which El Maestro and two of his guerrillas died. On the other side, Civil Guard Nicasio Gonzalez Arias from Castejeira-Sober (Lugo) was killed. One of the dead guerrillas was identified as Brindis Mauriz Rodriguez, a 40 year old farmer from Paradeseca, whilst the other was Luis from Montoria.

Later Eusebio Garcia Garcia gave himself up. Ramiro Perez Granja was arrested in his home in Fabero but died on the journey to Villafranca from the treatment he received. The two surviving members of the band, Antonio Vega Guerrero (*Rizoso*) and Joaquin Lage Fernandez (*El Xoqui*) joined the group led by Serafin Fernandez Ramon (*El Santeiro*).

Antonio Tellez

From *Polemica* (Barcelona) No 66 (June 1998).

1 *Historia del anarquismo leones*. CNT, Leon, 1993, pp.105 and 176

2 Joaquin Arraras *Historia de la Segunda Republica Espanola* Madrid 1969 Tomo II, p.255

3 *Historia del anarquismo leonesa*. p.176.

4 Francisco Aguado Sanchez *El maquis en Espana*, Editorial San Martin, Madrid, 1975, p.664

5 Secundino Serrano *La guerrilla anti-franquista el Leon (1936-1951)*, siglo XXI Editores, 1988; p143

## CESAR TERRON ABAD (1915-1941)

CESAR TERRON WAS BORN in Fabero (Leon province) in 1915. He was active in the CNT in the miners' union, the largest local union. In Fabero the CNT was the predominant trade union organisation. It had its own local on the road between Otero and Naraguantes and an *ateneo* complete with arts group and workers' co-operative.<sup>1</sup> Cesar Terron was the local federation's treasurer. Also active in Fabero in the same miners' union was Serafin Fernandez Ramon (*El Santeiro*) who distinguished himself in the guerrilla war against Franco. More of him later.

Come the anarchist uprising of December 1933 in the province of Leon, the Fabero miners seized the town and declared libertarian communism. They seized a gunpowder store and, armed and with plenty of dynamite charges, they set off for La Vega de Espinareda where they surrounded the Civil Guard barracks. The occupants offered resistance and the barracks were destroyed by dynamite. Two Guards were injured and the rest surrendered. The miners then set out for Arqansa and Cacabelos, but there they were fought off.<sup>2</sup> Cesar Terron was arrested for his part in these events.

During the civil war he served as a captain with the 210th Battalion of the 192nd Brigade under the anarcho-syndicalist Higinio Carrocera, serving with the Machine Gun Company, 63 of the 124 men of which came from Leon. They included the likes of Ramiro Perez Granja (lieutenant also from Fabero); Manuel Alfonso Montes (captain) from Paradeseca; Manuel Rubio Lopez (sergeant) from Valla de Finollado; Santos Blanco Rodriguez (sergeant) from Vega de Espinareda; Luis Martinez Rodriguez (sergeant) from Fabero. The 210th Battalion distinguished itself in the battle at El Mazuco, taking heavy casualties.<sup>3</sup>

Right after the loss of Asturias in October 1937, Cesar Terron made his way homewards with a band of 37 men, six of whom stuck with him: they were Eusebio Garcia Garcia, Ramiro Perez Granja, Antonio Vega Guerrero (*Rizoso*) a Leones born in 1917 in San Juan de la Mata, two men from Fontoria (Ubaldo and Luis), plus an Asturian, *El Maestro*. The band settled in the Fabero district and had hide-outs in the Sierra de Ancars; its raids took it as far as Lugo and Asturias. There were other bands of "runaways" operating in the Sierra de Ancares. The biggest was the group of Serafin Fernandez Ramon (*El Santeiro*).

Aguado Sanchez is very curt in his references to Cesar Terron.<sup>4</sup>

*In 1938 Cesar Terron's group was set up in the Fabero and Valle de Ancares districts. Comprising six escapees from the collapsed Asturian front, it marauded north of Ponferrada as far as the ports of Cienfuegos and Leitariegos. They carried out hold-ups in San Martin de Moreda and Bustarga. In Fresneda they murdered the parish priest. In 1940 in Villar de Otero Cesar Terron was hunted down. One of the bandits gave himself up to the authorities. The others decided to 'offer their services' to the 'Pataciegos'*

The Pataciegos band had been set up by the brothers Salvador, Demetrio and Pedro Voces Canonica, known as the 'Pataciegos' brothers.

Approaching the Villar de Otero (Leon) district in search of food supplies - there being lots of sheep in the area - Cesar Terron's group was apparently spotted by intelligence agents. The guerrillas' families who, it was thought, (correctly) were helping them with supplies, were forced to choose between 'voluntarily' moving into Leon or going to prison.

The band retreated into Asturias to escape from the dragnet and in Llandeo they freed Jose Fernandez Perez from capture by a Civil Guard patrol. One Guard died in the skirmish.<sup>5</sup> The Cesar Terron group was hotly pursued following the death of the Fresneda parish priest, Juan Alvarado Garcia, on 30 August 1938. The guerrillas accused him of having incited the Falangists of Toreno to kill the Finlledo teacher Manuel Perez Abad, uncle of Cesar Terron, who had been *paseado* (taken for a ride and murdered) on 2 September 1936.

The pursuit of the band was stepped up even further after the killing of an army officer in Vega de Espinareda on 2 July 1940.

In the Fabero district there were repeated clashes with mixed patrols of Civil Guards, troops and Falangists. The noose was tightening day by day on Cesar Terron. At the same time his support was shrinking and several townspeople were jailed on charges of having aided and abetted him.

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