

ANARCHISM IN GALICIA

Organisation, Resistance and

Women in the Underground

Essays by Eliseo Fernández,

Antón Briallos and Carmen Blanco

Edited and translated by Paul Sharkey

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Josefa Calvo Cortes was a runner for the FAI and a 47 year old fishmonger and greengrocer ... She was in charge of supplying fish, fruit and vegetables to Alicia Dorado's safe house since Alicia was working as a baker and could not go to the public square.

On 10 July 1937, the day that Alicia Dorado, Julio Acebedo and Antonio Fournarakis were killed, Josefa brought them sardines and cherries.

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What is Anarchism?

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

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

THE FAI IN GALICIA

by Eliseo Fernández

Come the Transition years and an upsurge in publication of books dealing with the history of the workers' movement, Galicia too began to see publication of studies of the history of anarcho-syndicalism: one of the earliest studies of the history of anarcho-syndicalism in Galicia was written by former CNT and Syndicalist Party militant Manuel Fernández for the *Gran Enciclopedia Gallega*. That work which is of tremendous value in that it came from a former militant of the organisation was in turn tainted by Manuel Fernández's prominent activism as a member of one of two contending schools of thought within the anarcho-syndicalist organisation. The worst thing was that his honestly held but impassioned characterisation of the FAI and its influence within the CNT's Galician Regional Confederation set the standard and was replicated and indeed added to in subsequent studies: instead of Fernández's study being accepted as merely the testimony of yet another of the protagonists of the time, it was embraced as unassailable truth by most authors.[1] Only the more heavyweight and rigorous studies carried out by Dionisio Pereira [2] and Carlos Pereira [3] recently reopened the way to exploration of the subject on a proper basis, to wit, on the basis of the press and the documentation generated by Galicia's anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist organisations.

Given that the aforementioned studies only touched on the subject in a tangential way (in the case of Dionisio Pereira) or adopted a localist approach (Carlos Pereira), I shall attempt in this article to offer a more comprehensive view of the FAI's history in Galicia, relying upon heretofore underused sources such as the correspondence between the Galician Regional Committee and the FAI Peninsular Committee, as well as the very nearly complete collection of the La Coruña anarchist newspaper *Brazo y Cerebro*. The task of probing the broader trajectory of organised anarchism in Galicia (taking in the anarchist groups predating the foundation of the FAI, the Libertarian Youth, the *ateneos libertarios* as well as non-FAI-affiliated anarchist groups) I shall have to leave to a later essay, albeit that the odd reference will be made to their history here of course.

Retrospective: organised anarchism in Galicia

The very first anarchist groups in Galicia came into being towards the end of the 19th century: according to Gerard Brey, one popped up in La Coruña in April 1890 "probably in order to monitor the anarchist orthodoxy of the Local Federation and to counter any electioneering temptations in the ranks of the proletariat on the eve of the introduction of universal male suffrage".[4] Shortly after that, in January 1893, the anarchist group 'Ni Dios Ni amo' was behind the publication of the La Coruña newspaper *El*

Corsario which had been published up until December 1892 by the La Coruña Federation. [5] As the century was drawing to an end, anarchist groups began to surface elsewhere in Galicia, groups such as ‘Lo que somos’, launched in El Ferrol in late 1894, and by 1901 the ‘Los Inconoclastas’ group was also in existence in the same location.[6] But the real upsurge in anarchist groups in Galicia came during the 1910s, coinciding with a period of organisational disarray due to the virtual disappearance of the CNT following the 1911 congress: during this time the ‘Germinal’ group appeared in La Coruña [7], the ‘Humanidad Libre’ group in Orense and in El Ferrol there was a positive rash of anarchist groups, taking in youth groups like the one calling itself ‘Juventud Libertaria’ [8], women’s groups such as ‘La Antorcha’ [9] and straightforward anarchist groups like the ones calling themselves ‘13 de octubre’ [10] or ‘Sin Fronteras’.[11] This proliferation of anarchist groups, especially in El Ferrol, can be seen in the light of the weakness of anarcho-syndicalist style trade unions and the intention of furthering reorganisation of the workers’ movement along anarchist lines.

El Ferrol was the location of the celebrated Peace Congress held in May 1915; on foot of this the CNT relaunched its effective reorganisation: but in parallel with the Peace Congress, El Ferrol hosted a meeting of anarchist groups and newspapers held to deal with the launch of the ‘Spanish Committee of the Anarchist International’, at the suggestion of the Levante-born anarchist and La Coruña resident Constancio Romeo. As a result of that meeting a Committee was appointed: it would be populated by the ‘Tierra y Libertad’ group from Barcelona and would have charge of shaping the Spanish chapter of the Anarchist International and the work involved in establishing that organisation around the world. That meeting and the Peace Congress alike drew the presence of the La Coruña anarchist groups ‘Juventud en marcha’ and ‘Ni Dios Ni Amo’, and of the ‘Acción Anarquista’ group from El Ferrol.[12] Even though the Committee’s endeavours did not see fruition in the establishment of an anarchist international, it did represent a step forwards in the coordination of anarchists throughout Iberia; bear in mind that the Portuguese trade unions and anarchist groups had taken part, albeit only fleetingly [13], in the Congress, bringing to it a proposal for the establishment of an Iberian Trade Union Federation. Even though that proposal was not carried, we are entitled to see it as a precedent of the FAI, albeit with a trade union focus, as borne out, perhaps, by the fact that one of the members of the Portuguese delegation was Manuel Joaquim de Sousa, one of the founder members of the FAI years later and father of Germinal de Sousa, a leading FAI militant during the civil war years.

Anarcho-syndicalism in El Ferrol went into a decline from 1915 onwards due to the crisis in the shipbuilding industry and the powerful influence exerted by the mighty La Coruña Local Labour Federation, ensuring that during the 1920s the epicentre of anarchist activity shifted to La Coruña.[14] At that time, according to Dionisio Pereira,

there were at least four anarchist groups in Galicia, two of them in La Coruña (the 'Tierra' group which published a newspaper of the same name and comprising Jesús Arenas, Ricardo García Lago and Emilio González López, plus a second group (name unknown) made up of Pedro Monreal and the rationalist schoolteacher Juan Expósito), one in Santiago (the 'Los Libertarios' group) and finally another in Vigo (the 'Desper-tad' group in which Eduardo Collado, Severino Estevez and José Villaverde were active). [15]

Which is how things stood come 1927 when the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) was launched: according to Juan Gómez Casas [16] the veteran anarchist militant from Compostela, Manuel Fandiño Ricart, had a hand in the foundation congress of this specific organisation. We know little about the credentials that Fandiño brought to that congress or his contribution to the proceedings, although it is known that he was not active in the Iberian Anarchist Federation during the years of the Republic, nor did he display the slightest sympathy for it. Quite the opposite.

The Second Republic and the creation of the FAI in Galicia

Anarchist activity in Galicia was reviving from early 1931 as indicated by the emergence of the 'Helios' group in La Coruña which attempted to set up a rationalist school in the city at about that time [17], and by Valentín Meira's attempt to organise the La Coruña Local Federation of Anarchist Groups within just days of the proclamation of the Second Republic.[18] That same summer anarchist activity shifted to locations close to La Coruña city, places like Betanzos and Sada, each with its own anarchist group, the 'Liberación'[19] and 'Luz' [20] groups. Under the leadership of the La Coruña Bakers' Union, José Moreno Torres, the anarchist groups from La Coruña, Betanzos and Sada attempted that summer to mount a propaganda tour of Galicia to introduce the FAI.[21]

Up until then, the Galician Regional Confederation (GRC) had espoused a moderate line favouring collaboration with republicans, as was evident in rallies held all over Galicia in late 1930, with addresses from republicans such as Casares Quiroga or Antón Villar Ponte and anarcho-syndicalists like José Ramón Suárez, José Villaverde or El Ferrol's Mario Rico Cobas. Such partnership more or less broke down after the proclamation of the Second Republic and the formation of the republican-socialist coalition government which did not take long to disappoint the hopes of the working class affiliates of the GRC. As a reasonable result, those militants who had overseen the flirtation with the republicans were losing influence to more radical trade union cadres: in addition, the big disputes mounted by the GRC in 1932, such as the general strike in protest at lay-offs in the shipbuilding sector in El Ferrol or the protracted fishermen's strike in the latter half of that year further undermined the GRC Committee,

culminating in the resignation of the committee's secretary, José Villaverde, at the beginning of 1933.[22]

Contrary to what might have been expected, the GRC's switch to more pugnacious policies and direct confrontation with the republican regime did nothing to help consolidate the FAI in Galicia: quite the opposite, since the militants who might have been boosting the organisation at that point moved over to take up prominent posts within the CNT and committed themselves entirely to the business of union organising. As a result, men like José Moreno Torres and other anarcho-syndicalist leaders, especially in La Coruña, significantly eased up on their dealings with the FAI.

Although a number of anarchist groups such as La Coruña's 'Amanecer anárquico',[23] or isolated militants such as Manuel Rodríguez Baraja (from La Coruña) or indeed Federico Urales (from Barcelona) directed stinging criticisms at José Villaverde and the outgoing GRC committee in the columns of Barcelona's *El Luchador* newspaper [24], the majority line among the Galician anarcho-syndicalists was to avert any splits in the organisation and to try to further consolidate the GRC, without being distracted by pointless bickering.

The Galician organisation of the FAI

It needs to be stressed that at that point the CNT and FAI organisations were in weak condition, as evident in the January 1933 revolutionary uprising which created scarcely a ripple in Galicia, even in areas like La Coruña city where libertarians were solidly established.

It was precisely because La Coruña anarchists were immersed in GRC activities that the first steps towards the creation of the FAI's Galician organisation were taken elsewhere in the region. One such location was Pontevedra, where the 'Natura' group [25], supposedly led by the waiter Desiderio Comesana and telegraph official Francisco Iturralde, took on the task of serving as the FAI's Galician Regional Committee in early 1933.[26]

Right from the start, the FAI's Galician RC (Regional Committee) ran into the most serious difficulty the Galician FAI was to grapple with throughout its existence: the reluctance of La Coruña anarchist militants and groups to join the Iberian Anarchist Federation. Alongside the GRC plenum held in Santiago in February 1933, there was a meeting held over the establishment of the CNT Defence Cadres, attended both by Galician anarchist groups and by the GRC's secretary José Moreno.[27] In the wake of that meeting, the Galician Regional Committee insisted that Moreno had launched an anarchist group in La Coruña and had discreetly become a member of the '*la específica*' (i.e. FAI), [28] although in actual fact affiliation never actually took place.

The new FAI Galician Regional Committee was faced with a second front when the Vigo militant Dalmacio Bragado attempted to launch a new structure, the Galician

Regional Federation of Anarchist Groups, separate from the FAI [29]: as might have been expected, his venture failed to prosper.

In the summer of 1933 and coinciding significantly with Francisco Ituralde's move from Pontevedra to El Ferrol, the FAI's Galician Regional Committee relocated to El Ferrol too. It is from this point on that we have reports of the FAI's Galician organisation putting down roots: at the Peninsular Plenum held in Madrid in October 1933 and attended by a Galician delegate [30], the organisation was said to comprise 150 members and 16 groups scattered across 8 localities.[31] At the time, the Galician FAI was made up of 6 groups in La Coruña, 4 in El Ferrol, 1 in Lugo (albeit that this was in crisis at the time), 1 in Pontevedra and smaller groups in Monforte, Porriño, La Guardia and Tuy. This pattern of distribution was understandable given that the largest concentration of CNT members was in La Coruña and El Ferrol, although tellingly, there were no FAI groups in places such as Vigo, Santiago, Villagarcía or Marín where libertarians had a solid foothold. [32]

In cities like Vigo and Santiago, the FAI had difficulties organising, as the Galician RC explained to the Peninsular Committee, due to the influence wielded by militants from the moderate faction of the GRC such as Compostela's ex-FAI member Marcial Villamor or militants from the Vigo Fishing Industry Union.[33] On the other hand, La Coruña had a functioning Local Federation of Anarchist Groups operating wholly independently of the FAI: and, since April 1933, La Coruña had had a "Local Defence Liaison Committee" which played a significant part in the incidents related to the strike mounted against public order bill in May 1933. This ambiguous situation created quite a few difficulties for the subsequent expansion of the FAI in Galicia. The Galician Regional Committee complained about the parochialism of those in La Coruña and their dalliance with members of the outgoing GRC (especially José Villaverde) "due to senseless respect and personal friendships impeding the joining of battle against entrenched reformists." [34]

The relocation of the FAI's Galician RC from Pontevedra to El Ferrol signalled a more pugnacious approach by the specific organisation in Galicia, so much so that in its first message to the Peninsular Committee, the Galician RC was already outlining an ambitious plan for an insurrection in El Ferrol city and remarking upon potential action in Lugo (with FAI members who had infiltrated a number of barracks) and Monforte (an important enclave in that it was the railway hub in Galicia at that time).[35]

That was how things stood in December 1933, when there was a six day general strike in protest at the right's victory in the elections; in some parts of Galicia the strike turned into an out-and-out insurrection. In La Coruña the revolt ended with several hundred people jailed, many wounded and the railway worker Francisco Llerena killed in the attack on the Civil Guard barracks in Oleiros.[36] As a result of the December 1933 uprising, the organisation was hard hit, with a number of the members of the

FAI's Galician RC arrested (including the secretary) whilst other leading activists were forced temporarily into hiding by the crackdown enforced across Galicia.[37] At the same time, the death of Francisco Llerena decapitated the La Coruña Local Federation of Anarchist Groups, in that he was its serving secretary at the time. [38]

The repression was a set-back for the FAI which had been making some headway at the time, and at the same time it altered the balance of power on the GRC, since its secretary José Moreno was forced to go into hiding and many of the leading activists from the Confederation's most radical wing were out of circulation (being jailed or on the run), and the CNT's Galician Regional tilted towards more moderate positions such as those spelled out by its delegates at the National Plenum of CNT Regionals held in March 1934.[39]

With the Galician FAI in mid-crisis, the Regional Committee changed hands again, although it did not move out of the El Ferrol comarca, in that the post of secretary was handed to Rogelio Leal Lopez, a draughtsman from the El Ferrol shipyard and a resident of Piñeiros in the Naron district. And to make matters even worse, shortly after his appointment as secretary, in spring 1934, he was arrested and put out of action for two months.

The vacuum created by the inactivity of the FAI's Galician RC was filled by the La Coruña Local Federation of Anarchist Groups which started to liaise directly with the FAI Peninsular Committee, and by the La Coruña anarchist activist Luis Chamorro Castro [40] who was behind the conversion of the Transport Union's Defence Committee (of which he was a member) into a FAI group.[41]

At that point both the FAI Peninsular Committee and the Galician anarchist groups agreed that they needed to confront those well disposed towards the Workers' Alliances who were beginning to raise their heads within the GRC. Luis Chamorro's venom against the moderate trade unionists was so extreme that in a letter to the Peninsular Committee he bragged that La Coruña anarchists had sabotaged a festival held in support of the *casa sindical* (trade union house) that being a stronghold of the *treintistas*, costing it 5,000 pesetas.[42]

When the secretary of the Galician FAI's RC was freed from prison in the summer of 1934, Chamorro laid on a meeting with José Moreno and other representatives of the La Coruña anarchist groups; at that meeting, Moreno stated that there were no FAI groups in La Coruña, but that there were CNT Defence Groups and offering by way of explanation of his refusal to join the FAI the argument that "the FAI was not in its place because it had targeted the unions rather than committing itself to educating the people." [43]

Besides, the fact that the La Coruña Local Federation of Anarchist Groups was in direct contact with the Peninsular Committee had the effect of ensuring that the organisation was not operating properly, with telling anomalies such as the fact that three

CNT Defence Groups ('Orto', 'Los Solidarios' from La Coruña and 'Plantas Nuevas' from Betanzos) had affiliated themselves to the FAI unbeknownst to its Galician RC. This irregularity was sorted out months later in September 1934 when two of those groups – 'Orto' and 'Plantas Nuevas' – contacted the FAI's Galician RC to regularise their status. The situation even prompted the FAI's Galician RC to raise the possibility that said committee might relocate to La Coruña, instead of operating out of El Ferrol, just to pre-empt these problems.[44] That idea was ruled out by the Peninsular Committee which expressed the view that such a relocation could take place at a later date, once the La Coruña groups had been incorporated into the organisation.

All of these issues were 'parked' in October 1934, come the socialists' revolutionary uprising. On this occasion, the highest profile was in El Ferrol where radicalised social groups were behind a range of revolutionary actions, resulting in three deaths by violence (one socialist activist, one Assault Guard and one CNT militant who perished in La Escollera military prison) and several arrests. Although El Ferrol's FAI refused the back the socialists in their October uprising, there was nonetheless a degree of cooperation between socialists and anarchists at the grass roots. The upshot being that a number of FAI militants such as El Ferrol's Luis Abella[45] and La Coruña's Luis Chamorro were arrested (both of them implicated in the distribution of a batch of bombs that had been supplied by socialist militants). [46] In La Coruña, the behaviour of the 'Orto' group militant Octavio Carro Garcia when he was arrested came in for serious questioning from the La Coruña groups, leading to Carro and the 'Orto' and 'Alfa Orto' groups dropping out of the FAI. [47]

Late 1934 saw another change to the make-up of the FAI Peninsular Committee with the influx of militants who were more scrupulous in the performance of their tasks, so that any communication with the La Coruña Local Federation of Anarchist Groups and with Luis Chamorro was cut off until such time as they had entered into direct liaison with the FAI's Galician RC. Aware of the difficulties facing the Galician FAI, the Peninsular Committee even suggested that the Galician Region should be amalgamated with its Asturian counterpart, although that option was rejected by the Galician RC due to communications difficulties between Asturias and Galicia. Furthermore, the incoming Peninsular Committee forwarded "chemical formulae" which appear to have been sent out earlier by other committees; despite frictions and the repression, the El Ferrol anarchists were still committed to the revolutionary road and early 1935 had set up a liaison committee with the Navy; it served to smuggle the newspapers *FAI* and *Revolución Social* on to ships and into barracks. [48]

1935 proved rather quieter than 1934 since the trade unions were back in operation after March and new anarchist groups were launched in Moaña, Pontevedra and Villanueva de Valdeorras, and that May saw the launch in La Coruña of the anarchist newspaper *Brazo y Cerebro*, published by a group of La Coruña anarchist and

Libertarian Youth militants [49] like Gregorio Quintana, Antonio Varela and, most especially, the Greek-Argentinean Antonio Fournarakis, recently arrived from Latin America after a period of great activity in Argentina and Bolivia.[50] This new Galician anarchist mouthpiece helped reposition the anarchist movement and coordinate the efforts of the groups, youth, *ateneos* and indeed women's groups, whilst at the same time mounting an ideological and cultural education drive that had previously been pushed into second place by concern for the urgency of revolution during 1933 and 1934.

By the time the FAI's Galician organisation held a regional plenum in July 1935, the FAI could count on organised groups in Sada, Cabovilano, El Ferrol, Mugarodos, Piñeiros, Pontevedra, Vigo, Villagarcia, Porriño, Tuy, La Guardia, Moaña and Orense.[51] One of the items on the agenda at the plenum was the possible entry of FAI personnel into the Defence Groups and it was agreed that the report from the National Defence Committee would be acted upon, and that both the FAI and the Libertarian Youth would join said committees. Lots of Defence Groups were already linked in some way to the FAI but there was also strong opposition to FAI personnel's joining them. Some of that opposition came from the organiser of La Coruña's Defence Groups, Julián Carballo, who opposed it on anarchist grounds. Opposition came also from El Ferrol's moderate trade unionists who impeded the formation of Defence Groups on account of misgivings about FAI involvement. [52]

Relations between the FAI's Galician RC and the Peninsular Committee had yet to be sorted out: first it was the FAI's Galician RC that was flabbergasted by the latter's suggestion that, capitalising on José Villaverde's resumption of his activities, he should be asked to write for the anarchist press: that suggestion was emphatically rejected by the Galician FAI's plenum, at which Villaverde was disowned and the Galician FAI resolved that he should be ignored.[53] Relations were strained again in late 1935 by a problem with a book order paced by the Galician RC and above all by the Galician RC's suggestion to the Aragon RC that a sort of an Inter-regional Committee be formed: this was resented by the Peninsular Committee. Another controversial issue was the Galician RC's petition to the Peninsular Committee that it should nominate a comrade for election to the position of CNT general secretary at the congress scheduled to take place in Zaragoza in 1936.[54] That petition was turned down by the Peninsular Committee.

In April 1936 a meeting was held in La Coruña at which, after two years of ebb and flow, the differences between the Galician RC and the La Coruña anarchist groups were sorted out "once and for all".[55] But the resolution could not have been all that final since serious differences of opinion resurfaced after the Zaragoza congress: the issue being certain things said about Antonio Fournarakis that prompted both him and his group to quit the FAI. Although it appears that there were La Coruña anarchists

who cited Fournarakis's presence as an obstacle to their joining the FAI, after Fournarakis quit the FAI they still did not join, to the indignation of the secretary of the FAI Local Federation of Anarchist Groups, José González.[57]

Latterly the FAI's activities had concentrated on tip-offs received about the preparations under way for a military coup. In late June the Local Federation of Anarchist Groups mentioned that the Local Federation of the CNT had been approached by the civil governor who asked that it place about 50 determined men at his disposal [58], whilst in El Ferrol precautions were also being taken against an army revolt. But when the army revolt came in Galicia on 20 July the anarchist militants' "revolutionary gymnastics" simply delayed the rebels' victory for a few days. In libertarian strongholds like La Coruña, El Ferrol, Verín and Tuy, the resistance held out for a few days and allowed many leftwing militants to escape with their lives, but by late July the whole of Galicia was under army control.

During the civil war years, whilst the CNT's Fishing Industry Union committed itself to orchestrating escapes by fishing boat, a few anarchist militants were considering action and tried to organise a rebellion against the new authorities. In La Coruña, the erstwhile secretary of the FAI Local Federation of Anarchist Groups, José González, reestablished contact with Antonio Fournarakis and with the printing worker Antonio Varela, the object being to resurrect the Local Federation, to which end they launched an underground leaflet asking members to band together to avenge all of the left-wingers who had been murdered by the new authorities: they also tried to re-establish contact with the organisation which was still extant in El Ferrol. But this attempt to resurrect the FAI in La Coruña was thwarted by the efforts of a 'plant' within anarchist underground circles who put the police on the trail of the González-Fournarakis group [59], as well as another group in which the Levante anarchist Jaime Baella [60] was involved. As a result, by late June-early July 1937, three homes in the old city of La Coruña were raided and fourteen men and two women murdered by the police and Civil Guard: a further seven arrested during the operation were later executed in March 1938.[61]

Meanwhile in El Ferrol virtually the entirety of the FAI's membership had escaped unscathed: after tackling the army on the streets of the city they had withdrawn from there to the safety of less closely monitored rural districts. A few anarchist militants like Nicasio López, Manuel Ardao or Francisco Iturralde were arrested and murdered in the autumn of 1936, whilst the remainder stayed in hiding, albeit that they engaged in a few skirmishes with the authorities by launching a guerrilla war in the area: when the war was lost by the republican camp, El Ferrol's anarchists were involved in two seaborne escapes to France in the spring and summer of 1939: Maximiano Romero Ramos [62], an anarchist from the nearby town of Mugardos, took part in the former and the most

prominent militants of the El Ferrol FAI – Rogelio Leal, Luis Abella and cook Moisés Lago Lorenzo – in the latter.[63]

Other Galician FAI militants were slain in the orgy of repression launched by the new authorities: they included José Esmoris in Cabovilano, José Monzo in Sada, Emilio and José Costas in Tuy, Antonio Vidal and Rafael Lamas in La Coruña. Some of the ones who managed to escape into the republican zone and who survived the civil war reluctantly went into exile – Luis Chamorro from La Coruña, or Luis Bazal from Orense, to name but two.

By late 1947, after the CNT's clandestine organisation in Galicia had been smashed, Rogelio Leal returned from France together with the former Libertarian Youth militant Manuel Fernández Dópico, their plan being to refloat the FAI in the area and wean the CNT away from the "collaborationist" faction which held the upper hand in the Interior. Leal and Fernández Dópico were operating in concert with the FAI Committee that Juan Gómez Casas and Angel Urzaiz headed in Madrid. But shortly after they arrived the Madrid and Galician organisations of the FAI were rounded up by the police and Rogelio Leal was to spend many a long year in San Miguel de los Reyes prison, whilst Fernandez Dópico managed to escape before finally turning himself in once the worst was over.[64]

The FAI's foothold in Galicia

In terms both of numbers and geographical distribution, we might say that the Galician FAI did not have much of a foothold. The only overall figure we have refers to October 1933 and at that point the organisation was made up of 16 groups and some 150 members. The likelihood is that in 1936 the FAI covered a wider area in geographical terms and had something over 200 militants. But even so, the FAI tried to bring influence to bear on an organisation like the GRC which, under the republic had an average membership of 20,000. Plainly it could not have done this on the basis of numbers alone.

In the capital of Galician anarcho-syndicalism, La Coruña, the FAI faced very serious problems in recruiting the bulk of anarchist activists who were under the umbrella of the Confederal Defence Groups. Although the FAI always had some group or other in the city, its influence was minimal set alongside the influence of the Defence Groups. Some of the groups that existed in La Coruña included the 'Amanecer anárquico', 'Orto', 'Alfa Orto', 'Nervio', 'Los Solidarios' or 'Los Excomulgados' groups. And it should be noted that La Coruña was the only city in Galicia with a women's anarchist group during the years of the republic: the so-called 'Vanguardia Feminina', one of whose most outstanding militants was Sebastiana Vitales.

However, El Ferrol was a counterweight to La Coruña, since the CNT there had a smaller presence yet the FAI managed to have three and even four groups there, in the

city proper as well as in the adjacent towns of Narón and Mugardos. That being the case, it is small wonder that between 1933 and 1936 the Galician FAI's RC was based in El Ferrol and that the city was the epicentre of CNT activity. Only the activity of very popular El Ferrol CNT militants like Mario Rico Cobas who was very close to Pestaña and by 1936 had ties to the Syndicalist Party, was able to resist FAI activity in El Ferrol.

The third big city in La Coruña province, Santiago, was scarcely touched by FAI activity. Only after 1934 do we have any record of the existence of a FAI-affiliated group. Maybe this tenuous foothold was due to the efforts of some old or influential militants from anarchist groups, people such as Marcial Villamor, Manuel Amil or Manuel Fandiño who, from Santiago or from outside (Amil from La Coruña and Fandiño from Marín) mounted robust opposition to FAI tactics.

Carballo, Cabovilano, Sada and Tuy were towns on the outskirts of La Coruña where La Coruña anarchists left their mark, albeit that when it came to the FAI, they kept the La Coruña influence at arm's length and were close to the specific organisation and its Galician RC. In Betanzos as well as in Sada, there were several groups, although the likelihood is that they were the products of the same organising drive and that the change of names came about simply because the groups were disbanded in the wake of the 1933 and 1934 uprisings (Betanzos had the 'Liberación' and 'Plantas Nuevas' groups and Sada the 'Luz' and the 'Nueva Vida').[65]

To finish with La Coruña province, we ought to highlight the presence of some FAI sympathisers in the townships of Noya and Lousame, some of them Portuguese anarchists in exile who belonged to the 'Os conquistadores modernos' group.[66]

As for Lugo province, the FAI groups there were concentrated in the city and in the Monforte area, although there were some sympathisers in the Vivero area as well. It was in Lugo city above all that the FAI had the surest foothold and there anarchist militants promoted the establishment of the 'Humanidad Libre' *ateneo libertario* as well as of the 'Vida y Acción' anarchist youth group in late 1935.[67]

A province where anarcho-syndicalist activity was slight, as was the case in Orense, was also not going to be able to produce a very buoyant specific organisation and this was the case. Only after July 1934 do we have any record of a FAI group in the city and later libertarian groups were also formed in Villanueva de Valdeorras (the 'Unión Anarquista' group in March 1935)[68] and in Xirazga-Beariz (the 'Luis Fabbri' group in November 1935)[69] In the Verín district, where most of the railway construction workers were CNT members, there were FAI sympathisers, but not one FAI group was formed.

AS for Pontevedra province, we have to draw a distinction between the city, the home of the 'Natura' group which served as the FAI's Galician RC during its initial stages (despite the meagre CNT presence in the city) and the city of Vigo and the rest of

the province. In Vigo, a strongly independent socialist town, the FAI had scarcely any foothold to start with but by around 1935 there was a strong upsurge in organised anarchism culminating in the establishment of a Comarcal Federation of Anarchist Groups, as well as a Provincial Federation of Cultural Centres, Ateneos and Youth.[70] Elsewhere in the province, we should highlight the La Guardia and Porriño nuclei, with minimally active FAI groups, whereas in Moaña, Villagarcia and Tuy the FAI groups were more organised.

As to foothold in terms of areas of production we ought to highlight the fact that in the areas where the CNT's Regional Fishing Industry Federation [71] prevailed, there was scarcely any FAI presence, maybe on account of the moderate approach of the fisheries union organisers Manuel Fandiño, José Villaverde, Eduardo Collado and, to some extent, Manuel Montes. In farming areas where the GRC established a presence towards the end of the republican era, the libertarian groups had hardly any presence, except in areas near to cities or locations where anarchists held sway, like La Coruña, El Ferrol or Tuy.

The FAI and the GRC

Relations between the CNT's GRC and the FAI's Galician regional were never very close. The intention on the part of successive FAI GRCs to bring influence to bear on the behaviour of the trade union organisation led to strained relations between the two organisations. All of the correspondence of the Galician RC is shot through with a serious preoccupation with the outlook of the GRC and the performance of its committee which swung backwards and forwards between moderate and more radical positions. Also, the evolution of the specific organisation was largely dependent on the extent of the trade union organisation's presence and, to some extent, marched in step with the latter in that FAI get-togethers normally coincided with GRC meetings.

The Confederal Defence Groups, made up of CNT, FAI and Libertarian Youth personnel, might have been one way of reconciling the interests of the respective organisations. But at the moment of truth, the establishment of Defence Groups proved yet another source of controversy, either because the syndicalists refused to get involved with them on the basis that their members belonged to the FAI, or due to the refusal by some groups to toe the specific organisation's line.

Although the FAI tried to sway the CNT, militants of a different outlook were not idle, so that the expansion of the specific organisation found itself hampered by the actions of activist moderates like the cadres from the Fishing Industry Union in Vigo, Marcial Villamor in Compostela or Syndicalist Party militants in La Coruña. But another factor in its stagnation was that anarchist militants like Moreno, Baella, Hermida, Amil or Carballo mounted a defence of the trade union organisation's independence.

Relations between the GRC and the FAI were never good, but plainly, at times when the Committee was in the hands of activist moderates like Villaverde, relations were much worse than when, say, José Moreno was in charge. Although they did not see eye to eye on certain matters, the practicalities of trade union policies and insurrectionist activity united the La Coruña anarchist groups and the FAI organisation who were, as the saying goes, “on the streets”.

Times of repression encouraged moderate control of the trade unions, since at such times the activists from the anarchist or *faísta* faction were usually behind bars or on the run (sometimes for things they had done, sometimes targeted by pre-emptive raids). In more tranquil times, the moderate faction was normally in the minority, except inside the unions or in specific localities.

Although it is on record that certain activities of the members of the FAI’s Galician RC and the FAI groups had an influence on the GRC’s shifting towards their policies [72], it is hard to gauge whether the act of coordinating through the FAI achieved something that might not have been achieved had they acted as “mere” CNT militants.

If there was one defining feature of the GRC, it was the existence of a strong anarchist sector that was not inside the FAI camp and which, in normal circumstances, was in the majority within the organisation. An anarchist sector (in the majority in La Coruña) that championed the CNT’s independence of the FAI, that threw its weight behind insurrections, protracted disputes and violent activities but which was not unduly belligerent towards the moderate faction and could even, under certain circumstances, be in favour of the Workers’ Alliances.[73] This non-FAI anarchist constituency was in the majority in La Coruña and exercised a degree of influence inside the Regional Fishing Industry Federation and thus had a crucial bearing on the policy of the GRC despite opposition emanating both from the FAI and from the Syndicalist Party.

FAI activities

Judging by the correspondence exchanged between the FAI’s Galician RC and the Peninsular Committee, the bulk of FAI activity would have been of the conspiratorial variety as it attempted to monitor the GRC and undermine the influence of the moderates, represented by Villaverde, first, and of the Syndicalist Party thereafter. But it is plain that there were other activities carried out by FAI groups in Galicia, although they may not be reflected in the correspondence.

On the one hand, the members of each group brought ongoing pressure to bear at grassroots level inside the trade union bodies, lobbying inside the unions of which they were members for the adoption of resolutions that were revolutionary in character and championing the FAI’s stance and this was often done without their being any need to coordinate with one another through the FAI; they were acting on their own initiatives.

Whether as individuals, through the anarchist groups or the CNT's Defence Groups, anarchist militants involved themselves in activities in defence of their trade union demands, in activities of a different sort (church burning, say) and in attempted uprisings; although the correspondence exchanged between the FAI's Galician RC and the Peninsular Committee made no mention of the preparations for any sort of operation (only to be expected), there is no question but that the Iberian Anarchist Federation's organisation network helped in laying the groundwork for operations of this sort, albeit that they were cooked up discreetly on foot of personal contacts with more like-minded male and female comrades.

Across Galicia, there was a proliferation of cultural activities linked to anarchism. Although it is hard to make out which were boosted by the FAI's militants and which by militants of different persuasions present within the libertarian movement, there are some – such as the El Ferrol Rationalist School, the 'Humanidad Libre' *ateneo libertario* in Lugo, the Provincial Federation of Cultural Centres, Ateneos and Youth in Pontevedra – in which the *faístas* were especially prominent. Another cultural front was the distribution of the libertarian press, books by anarchist theorists and the mounting of lectures and talks about current political events or with educational purposes.

There was, moreover, the quiet and thankless work done by the various FAI Galician RCs, such as keeping up contacts with the groups (weathering times of repression), collecting dues (a very demanding task), distributing the organisation's circulars and there was even, in late 1935, a 17-day tour mounted through the whole of Galicia, with visits to comarcal and local committees, groups and individual militants in order to circulate the FAI's principles.[74]

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the FAI was not a perfectly structured organisation, since its agencies were battered by repression and its networks weakened. Groups often disappeared and committees were arrested or forced to wind up their activities, forced on to the run and all of this meant that activity was continually had to be re-launched. Although it may appear anecdotal, it is telling that the FAI Peninsular Committee and the FAI's own Galician Regional Committee use a range of names when referring to the latter body – FAI Galician Regional Committee, Regional Committee of Anarchist Groups of Galicia, FAI Liaison Committee in Galicia, Committee of the Galician Regional Federation of Anarchist Groups, Galician Regional Secretariat, Galician Regional Liaison Committee, Secretariat of the Galician Regional FAI Committee, Galician Anarchist Regional Committee, and virtually every other conceivable variation.

Conclusion

In its day as well as at present, the FAI's history has been wrapped up in the myth that surrounds it; whether in the positive version, as good, selfless men who put their lives on the line in order to achieve a fairer and more equal society, or the negative one, as the fanatical, uncompromising anarchists whose adventurism brought about the ruination of the organisation. Plainly, in Galicia and elsewhere, the organisation grew up shrouded in that myth and there is no doubt but that the FAI would not have achieved the influence it did in Galicia but for the romantic image that had been woven around its militants. The fact that experienced and veteran anarchists like the ones in La Coruña were reluctant to join the FAI, whereas the greenhorns from smaller country areas enthusiastically signed up for membership, is one obvious symptom of this.

Albeit very slowly, the FAI was consolidating its Galician organisation during the republican era. Besides maintaining its influence in areas where it was most influential (El Ferrol, Betanzos, Sada, Tuy, Carballo and Lugo), it successfully grew the organisation and gained a foothold in areas with a strong CNT presence but where it had initially had no presence of its own (Villagarcia, Santiago and most especially Vigo). Although the situation in Galicia was always a complicated one, the ties of some anarchist groups to the specific organisation were maintained.

In the cultural and ideological spheres, the FAI's Galician organisation did not engage in specific efforts but exercised an influence through the anarchist militants who belonged to it whilst simultaneously taking part in the libertarian movement's multi-faceted cultural ventures. So it is out of place to talk about the FAI bringing light to anarchist ideas; it merely spread its watchwords. Maybe the fact that one after another the Regional Committees were populated by men of action but men of action with no particular obsession with theoretical issues was the source of this shortcoming.

The FAI's influence, together with that of the La Coruña anarchist groups unaffiliated to it, helped radicalise the Galician Regional Confederation during 1933 and 1934: but despite a strong campaign mounted in 1935 and 1936, the FAI failed to shift the Galician Regional Confederation from a course that seemed to lead on inexorably to support for Workers' Alliances. Throughout the years of the Republic, the Galician FAI failed to get the Galician Regional Confederation to tailor its activities to the FAI's analysis of the political situation, due to the strength of the La Coruña anarchists who refused to join the specific organisation. But imperceptibly its influence within the GRC was on the increase, with some ebb and flow.

Its practice of revolutionary gymnastics, its connections inside the Army and Navy and the chemical industry also proved unable to avert defeat in July 1936, but at least they helped ensure that in some places a goodly number of libertarian militants escaped the repression.

It is for the reader to gauge for himself the viability of the FAI militants' analysis, or how proper their approach to implementing it, but in my belief there is no denying the altruism and selflessness with which they championed their beliefs, in many instances even at the cost of their very lives.

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Notes

1. Manuel Fernández Fernández writing in *Gran Enciclopedia Gallega*, under the entry "Confederación Regional Galaica". Among other things, Manuel Fernandez includes this enthusiastic comment: "1932 was drawing to a close when the men of the FAI (*Federación Anarquista Ibérica*) launched into an all-out campaign to discredit the Regional's secretary, José Villaverde Velo, the object being to oust him from office in order to have him replaced by someone rather more amenable to their plans for ongoing revolutionary agitation. This was to prove a protracted and onerous battle and its sponsors did not refrain from threat and the most disgraceful slander. Prominent in this campaign were Furnerake [Fournarakis], Baella, 'el Francés' and Luis Chamorro, very ably assisted by Manuel Amil, Manuel Montes, Julián Carballo, Hermida and others. Villaverde was alive to the risks implicit in any split in the organisation and for the sake of unity he decided to step down from the post of secretary which then passed to José Moreno Torres." It is startling that such a partisan entry should have found its way into a general encyclopedia, but what looks truly unthinkable is that it should then have been repeated by most Galician historians who have tackled the history of the CNT's Galician Regional Confederation.

2. Dionisio Pereira *A CNT na Galicia 1922-1936* (Laivento, Santiago 1994)

3. Carlos Pereira "Una achega á historia da FAI en Galicia: o grupo 'Plantas Nuevas' de Betanzos" , in *Anuario Brigantino* 22 (1991).

4. Gerard Brey "El movimiento obrero en La Coruña entre 1881 y 1889" in *Cuadernos de Estudios Gallegos*, XXXIII (1982)

5. *El Corsario* (La Coruña) 29-01-1893

6. The 'Los Iconoclastas' group published A. Pellicer's pamphlet *En defensa de nuestros ideales* and was involved in campaigning in El Ferrol in relation to the events in La Coruña in 1901. [La Coruna, 1901: On 30 May 1901 a striker was killed, triggering serious rioting and a general strike. The massive funeral of the deceased led to the authorities' imposing martial law. The security forces opened fire and two women and several men were killed, among them the keyholder of the La Coruna Carpenters' Union. The officer in charge was hauled before an honour board and dismissed from the service. Ten days after that Ricardo Cotelo, anarchist, bumped into

the officer on the street and fired two shots from a revolver, missing him entirely. As a result, Cotelo was sent to prison and was only freed in April 1904. This may or may not be the same Roberto Cotelo who later went to Spain from Uruguay in 1937 to assist the revolution. PS.]

7. *Tierra y Libertad* (Barcelona) 24-3-1910

8. *Acción Libertaria* (Madrid) 31010-13

9. *Tierra y Libertad* (Barcelona) 21-8-12

10. Ibid. 24-2-10

11. Ibid 16-4-13

12. Ibid. 12-5-15

13. They were put out at the end of the first session of the Peace Congress. See Eliseo Fernández Fernández *José López Bouza: Do anarquismo ao republicanismo: e o seu fillo o pintor José López Fernández* (Edición do Castro, Sada 2002)

14. The La Coruña anarchist militant José Suárez Duque took part in the National Anarchist Conference held right after the congress of Sans and represented Galicia. See José Luis Gutiérrez Molina *La idea revolucionaria: El anarquismo organizado en Andalucía y Cádiz durante los años treinta* (Madre Tierra, Madrid 1993).

15. Dionisio Pereira, op. cit.

16. Juan Gómez Casas, *Historia de la FAI* (Zero-Zyx, Madrid 1977)

17. *Solidaridad Obrera* (La Coruña) 14-3-31

18. Ibid. 18-4-31

19. Ibid. 6-6-31

20. Ibid., 4-7-31

21. Ibid., 25-7-31

22. Dionisio Pereira, op. cit.

23. It appears to have been made up of militants from the Labourers' Union. see Dionisio Pereira, op. cit.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. By early 1906 an anarchist group had emerged in Pontevedra under the cabinet-maker Edelfonso Mayen. See *Germinal* (La Coruña) 7-1-05

27. Letter from the FAI's Galician Regional Committee to the Peninsular Committee (no location, undated) ACP-FAI 1933 [FAI Peninsular Committee Archive held at the IISH in Amsterdam]

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. There is a possibility that the delegate in question was none other than José Moreno himself in that he took part in a Regional CNT Plenum at around this time.
31. Letter from the FAI's Galician Regional Committee to the Peninsular Committee, El Ferrol, 9-11-33, ACP -FAI, 1933
32. At the Regional Plenum held in El Ferrol in the summer of 1932, La Coruña had 10,171 members, El Ferrol 2,160, Santiago 1,470, Vigo 3,174, Vilagarcia 1,248 and Marín 1,600. See Dionisio Pereira, *op.cit.*
33. Letter from the Galician Regional FAI Committee to the Peninsular Committee, El Ferrol 9-11-33, ACP-FAI 1933
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. Dionisio Pereira *Sindicalistas y rebeldes* (A Nosa Terra, Vigo 1998)
37. FAI's Galician Regional Committee letter to Peninsular Committee, El Ferrol, 24-2-34, ACP-FAI 1934
38. *Ibid.*, 16-3-34
39. One member of the FAI Peninsular Committee attended the aforementioned Plenum and came away with an unfavourable impression of the moderation of the Galician representation present. See letter from the Peninsular Committee to the FAI's Galician Regional Committee, Barcelona, 5-3-4, ACP-FAI 1934
40. Luis Chamorro (La Coruña, 1901-Tribomont (Belgium) 1969) was a La Coruña docker who had very good connections to the Argentinean FORA and Argentinean anarchists. Arrested on foot of the December 1933 uprising, he did not regain his freedom until April 1934 from which point on he engaged in frantic activity, striving to reorganise the FAI in La Coruña and district.
41. Letter from the 'Orto' group to the Peninsular Committee, La Coruña, 24-7-34, ACP-FAI 1934
42. Letter from Luis Chamorro to the Peninsular Committee La Coruña, 17-7-34, ACP-FAI 1934
43. Letter from the FAI's Galician Regional Committee to the Peninsular Committee, El Ferrol 29-7-34, ACP-FAI 1934
44. *Ibid.*, 2-9-34
45. Luis Abella Beade (b. Landoi-Cariño 1900) active in the El Ferrol Waiters' Union from the 1920s onwards, was one of the busiest CNT and FAI activists in El Ferrol, serving a number of jail terms.
46. A batch of bombs was delivered by socialist activists to the veteran Transport Union activist Francisco Salgado for safe-keeping and some of these were shipped by Luis Abella by sea to La Coruña, addressed to Luis Chamorro. Later other libertarian

- militants from La Coruña and El Ferrol would find themselves implicated in this trial. See IV Territorial Court Martial, El Ferrol. Land [Forces]. Case 310/34
47. Letter from FAI Galician Regional Committee to the Peninsular Committee, El Ferrol, 20-12-34, ACP-FAI 1934
48. Letter from the FAI's Galician Regional Committee to the Peninsular Committee, El Ferrol, 5-1-35, ACP-FAI 1935
49. Dionisio Pereira "Prensa y anarquismo en Galicia: Análisis de una experiencia: *Brazo y Cerebro* (1935-1936)" in *Typologie de la presse hispanique: Actes du colloque* (University of Rennes 1984)
50. Fournarakis was even involved in the activities of the ACAT (American Continental Workers' Association), an umbrella organisation for Latin American trade unions with anarcho-syndicalist leanings. [Referred to elsewhere in this pamphlet as Fournarakis]
51. *Acta del Pleno de Grupos Anarquistas afectados de la FAI*, (no location indicated) ?-7-1935, ACP-FAI 1935
52. Although the secretary of the FAI's Galician Regional Committee held the position of secretary of the CNT's El Ferrol Comarcal Federation in March 1935, relations between the two organisations were never any too good, as may be gleaned from complaints relating to the Defence Groups or the fact that the FAI Galician Regional Committee was not allowed to use the typewriter held at the Confederation's local. See Letter from the FAI's Galician Regional Committee to the Peninsular Committee, El Ferrol, 28-8-35, ACP-FAI 1935
53. Letter from the FAI's Galician Regional Committee to the Peninsular Committee, El Ferrol, 28-5-35, ACP-FAI 1935
54. *Ibid.*, ACP-FAI 1936
55. *Ibid.*, 20-4-36
56. The Galician Regional Committee cited Julián Carballo, Jaime Baella, Juan Hermida and José Moreno. Letter from the Galician FAI Regional Committee to the Peninsular Committee, El Ferrol, 29-6-36, ACP-FAI 1936
57. Letter from the La Coruña Local Federation of Anarchist Groups to the Peninsular Committee, La Coruña, 27-6-36, ACP-FAI 1936
58. *Ibid.*
59. IV Territorial Court Martial, La Coruña, Case 992/37
60. Emilio Grando Seoane *Vixiancia y represión na Galicia da guerra civil: o 'Informe Brandariz' [A Coruña 1937]* (Edicions do Castro, Sada 2001)
61. IV Territorial Court Martial, La Coruña, Land [Forces] Case 1007/37
62. *Ibid.*, El Ferrol. Navy. Case 1632/39
63. *Ibid.* 2134/39

64. Special Espionage and Communism Offences Court. case 170/48. Made available by Consuelo Zabala, the partner of Ángel Urzaiz.
65. *Brazo y Cerebro*, (La Coruña) 15-11-35
66. It is interesting to note that Portuguese anarchists had a presence in a number of areas in Galicia such as Lousame, La Coruña or Carballo. Some of these were members of the FAPE (Federation of Portuguese Anarchists in Exile), lots of communiqués from which were carried in the anarchist newspaper *Brazo y Cerebro* (La Coruña), 15-8-35, 15-11-35 and 15-12-35.
67. *Brazo y Cerebro* (La Coruña) 15-2-36
68. Letter from the 'Unión Anarquista' group to the Peninsular Committee, Villanueva de Valdorras, 13-3-35, ACP-FAI 1935
69. *Brazo y Cerebro* (La Coruña) 15-2-36
70. *Ibid.*, 15-1-36
71. This organisation catering for fishermen and allied trades along the Galician coast had grown to a membership of nearly 16,000 workers by 1936.
72. According to the Galician Regional Committee, Villaverde was not present at the Regional Plenum of the Galician Regional Confederation in late 1933 because of a beating meted out to him at the earlier one in El Ferrol: later it pointed out that the United Front was rejected at the summer 1934 Regional Plenum of the Galician Regional Confederation because of opposition from El Ferrol and Lugo. See Letter from the FAI's Galician Regional Committee to the Peninsular Committee, El Ferrol, 9-11-33 and 15-8-34, ACP-FAI, 1933-1934
73. In December 1936 the Local Workers' Federation of La Coruña held a public debate on the subject of Alliances, at which the case against was put by Fournerakis and Jaime Baella, whilst the majority backed the proposal from Montes that the existence of a pro-alliance stance in the Galician Regional Confederation should be acknowledged, but without any compromise on elections being entertained and with any suggestion that organisations amalgamate being ruled out in advance. See *Brazo y Cerebro*, La Coruña, 15-12-35, 15-1-36 and 1-2-36.
74. *Brazo y Cerebro*, La Coruña, 15-1-36

“Nothing would escape falsification and trivialisation, save through the obstinacy of the few in practising what is the subversive activity par excellence in dark days: remembrance.” Miguel Amorós

VIGO 1936
By Antón Briallós

An Overview of the Libertarian Movement in Vigo

In the Vigo of 1936 the Libertarian Movement was fully matured. In the wake of organisational efforts mounted during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship a comprehensive organisational structure had been developed featuring CNT unions, the Libertarian Youth and some anarchist groups, most of the latter affiliated to the FAI with a few independent ones.

The CNT's unions were in the throes of reorganising: they numbered several thousand members [1] in a number of strong unions and their profile in a number of important disputes such as the Metalworkers' strike was on the rise. The UGT, a union with a long tradition locally, and which had enjoyed a majority during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and during the early days of the Republic, [2] was still in control of unions key to influencing local life, unions such as the Tram Union, but the CNT was a lot more pugnacious. The Libertarian Youth, founded in 1933, was already substantially developed with upwards of 100 members organised into autonomous groups, each ten people strong. Libertarian Youth members did the unions' donkey-work and looked after propaganda, funding and all the day-to-day business. The FAI, established in Vigo since 1934, was much tinier and numbered no more than 30 people organised into affinity groups in direct contact with La Coruña (or, in the Galician language, A Coruña) or Barcelona and each was utterly independent of the others, so much so that it was frequently the case that the local groups were unacquainted with one another. There was also a couple of independent anarchist groups around Dalmacio Bragado (CNT) and José Luis Quintas (FIJL). Without exception, the anarchist organisations' members were CNT members too.

In the villages adjacent to Vigo there was also a considerable libertarian constituency. Pride of place went to Moaña with its powerful seamen's union and a number of FAI groups – the number one Galician *agrupación* for sure – with a lesser presence in Cangas, a significant and influential presence in Tuy and Guillarei and groups in Sabaris, Baiona and La Guarda and seamen's unions all along the coast. On the outskirts of the city too there was a strong presence, especially in Lavadores, Candeán, Bembrive, Beade and San Pedro de Sárdoma. In Candeán there was an anarchist group made up of exiles returned from Argentina; [3] in Beade there were the 'La Antorcha el Porvenir' and 'Proa al Fin' groups; San Pedro had the 'Agrupación Cultural El Libro'

and, as a rule, the groups (be they FAI, Libertarian Youth or independents) completely controlled the farmers' associations in those parishes and wielded very significant influence through these. And there was also the O Casal Ateneo Libertario. [4]

In addition to actual numbers, the various libertarian organisations had amassed considerable operational efficacy. In the latter years of the Republic they had been forged in significant disputes and carried out activities in support of trade union struggles without sustain any significant losses at the hands of the police. The CNT's Metalworkers Union had its own Defence Group which was highly experienced following the 1936 strike in which they had been very active, especially at the Barreras shipyard.

Confronting the worker forces were army personnel – some 350 troops in Vigo – and the Civil Guard and Assault Guard personnel who numbered around the same.

The town hall in Vigo was in the hands of Popular Front candidates, with the PSOE's Emilio Martínez Garrido as mayor, plus PSOE councillors Ramón González Brunet, Waldo Gil Sastóstequi and José Caldas Iglesias and Republican Left councillors Enrique Blein Budiño and Antonio Caballo Vázquez.

Preparations for the Coup d'état

The libertarian organisations were convinced that the most reactionary elements in the land were laying the groundwork for a coup in the wake of the Popular Front's election victory. They had intelligence to that effect, sometimes supplied by libertarian soldiers doing their army service or from like-minded officers and analysis of the situation confirmed as much. As early as 6 February 1936 one faction among Vigo's anarchist activists had spontaneously retaliated by attacking the Falange premises on the Calle Riego (now Alfonso XIII), resulting in the deaths of one Falangist and one libertarian (Robustiano Figueira Villar) and other participants were seriously wounded; these included José Luis Quintas from the FIJL. José Villaverde had alluded to the days ahead in the most pessimistic terms possible at a May 1st rally at the Tamberlick Theatre, concluding his speech with this dark forecast: "The future is going to close its gates against us, only to throw open our graves."

In late June Vigo's FAI groups received circulars from Barcelona informing them that the military were preparing a large scale uprising and urging them to remain on red alert. This information prompted a clandestine coordination meeting on the wharf from which the trans-Atlantic shipping left.

On 14 July the Libertarian Youth gathered on the CNT's premises to deal with "correspondence" and general business, according to a report in *El Pueblo Gallego*, but actually the proceedings centered on the imminence of the coup and the preparedness of the CNT's defences. [5] The UGT was involved in a dispute at the Singer plant. The civil governor arrived in Vigo and told acting mayor Antonio Vidal Vilas to implement

“extraordinary measures to prevent the general strike” planned in relation to the dispute.

At about the same time, as the political temperature in Madrid peaked due to the murders of Assault Guard Lieutenant José Castillo and Nationalist Bloc leader José Calvo Sotelo, FAI groups mounted patrols in the city, capitalising on the fact that it had a number of militants among the taxi drivers’ union membership. Driving around between fares or once their shift was over, they toured key points in Manuel Rios’s taxi or in the cab that the libertarian groups had bought and registered in the name of Evaristo Paz Piñeiro, with César Rosas (the then secretary of the Drivers’ Union, a FAI member and a central figure in the coordination of the CNT’s entire defences) at the wheel.

18 July 1936 (Saturday)

Leading Falange member Manuel Hedilla Larrey arrives in Vigo, He books into the Moderno Hotel under the name ‘José Pasaván’ and meets up with local Falangists at the Derby café. That evening he has another meeting with Infantry Captain José Pavón, adjutant to garrison commander Felipe Sánchez Rodríguez; the meeting has been facilitated by Enrique Rodríguez Cantero (aka “Tajuelo”), whom Hedilla appoints acting chief of the Falange.

The workers’ organisations receive reports of the army uprising in Morocco but comprehensive and consistent information is lacking. *El Pueblo Gallego* carries an insertion stating that “for reasons unknown to us, our Madrid news agency has stopped issuing bulletins since 9.00 p.m. (on 17 July 1936). All efforts on our part to re-establish communications have been thwarted, as have all attempts to contact our correspondents in La Coruña and elsewhere in the region.” The evening edition of *El Pueblo Gallego* reports an uprising in Morocco.

The acting mayor, Antonio Vidal, issues a statement read over the airwaves of Radio Vigo (EAJ48) announcing that: “In response to this painful spreading of false reports, the Workers’ Local Federation, Socialist Party, Communist Party, Republican Left and Unified Youth are busily distributing a manifesto addressed to the public, reaffirming more than ever their unconditional and whole-hearted support for the government of the Republic. The CNT too has been in touch with the Workers’ L[ocal] F[ederation] to throw in its lot, should the need arise, with whatever provision the people may make to stand by the Republic. This mayor’s office reaffirms to residents that it has full confidence that the criminal endeavour mounted outside the territory of the peninsula has been completely extinguished, drowned out by the loud cry resounding even now through every part of the land: Long live the Republic!” The statement will be published by the local press the following day.

The only news of the army uprising were arriving over the wireless since the telephone lines were already down.

El Pueblo Gallego reports the rising in Ceuta and Melilla but without any specific detail. Statements from a range of political organisations are carried, their positions ranging from gung-ho republican patriotism to calls for mobilisation. There are two from the CNT: one, censored, broadcast from Madrid over Unión Radio, cautions that “in the face of provocation from fascist and reactionary elements ... the CNT ... Must fight back with all means at its disposal.” The other, issued from A Coruña reports the meeting at the bullring and the notice, widely distributed throughout the city, in which the CNT warned that ... “the reactionaries ... Are watching out and sooner or later may emerge from their nests since ... We see no sign of the vigor required to eradicate this fascist eruption.” Also carried on the front page is a note from the UGT in Madrid “the working class to get ready right now and without delay to face all of the contingencies of fighting in the streets.” This observation, spot on, by the Madrid union is at odds with the note published the day before by Vigo’s mayor’s office on behalf of the Popular Front.

The rebel military press on with their plans, coordinating with A Coruña to perfection. At the battalion HQ of the Mérida Regiment the proclamation announcing a state of war as of the 20th is printed up.

In keeping with his insistence that its institutions are loyal to the Republic, the mayor himself calls Felipe Sánchez to refute rumours that a general strike is to be declared on the 20th.

Representatives from the Libertarian Youth – along with Guillermo Barros (FIJL-FAI) among others – gather at the Casa del Pueblo together with the Unified Socialist Youth to broach the possibility of concerted action such as neutralising the monarchist centres (such as the Yacht Club and the Casino) and work out some sort of coordination as a way of resisting the Uprising. Again they lobby for arms, but the socialists (who include Antonio Ennes) have none – even the communists are not bragging about having any – and the meeting ends inconclusively.

Another group of Libertarian Youth – Olegario Collazo, Antonio Iglesias, José Luis Quintas, Enrique Ramos, Fernando Román, César Rosas and Veiga – made for the town hall to meet with the mayor but only get to talk to Heráclio Botana. They put forward a plan to ensure the loyalty of the security forces; it consists of their being mobilised and amalgamated with trusted revolutionary militants. At the same time they press for weapons to be distributed and set out their ideas for capturing the Infantry Barracks. Botana’s reaction is to reach for the phone and summon the police, but he is unable to follow through because at that point they draw pistols and dissuade the elderly printing worker from doing so. [6] However, it seems he issues them with a pass and requisition order for the arms [7] – they manage to procure a hunting rifle from an

old man in Lavadores – and he urges them to keep an eye on the cruiser Jaime I on which “a lot of movement has been observed.”

The libertarians’ plans made a lot of sense and they had considerable manpower available to them, but they lacked weapons: all they had was a few small pistols with little ammunition and a small number of home-made bombs. Actually the attack on the Infantry Barracks at the prison could have been mounted from the Calle de Progreso with considerable advantage in terms of position. The numbers the libertarian movement could call upon in any such attack amounted to Vigo’s Libertarian Youth (about 100 of them), lots of militants from the local CNT, about 1,000 seamen from the Moaña unions (whose assistance had been secured through the CNT-FAI’s José Paz) and several groups from Cangas and other outlying towns.

There is evidence aplenty to show that the republican authorities – made up at that point of the PSOE and embodied by Martínez Garrido, Heráclio Botana and José Antela Conde – set their face against any measure which might, however advisable in the circumstances, imply that revolution was making headway. The excuse that this was done in order to preserve “the democratic order” cannot disguise the main responsibility: Martínez Garrido was freshly back from Madrid where the socialist leaders would surely have briefed him on the scale of the fascist threat. The Madrid UGT itself was in a state of alert and was even then taking part in the storming of the Montaña Barracks. [8] But this is also indicative of the prejudices against and real fear of anarchism – which would doubtless have reaped the benefit from making the running – over and above any cold analysis of possible implications of the rebellion’s being defeated. Regrettably, this cost all of their lives and left the way open for several thousand people who perished, defenceless, in the province of Pontevedra at the hands of killers. [9]

The *faistas’* taxi patrols continue throughout the day. At midnight, Guillermo Barros and César Rosas headed for the Casa del Pueblo where they are tipped off that, by order of mayor Martínez Garrido and Public Order Chief Antonio Vidal (of the PSOE), the Assault Guard are carrying out a search for weapons at the Casa del Pueblo: only three pistols are found. They have just enough time to turn tail and make for the CNT premises on the Calle de 14 de Abril (today’s Calle Eduardo Iglesias). On the way they brief the Republican Union which has its premises in the Calle Velázquez Morena, upstairs from the Colón café. CNT personnel are on their premises making ready to resist the security forces which have yet to put in an appearance.

That night, Miguel Lima (CNT-FIJL) and Fernando Román (CNT-FIJL) assemble 300 crude bombs using pepper canisters packed with ordinary gunpowder and a fuse. Added to a further 200 held in reserve, they comprise the sum total of the arsenal they have with which to protect themselves from the military in the days ahead. [10]

The Army Revolt

20 July 1936 (Monday)

Communications are still down. The libertarian organisations are cut off from the rest of Spain. [11] There is dismay in the UGT unions where the belief is that the uprising has been snuffed out. The local CNT, although proceeding with the plans for a general strike, is completely isolated and cannot mobilise the resources of the state which cold shoulders every initiative coming from the libertarians.

Shortly before noon, Felipe Sánchez gets a phone call from Colonel Cánovas in A Coruña, issuing him with instructions that the rising is to proceed. At around 12 o'clock Felipe Sánchez orders Captain Antonio Carrero Verges to proclaim a state of war. He promptly forms a picket of Infantry and with a 50-soldier escort ventures from the barracks situated at the rear of the courts in the Calle Galán (today the Rua do Principe) and makes for the intersection of the Calle Urzaiz and the Calle Colón. They head first for the Civil Guard barracks where they post up a copy of the proclamation. They then double back and on their way down the Calle Colón they encounter folk who are fearful and expectant at the sight of troops being deployed. The crowds chant "Long live the Republic" – and so do some of the soldiers – and the odd group even confronts the platoon and calls them traitors. On reaching the junction with the Calle Policarpo Sanz, they veer left and head for the Puerta del Sol. It is 1 o'clock when they get there and people are milling around everywhere. [12] Carrero halts, forms up his troops and his adjutant reads out the proclamation of the state of war. The most widely held version of what then ensued is that, just as he was beginning to do this, somebody by the name of Lence [13] tries to snatch it out of his hand. Precisely what happened is open to question: some say that Carrero fired a shot at him and others that Carrero's adjutant ran him through with a bayonet. Whereupon a group of civilians jumped the soldiers, meaning to snatch their rifles. Carrero sounds the alert and then the shooting starts. Utter bewilderment. From the stairs at the side of the Simeon warehouse building (in today's Rúa da II Republica), Fernando Rodriguez from the CNT's Ships' Masters and Lightermen's Union sends the very first response to the soldiers by firing a few shots from a parabellum machine-gun. [14] People scatter or take cover as the ground is littered with bodies and glass from the shop windows. Some 15 people are left dead in the Puerta del Sol along with a fair number of wounded who are dragged away by people. [15] Once calm returns, Carrero orders his troops to return to barracks.

Following this incident, a company and a machine-gunner section occupy the Casa del Pueblo in the Calle Garcia Barbón without resistance.

The anarchist groups decide to procure arms through their own efforts and mount a number of raids. One group raids the 'La Cosmopolita' armoury in the Puerta del Sol. Another team from the Cascallar CNT's Ships' Masters and Lightermen's Union

giving a lead, mounts a fruitless raid on the Customs House. César Rosas's (FAI) group, made up of eight libertarians, attacks the Civil Guard barracks in Teis, arresting a dozen guards and making off with 16 rifles and 14 pistols but little in the way of ammunition. In the wake of these raids all of the CNT groups agree to prepare to resist by throwing up barricades in Os Choróns, O Calvario and O Seixo and to muster in O Calvario as it is dangerous to move around the city since rebel sympathisers are shooting from the balconies. [16]

The rebels position machine-guns in strategic locations. One in the Calle Galán outside the Marsala Academy and the other at the Casino.

From Radio Vigo a number of announcements are read to the people urging them to resist the army. When Dalmacio Bragado (CNT), backed by José Paz (Moaña CNT-FAI) makes for the station to read out a CNT statement, they find that it has been seized by the army and they are obliged to beat a retreat.

By evening – between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock – the rebels enter the town hall and arrest the mayor Martínez Garrido and socialist deputy Ignacio Seoane Fernández.

By early morning barricades of paving stones and rocks are thrown up in Os Choróns and another in O Calvario. The CNT opens its resistance with an arsenal made up of a few handguns, some rifles seized from the Civil Guard and hand bombs. Civilians pour in from all the surrounding areas to join the defence on seeing the CNT personnel.

21 July 1936 (Tuesday)

The first attack is directed by Captain Carrero himself, commanding 60 troops in an assault on the barricade in Os Choróns. Fernando Román (FIJL) and other libertarians are right there, fighting back, primarily by tossing home-made bombs. Lives are lost on the barricades.

The soldiers set up machine-guns which begin to rake the Calle Urzaiz towards O Calvario. The Os Choróns barricade falls.

There are several libertarians in O Calvario, among them Guillermo Barros, Federico Caballero, José Calvino and the Candeán anarchist group. The resisters are also joined by the Beade anarchists from the 'La Antorcha del Porvenir' group, including Juan Silveira and Orencio Abalde, 'Os Artilleiros' and 'O Ministro' and with them are lots of civilians brandishing hunting rifles and for a moment they are mistaken for soldiers, but the panic passes without a shot fired. Later they are joined by republicans from Pontareas and other villages. The army deploys its mortars. [17] Lives are lost. Some of the bodies display wounds not inflicted from in front and the talk is that there is a sniper in the rear. In the din of battle one girl contends that there are shots coming from Estanislao Núñez's chalet and the mob sets the house ablaze, causing the death of its owner. Two of his sons – Jesús and Ignacio – are arrested and taken to the

Lavadores Workers' Sports Club but are freed within hours, at the instigation, it is said, of Manuel González Fresco. [18]

The resistance suffers its first libertarian wounded although libertarians have already perished among the defenders of the barricades or on the outskirts. A bomb explodes in Taboada's (CNT) hands and he is brought to Dr Troncoso's clinic in the Calle 14 de Abril. Other wounded are taken to Dr Amoedo's sanatorium, to the Municipal Hospital – where they are treated by Dr Eugenio Arbones Castellanzuelo – and other private clinics.

Resisters manning the O Calvario barricade are harrying the soldiers from the roofs of the market and a number of other buildings, but shortage of ammunition forces them to give ground and the position falls. César Rosas and Antonio Iglesias are there. The soldiers suffer some fatalities.

In Lavadores the resistance continues. But at noon the army overruns the town hall and the resisters fall back to their second line of defence outside the Civil Guard barracks in Pardávila. Evaristo Paz Piñeiro (FIJL) and Roberto Fernández Alvarez (FIJL) hold the barricade right to the end.

The Civil Guard from the Pardávila barracks who have so far stayed out of it now side with the rebels and attack the barricade from the opposite flank. [19]

As the bombs run out on the O Seixo barricade, the resisters cut and run. The libertarians realise that they will be shown no mercy and they head for the hills. A bunch of workers from the A Guarda Workers' Federation (CNT) arriving to join the resistance is unable to get beyond Puxeiros and turns back.

22 July 1936 (Wednesday)

The officer commanding the army ordered a return to normal business trading. A light plane carrying a member of the Tuy (CNT) Workers' Federation by the name of Antonio drops leaflets over Vigo calling upon the rebels to give themselves up. [20]

The Falange sets up its headquarters in the Casa del Pueblo.

The Repression Gets Underway

On Thursday 23 July 1936 a sea-plane from the naval base in Marín drops a bomb on A Madroa hill to which some of the Lavadores and O Seixo resisters have withdrawn and one person is killed. [21] It then headed for Tuy where the uprising is facing stiff resistance. The crew uses its chance to destroy the light plane used to drop leaflets over Vigo the day before. [22]

Vigo's army commander, Felipe Sánchez, sets up the Vigo City Management Commission chaired by war commissar José Jimenez Garcia.

On discovering that Taboada (CNT) is convalescing at Dr Troncoso's sanatorium, Civil Guard Lieutenant Fernando González Rodriguez aka 'El Rabioso' [23] leads a

raid there in order to make an arrest; this is resisted by the owner but, under threat from the Civil Guard, there is nothing that he can do. With help from Polo, 'El Rabioso' drags Taboada out on to the Balaidos road and murders him there. Other witnesses add further that the orders came from the captain physician in charge of the Military Hospital who forced the Civil Guard to carry out the murder. One thing is certain: Taboada was the very first victim of a '*paseo*' in Vigo.

From this day forward, there are few acts of resistance and the rebels set about activating the machinery of repression. On 24 July, the Civil Guard arrests Enrique Heráclio Botana in his home in Teis. Two days after that, on 26 July, a gang of Civil Guards on its way back from Cabral under the orders of a lieutenant comes under attack and Sergeant Quintela is wounded. The naval vessel 'Almirante Cervera' arrives in the port and José González Lorenzo is appointed delegate in charge of Public Order in Lavadores.

The last act of resistance comes on 28 July when a bomb explodes in the Figueiredo tunnel on the Vigo to Pontevedra railway line.

The erstwhile Vigo handball (*Frontón*) Court – later turned into the Niza cinema – in the Calle María Bediales is adapted for use as a holding centre. A 'cheka' is set up in the nunnery on the Alto do Seixo (these days the Residencia O Seixo, run by the Xunta de Galicia) and arrested persons scheduled for execution are held there. Both locations are the destinations for the killer teams which, over the ensuing months, will, under cover of night, systematically exterminate hundreds of Vigo citizens, working their way through the membership lists seized from a range of hostile organisations. But this long and dismal story, in which dozens of libertarians perished, is a subject for another essay.

Notes

1, We have some data published by Dalmacio Bragado in March 1936 (in *Solidaridad Obrera*, 209 March 1936) and used by Dionisio Pereira (*A CNT na Galicia*, p. 216) to gauge the CNT's strength shortly after the Popular Front victory. The Ships' Masters' Union had 50 members, the Confectioners' Union 20, the Fishing Industry Union 1,500, the Metalworkers' Union 500, the Amalgamated Trades 120, the Coopers' Union 60, the Streethawkers' Union 60, and the Marine Transport Union was in the throes of an organisational overhaul. These figures which were certainly under-estimates given that they were recorded within just a few weeks of the return to normal trade union activity in the wake of the Popular Front victory would need to be amended in the light of the subsequent influx of new unions before the Uprising. The oral testimony of Dalmacio Bragado and Guillermo Barros – many years after the events – set the figure for the membership immediately prior to the coup at some 6,000. These figures help us gauge the libertarian presence in Vigo in July 1936.

- 2, In August 1933 the UGT in Vigo had some 6,500 members and 31 branches (See Chaves Cuiñas *La UGT de Vigo. Una aproximación histórica*, p. 269)
- 3, These libertarians had mostly returned from Argentina, from where they had been deported under the Residence Law and the International Prisoners' And Victims of Persecution Support Committee in Vigo helped reintegrate them. Examples included Calviño, Villar, etc.
- 4, The story has often been told that Lavadores was known as "Little Russia", the name certainly having been lifted from the book *Lo que han hecho en Galicia*. The information at our disposal does not justify the description, for the main influence was libertarian, followed by a range of republican organisations. The known communist influence was confined to Riomaó where lots of Bolsheviks lived. They controlled a union of female packing employees – the odd one took part in a propaganda tour to the Soviet Union – and they used to parade in striking uniforms with fists thrust in the air. That was about the sum total of the communist influence in the area, although they were shrewd in their handling of propaganda, with the local press carrying loads of insertions regarding their activities. They paid a very high price for such notoriety in the wake of the Uprising in that they were to suffer a horrific repression.
- 5, The anarchists were versed in carrying forward trade union struggles and well versed in keeping the police at bay. They had few weapons at their disposal other than a few small calibre Star pistols handled by the groups, not enough to equip every member. There was also a half dozen people with experience in making and handling thunderflashes – the odd one having gone off during the recent strikes – having learnt this from a manual. There was no dynamite, no long arms no rifles (with the single exception mentioned below) and ammunition was very scarce. Nor was there any sort of military training.
- 6, Fernando Román (CNT-FIJJL) many years later confirmed that the situation was so tense that the guns would have been used had Botana persisted. Both Román and Barros confirmed that the date of the meeting was 19 July. Heráclio Botana in a statement to the court trying him (18 August 1936) mentioned that on 20 July, shortly before a state of war was declared, people burst into the town hall whom he described as "a mob of workers demanding weapons and whom I had to persuade that there were none." (See Antonio Chaves Cuiñas *La UGT de Vigo. Una aproximación histórica*, p 354)
- 7, See also the evidence of Fernando Román. In the book *La UGT de Vigo. Una aproximación histórica*, p. 331, there is a copy of a note from Captain-Judge Lage Becerra confirming that permits "for carrying arms" were issued by the Vigo Committee of the Popular Front at around this time.
- 8, This information too was available. Chaves Cuiñas in his book (p. 293 et seq.) prints documents confiscated from Martínez Garrido and used during his trial: they contain

details as to the plotters in Vigo and some of these papers are dated April 1936 and named virtually every one of those involved in the Uprising and the repression.

9, Giraldez Lomba in his article on “Remembering what happened in Vigo and surrounding areas during the Civil War” (p. 266) says that “*the local Communist Party and some members of the PSOE raised .. the need to arm the people.*” This may have been an option advocated by a few socialists and communists but no way was it the official position of the PSOE or of the Popular Front (to which the CP was a signatory) as far as we can judge from events and from the actual manifesto issued by the mayor’s office which was convinced that the Republic had everything under control. Nor does the contention fit in with the evidence from libertarians who took part in events and who met with the Unified Socialist Youth to demand arms.

10, Separate testimony from Fernando Román, Guillermo Barros and Dalmacio Bragado confirms these details.

11, The only news from outside was relayed by the radio. On 18 July *El Pueblo Gallego* spoke of the impossibility of establishing links with the outside world. These facts contradict the testimony given in Giraldez to the effect that “Rufilanchas (PSOE) rang Madrid twice”. Of course the response was that “everything has been wrapped up and there is no danger.” (*Memoria ...* p. 260)

12, The crowds milling around the troops was because the barracks had been under constant surveillance and the soldiers were followed as they moved through the city centre by militants, some of whom carried small pistols in their pockets. This explains why, once Carrero’s troops started shooting in the Puerta del Sol there was return fire, faltering to be sure, but return fire for all that. Remember that at the time people did not go around armed although some labour militants did have small handguns. That was how it was in libertarian circles and, less often, among UGT union members. Suffice to say, by way of anecdotal evidence that during the previous day’s search of the Casa del Pueblo the security forces had uncovered four handguns.

13, *El Faro de Vigo* (27/7/1936) carried an insertion for Manuel Lence González, “deceased on the 20th of this month”. However there is some confusion as to the identity of the individual who ripped down Carrero’s notice. In *Lo que han hecho en Galicia* (p.16) it states that “one of the people I myself saw felled and mortally wounded was Diego Lence, a republican lad whose chest was run through with a bayonet.” And in later reports it is stated that Diego Lence was the person at the centre of this incident. In our view, the protagonist was actually Manuel Lence, as Méndez Ferrin also contends. Diego Lence was a Galician anarchist writer who had had a number of pamphlets and the occasional newspaper article (in *La Venganza* in Vigo for example) published towards the end of the 19th century.

14, In *Lo que han hecho en Galicia* (p. 24) rumours regarding this machine-gun are mentioned. The weapon was hidden in Vigo because it had been used in A Coruña

shortly before during the Construction strike in the attack that claimed the life of the building contractor Rodriguez. In view of the situation it had to be dug up again although lack of ammunition reduced its impact.

15, *El Faro de Vigo* on 27/7/1936 stated that “corpses and quite a number of wounded were seen”. This figure is repeated by Arrarás.

16, Both in *Lo que han hecho en Galicia* (p. 20) and in many other descriptions given of the events right after this first incident it is claimed that the resistance was spontaneous and came from the people themselves. Such a claim is not only naïve but incorrect as well. The faltering response to the army in the Puerta del Sol was the doing of unionised workers including CNT members as we have seen. The raids carried out in search of arms and the three barricades erected in Os Choróns, O Calvario and O Seixo were anarchist initiatives and many anarchist militants were on the scene. After seeing the anarchists, civilians joined in with whatever weaponry they had. Actually the resistance ended once the supply of bombs – “pepper pots” (made by the Libertarian Youth) – ran out.

17, In *Lo que han hecho en Galicia* (p. 24) there is a mention of the use of mortars. In 1958 while cement was being laid at the home of Victor Francisco Cáceres (CNT) in what had been the road up to San Paio (the Rua Cabalaria these days) a mortar shell was found which was taken to the Civil Guard barracks in Lavadores.

18, For many a long year this incident survived in the memories of people from Vigo as the most significant of the events that July., perhaps on account of the fact that the charred ruins of the chalet were not demolished until well into the 1960s. Over time, a number of stories have emerged as to Núñez’s involvement or non-involvement in the shooting. We have heard it said by libertarians who were on the barricades in O Calvario that they were convinced that they had come under gunfire from the chalet. But from other witnesses we have also heard the explanation that the “shooting from behind” was simply down to bullets fired by Carrero from the bend in Os Choróns ricocheting off stones in the Alto do Seixo, or versions of events that quite straightforwardly depict old Núñez as blameless.

19, As to the allegation, included in *Lo que han hecho en Galicia* (p. 25) that civilian gangs tried to capture the Civil Guard barracks in Pardávila but were talked out of it by political leaders from Lavadores, Fernando Román confirmed that “we intended to relieve the Civil Guards of their weapons”. X. Miguel González (in *A Nosa Terra* of 29/10/1998, p. 31) puts the passivity of the Civil Guard down to tactics which were actually designed simply to buy time in view of the difficulty of defending their position. If an effort at dissuasion was actually mounted by the authorities as argued in the afore-mentioned book (“There was a dramatic argument at the town hall (in Lavadores). The Mayor, backed by the socialist deputy Don Antonino Bilbatúa and a number of UGT leaders talked them out of it. The Civil Guards stuck by the Republic”)

we find here the same stance as was adopted by the socialists in Vigo on 18 and 19 July.

20, See *Lo que han hecho en Galicia* (p. 11) and *Fuxidos* (p. 245-246)

21, Over the ensuing days several libertarians were to perish, among them Emilio Costas and Gumersindo Rodriguez, a prime mover in trade union activity throughout the south of the province.

22, See *Fuxidos* by Juan Noya Gil (Caracas, Ed. Casuz 1976) pp. 245-246.

23, He had long had the nickname “el Rabioso”. Years before in Alcabre he had been arrested a waiter from the CNT Marine Transport Union by the name of Jesús Lago Barbeito. While a statement was being taken from the prisoner, the latter availed of a momentary lapse in concentration and scarpered. The then Sergeant Rodriguez gave chase and after a series of incidents eventually caught him. To bring him to the barracks in Vigo, he tied him to his horse’s tail and dragged him the whole way there like that. When they reached the Puerta del Sol, physician Waldo Gil Santostegui challenged him from his clinic and called him an assassin. This was held against the doctor and when they came to ‘take him for a ride’ on 27 August 1936, Rodriguez lined him up against the cemetery wall. His viciousness on that occasion showed the nickname was well deserved. Jesús Lago was also to be ‘taken for a ride’ on 15 September 1936 by Lieutenant Rodriguez. The story, alluding only to “a miscreant” was published in *Lo que han hecho en Galicia* (p. 77) and has been reprinted many times since, without variation or further verification. Jesús Lago was the Vigo agent of the Buenos Aires FORA ‘Drivers’ Union’ and funds forwarded to him from Argentina were used to help deportees sent back from Argentina. Let us hope that from now on Jesús Lago is remembered as he deserves to be remembered.

Some biographical notes on libertarians cited in 'Vigo 1936'

ABALDE, Orencio (Beadé)

A collier by trade, he was a member of Vigo and District General Society of Loaders and Unloaders of Coal, Salt and Allied Substances, in which he held posts. A member of the commission that negotiated the work contract for the sector in December 1930, he was his union's delegate to the Plenum of the Local Committee of the UGT's Vigo Workers' Federation in 1936. He was one of those who lobbied for that union to join the CNT in the wake of the 1936 Zaragoza Congress. He organised and belonged to the Vigo CNT's Coal and Mineral Unloaders' Union. And was active in the Libertarian Youth. He took part in the resistance to the army Uprising in Lavadores. He played a part in underground anarcho-sindicalist activities right up until the 1947 wave of arrests, at which point he was forced into exile in Argentina.

ANTELA CONDE (Luis?)

Bricklayer belonging to the Vigo CNT Construction Union and brother of the socialist mayor of Lavadores. He was a member of Vigo's young CNT group in 1934 and was in charge of external co-ordination for that organisation.

ARIAS, Andrés

CNT member. Member of the group that founded the Libertarian Youth in Vigo in 1931. He took part in the attack on the Falange's headquarters in 1936, an attack spearheaded by several Libertarian Youth members.

BARROS, Saturnino

CNT-affiliated shopkeeper from Beadé. Member of the 'La Antorcha del Porvenir' Cultural Group. He was active throughout the underground period and during developments in 1960 which culminated in the disputes at the Vulcano plant and in the arrests of Victor Francisco and Jaime Garrido. He held the position of secretary on the Local Committee at that point. He remained a CNT member right up until the restoration of democracy.

BARROS CELA, Guillermo (Vigo 6/7/1914-)

A confectioner by trade, he joined the CNT at the beginning of the 1930s when his entire union decided to quit the UGT and affiliate to the libertarian organisation. He was a member of the group that founded the Libertarian Youth in 1931 and the group that launched the FAI in Vigo under the Republic. He was chairman of the CNT Foodstuffs Union, Confectionery and Allied Trades Section in March 1936. He took part in the libertarian resistance to the Rising, fighting on the O Calvario barricade. After the city fell, he spent three years in hiding in the home of some friends in Vigo. In 1939, he managed to escape the reprisals by doing his military service. He was active during the underground years and was vice-secretary of the Vigo Local Committee from 1942 until 1947. Arrested in Vigo, he was hauled before a court martial in the city (Case 81/39) and was given a five year prison term which he served in Seville. When

the Franco dictatorship ended, he was actively involved in the CNT, reorganising the Vigo and Pontevedra Confectioners' Union which re-affiliated to the libertarian organisation.

BRAGADO RUIZ, Dalmacio (Zamora 1893-Vigo 4/4/1986)

From a peasant family, he did his military service in Africa which is how he learnt to read. Moving away to Bilbao, he came into contact with the CNT. He was an occasional contributor to Bilbao's *La Tierra*. He served a number of minor jail terms for his trade union activities until he was sentenced to a term of "hard labour" that had him traipsing on foot to Valdepeñas as part of a prisoner chain gang. On his return to Bilbao, he made up his mind to move to Vigo, arriving there in 1923. Together with three other local activists such as José Villaverde and Manuel Montes, he helped reorganise the CNT throughout the Vigo bay area.

To support himself he found a job as a waiter in the Nelson Line transatlantic liners journeying to Latin America. This trade enabled him to establish contacts with comrades from South America such as Santillán and Fournarakis.

He is credited with the "Regulation of the Group of Workers' Societies affiliated to the CNT" which laid the definitive groundwork for the establishment of CNT unions in Vigo.

He took part in the CNT's Madrid Congress representing the Amalgamated Trades, Metalworkers', Footwear and Construction Unions of Vigo. His best contribution to trade unionism in Vigo was as organiser of the Boatmen's Union in September 1931: it came to have 200 members and functioned as a cooperative.

He helped organise and spread the 1932 dispute between the CNT's Fishing Industry Union and the 'La Marítima' employers' association. And headed the Vigo chapter of the International Prisoners' and Victims of Persecution Committee in 1932. In early 1933 he showed an interest in formalising a Federation of Galician Region Anarchist Groups separate from the FAI, which brought him in for some harsh criticism. He represented the CNT's Marine Transport Union in Vigo and held posts in the Marine Transport Union, serving as its delegate in the Northern Zone which took in the ports from Vigo to Pasajes. Later he served on the leadership of the Marine Workers' Alliance.

Come the success of the army revolt and once the resistance from the Libertarian Youth and FAI in Vigo had petered out, he was forced into hiding until 1939. Although he was arrested, he avoided falling victim to a *paseo* and regained his freedom. He took part in the refloating of the CNT, attending the regional Plenum in A Coruña in 1945. In 1956 he was corresponding with Campio Carpio in Buenos Aires and Hermoso Plaja in Mexico City. As his sight faded, he gradually withdrew from activity, not that this saved him from being arrested periodically on some pretext or another, being suspected

of libertarian activity. When democracy returned to Spain he kept in touch with the youth and with researchers into the CNT's past.

He used the aliases of *Fiat Lux* and *Gog*. And wrote a pamphlet entitled *Derivaciones y consecuencias del lock-out pesquero de Vigo* (Vigo 1933, Ed. Juventud Libertaria de Vigo, printed by Manuel Montero Malvar, 56 pages), a collection of some of the articles he published in the press in relation to the 1932 fishermen's strike. He was also the author of a *Catecismo Marinero* (Seaman's Catechism) which we have not been able to track down. He contributed to a range of publications including *CNT*, *CNT Maritima*, *Mar y Tierra*, *Solidaridad Obrera* (Bilbao and Barcelona) and *Claridad*.

CALVIÑO (José?) (birth details not known-died in Redondela 1936)

A Galician who emigrated to Argentina where he belonged to the FORA. He was expelled under the Residence Law and then settled in Candeán, joining the CNT and belonging to an affinity group formed by "Argentineans", including Losada. He was active in the farmers' associations on the outskirts of the city and gave talks. On 18 April 1936 he took part in a discussion at the Seamen's Alliance hall in Cangas with the 'Mar y Tierra' group on the subject of the "orientation and object of the labour society." He was killed in a *paseo* on the Redondela highway.

CASCALLAR, C.

Member of the Boatmen's and Lightermen's Branch of the CNT Marine Transport Union of Vigo. In 1936 he was the bursar of the Local CNT Union Federation. He took part in the libertarian resistance to the Uprising, attacking the Customs House in Vigo docks in search of weapons. After going to ground, he managed to escape by sea and left for exile in the Americas.

CABALLERO CALLEJA, Federico (Cuba).

A worker in a printshop, he was a member of Vigo CNT's Amalgamated Trades Union, holding the post of bookkeeper by December 1930. And was a member of the local Libertarian Youth. He was arrested after the revolutionary uprising of October 1934, accused of attending secret meetings and was indicted for threats made to the employer Natalio Sanchón in the wake of the sacking of Ramón de la Torre Boullosa that same month. He was involved in the raid organised by some Libertarian Youth members on the Falange local in February 1936. And took part in the resistance on 20 July 1936, on the O Calvario barricade. Arrested a short time after that, he was held in the handball court which was in use as a makeshift prison. On the night when he was due to be murdered, he mentioned to Lieutenant Rodriguez (aka 'El Rabiosa') of the Civil Guard that he was a Cuban and Rodriguez refrained from proceeding. The Cuban consul, Blas Molina, was informed and the latter saw to it that he was deported back to Cuba with Horacio Guerra.

COLLAZO LAGO, Olegario (1914 – San Xoan do Monte, 27/8/37)

Member of the Vigo CNT's Metalworkers' Union, employed at the Talleres Granja and later at the Barrera shipyards. Member of the founder group of the Vigo Libertarian Youth in 1931 and of the FAI. He was involved in the raid by a number of Libertarian Youth members on the Falange local in February 1936. After the Uprising, he and Leopoldo Comesaña fled to the home of a widow living near the San Xoan church. He was discovered and killed on 27/8/37 in a confrontation with Civil Guards forces attempting to arrest him. The widow who had been harbouring them was thrown into prison.

COMESAÑA LORENZO, Leopoldo (Freixeiro 12/12/1914 – San Xoan do Monte 27/8/1937)

Lathe-operator affiliated to the CNT Metalworkers' Union and the Libertarian Youth of Vigo, holding office in the latter. In March 1933 he was liaising with the FIJL Peninsular Committee. He was arrested on 8/11/1934 with several other comrades accused of clandestine assembly with an eye to setting up a revolutionary committee and he was held on remand for a month and a half. Tried by a Council of War on 26/1/1935 on charges of unlawful possession of weapons and explosives, he received a seven month prison sentence served in Vigo and Pamplona. Released under the amnesty on 23/2/36 following the Popular Front victory, he returned to Vigo. Following the Uprising he and Olegario Collazo hid out in the home of a widow near the San Xoan church. Tracked down, he perished on 27/8/1937 in a clash with the Civil Guard attempting to arrest him. The widow harbouring him was jailed.

COSTAS FERNÁNDEZ, Emilio (1914 – Tuy, 26/7/36)

Baker and member of the CNT's General Workers' Union in Tuy. During the dispute between the Fishing Industry Union and the employers' 'La Maritima' group in 1932-33, he was arrested along with Vicente Vales after shots were fired at Valentín Paz Andrade on 22/11/1932. He was tried in Vigo. Agustín Ribas and Isidoro Millán took charge of his defence and he was acquitted. From that point on he was targeted for relentless police harassment. In September 1934, an attempt was made to arrest him in Tuy under the Vagrancy Law. Later he arrested during the crackdown following events in Asturias in 1934. He was the Food and Allied Trades, Tuy Construction & Allied Trades Union and Guillarei Amalgamated Trades Union representative at the Zaragoza congress. He fell victim to a '*paseo*' on 26/1/1936 near Monte Aloia following libertarian resistance to the Uprising.

FERNÁNDEZ ÁLVAREZ, Roberto *aka El Severo* (Vigo 1915-Moledo, Santana, 4/4/39)

Member of the CNT Metalworkers' Union and Libertarian Youth in Vigo. He played an active part in the libertarian resistance to the army revolt of 1936 in Vigo and, together with Evaristo Paz Piñeiro was one of the last to pull back from the Lavadores

barricade. He was killed in a house in Moledo on 4/4/39 in a clash with the Civil Guard as was his comrade José Alonso Alvarez *aka* El Berzas. The woman harbouring them, Flora Rodriguez Comesaña, was given a 12 years and 1 day prison term by a Council of War held on 3/7/1939 on a charge of aiding and abetting rebellion.

FIGUEIRA VILLAR, Robustiano (Bembrive 1913-Vigo 6/2/36)

Member of the Vigo Metalworkers' Union and Libertarian Youth. Worked at the Barreras shipyard. Served as secretary at the extra-ordinary general meeting held on 11/1/36 at the Casa del Pueblo over the metalworkers' strike. He was involved in the raid on the Falange premises and was gunned down by an Assault Guard whilst withdrawing. He was buried on 9/2/36 in Pereiro cemetery.

IGLESIAS GONZÁLEZ, Antonio (O Casal, Lavadores 1910-O Toural, Teis, 3/4/39)

Machine fitter by trade, member of the CNT Metalworkers' Union in which he held the posts of recording secretary and treasurer at several meetings. He was active in the Vigo Libertarian Youth during the years of the Republic. He represented the Metalworkers' Union at the Regional Plenum in Orense in December 1935 and at the congress in Zaragoza in May 1936. He was one of the people involved in the 19 July 1936 meeting at the town hall in Vigo when arms were demanded of Botana. He was active in the resistance to the Uprising and one of the last to leave the Alto do Seixo barricade when the Civil Guard went back on its promise to stay neutral and attacked the barricade's defenders from behind. After the resistance failed he went into hiding. The Civil Guard eventually tracked him down to Lucia Dominguez Eiroa's house in O Toural, where César Rosas was also in hiding. Having no way out they wrote a letter to the besiegers, absolving the people harbouring them of all blame and chose suicide rather than cause a bloodbath. They shot themselves in the chest.

LAGO LAGO, Fernando (1905-Vigo 31/12/36)

Elected general secretary of the Amalgamated Trades Branch in December 1930. He was a welder affiliated to the CNT's Metalworkers' Union and a member of the committee of the Local Federation of CNT Unions in 1936, holding down the post of secretary. He took part in the libertarian resistance to the Uprising, especially on the O Calvario barricade. He was against the vandalism of looters during the attack on the Nuñez chalet, which fact was misrepresented and used against him later when he was arrested, brought before a court martial and sentenced to death. He was shot in Vigo 31/12/36.

LAGO BARBEITO, Jesús *aka* Rabioso (1893-Pereiro, Vigo 15/9/1939)

Emigrated to Argentina where he was a member of the FORA "Drivers' Union" in Buenos Aires. On his return to Spain he settled in Vigo. On account of his personality he was known as "El Rabioso" (Mr Angry). On 30/4/1917, he was arrested in the course of a trade union incident in Alcabre by a Civil Guard by the name of Fernando

González Rodríguez who stripped him and brought him to the barracks in Vigo tied to the tail of his horse. Along the route people took the Civil Guard to task for this and Doctor Waldo Gil Santóstegui called him a blackguard. People switched to calling the Civil Guard lieutenant – who gained notoriety for his involvement in a host of murders in Vigo during the post-war repression – “El Rabioso” because of his vicious treatment of his prisoners.

Chairman of the Boatmen’s and Lightermen’s Union in 1930, Jesús Lago Barbeito belonged to the CNT’s Marine Transport Union and he handled the monies sent from the Buenos Aires “Divers’ Union” to assist deportation victims who stayed at his home in Lavadores. He was an acquaintance of Diego Abad de Santillán with whom he had a meeting in June 1931 when the latter landed in Vigo on his way to attend the CNT congress due to be held in Madrid. A controversial individual, he had a hand in a number of the internal squabbles reported in the libertarian press of the day. Later, following the Uprising, Lieutenant Rodríguez, no less, made it his business to execute him in a ‘paseo’ on 15/9/1939.

LIMA PÉREZ, Miguel

Member of the Vigo CNT and Libertarian Youth during the Republic. During the resistance against the rebels he was one of the people placed in charge of preparing home-made bombs – made according to the ‘Berthelot method’ using pepper pots – used on the barricades in Vigo on 20 and 21 July 1936. He took an active hand in these events especially on the Os Choróns barricade. Going to ground in the months thereafter, he eventually turned himself over to the authorities when he was called to the colours. Once his army service was up, he withdrew from activity.

LOSADA

A Spaniard who had emigrated to Argentina where he belonged to the FORA. Deported under the Residence Law, he then settled in Candeán around 1935 when he was part of the anarchist group composed of “Argentineans” alongside Calviño and others. He was a CNT member. Thereafter his trail runs cold.

PARGA VARELA, Germán (A Coruña 1884-Soutoxuste, O Viso, Redondela 12/10/1936)

Fishing boat mechanic who belonged to the Vigo CNT’s Fishing Industry Union. He was chair of the Fishing Fleet and of the Vigo General Workers’ Union in December 1930. In October 1932 he was imprisoned in Gijón. After Valentin Vales was arrested during the ‘La Marítima’ strike, he was sent up from A Coruña to take over as general secretary of the Fishing Industry Union. He represented its Vigo branch at the regional plenum in Ourense. In January 1936 he was general secretary of the ‘Mar y Tierra’ Fishing Industry Union in Vigo-Bouzas. He fell victim to a ‘paseo’ on 12/10/1936 on the main A Coruña to Tuy highway, out near Sotoxuste. His body was buried in the graveyard in Eidos.

PAZ PENA, Jose (?-Moaña, ?/11/1936)

Seaman belonging to the Moaña CNT's 'Solidaridad Marinera' Union and to the FAI. He was one of the outstanding figures during the Republican era and an outstanding organiser. In December 1933 he was arrested and charged with planting a bomb in the home of a shipping owner. He took part in the resistance to the Uprising in Vigo on 20 July 1936. He then made his way back to Moaña where he was arrested later and savagely tortured – his fingernails being pulled out and testicles cut off – before he was finally murdered by Falangists in November 1936

PAZ PIÑEIRO, Benito (Vigo 21/4/1907-Caracas, Venezuela).

Having emigrated to Argentina he was deported from that country for anarchist activity. He returned to Vigo where he found work as a driver, joining the Amalgamated Trades Union, CNT Drivers' branch. In 1928 he was Vigo's delegate on the 'Guild of Friends of the Book' in Buenos Aires. The Hudson motor vehicle that the Local Federation had bought and which César Rosas operated as a taxi was in Paz Piñeiro's name. In 1936 he was president of the UGT-affiliated National Dock Labourers and Staff Federation, Vigo branch. He chaired the meetings on 22/1/1936 and 24/3/1936 at the Casa del Pueblo. In the wake of the Zaragoza congress in May 1936 he was the driving force behind that union's affiliating to the CNT.

He was an active participant in the libertarian resistance to the Uprising in Vigo, being one of the last people to abandon the Lavadores barricade. Following the Uprising he was forced into hiding, being dropped from his job as Under-Sergeant Wharf Watchman with the Docks Board. He was arrested by the Civil Guard on 6/6/1937 and brought before the courts. He was arrested again on 31/1/1941 when he was given a 6 year and 1 day sentence by a Council of War, some of which sentence he served in Lugo. From 1942 until 1947 he carried on with his clandestine activities despite constant harassment – he was arrested on 21/8/1944 and given eight days in prison – and served on the Vigo local committee, holding the position of general secretary in 1945. He took part in regional meetings in Santiago and was also active in reorganising the unions in Tuy and Vilagarcía. Arrested on 8/3/1947, he was tried before a Council of War in Vigo on 6/7/1948 (Case 156/47) and given a twelve year prison sentence. He was also a defendant in the Quintas trial and in 1950 was convicted of membership of an armed gang and given a three year jail term (Case 81/39). He served in prison in Alcalá de Henares, Dos Hermanas (Seville) and El Dueso and in the last named prison was assigned to the first aid team. After he was freed in the mid-50s, he left for exile in Venezuela where his brother Evaristo vouched for him and in the 1960s he took his own life.

PAZ PIÑEIRO, Evaristo

Member of the CNT and Libertarian Youth in Vigo under the Republic. He played an active part in the libertarian resistance to the Uprising in Vigo and was one of the last

men to give up the Lavadores barricade. He left for exile in Venezuela where he set up refrigeration business.

QUINTAS FIGUEROA, José Luis (A Calzada, Teis 17/4/1911-A Calzada, Teis 17/8/1976)

Known also as Alfonso. He was employed as a billing clerk with the CAMPSA [oil] corporation in Vigo where he started work in May 1928, joining the Petroleum-workers' Union. In 1931 he joined the CNT, but he decided to join the libertarian organisation rather earlier than his union and he held the post of general secretary. In August that year, within months of the holding of the Conservatorio congress, there was a Petroleum Industry Workers' Congress held in Madrid at which Quintas represented the Vigo branch and its 40-odd members. He was also involved in other meetings taking place in Madrid and Valencia. At around that time he was one of the founder members of the Libertarian Youth locally. He was first arrested in December 1933 on account of the revolutionary strike declared across Spain, while holding down the post of administrator with the Local Federation of CNT Unions and he served a month and a half in jail. He was arrested again in relation to the revolutionary events in 1934, which cost him his CAMPSA job, which he did not regain until June 1936, following the Popular Front election victory. He was also indicted for intimidation of the entrepreneur Natalio Sanchón in the wake of Ramón de la Torre Boullosa's sacking. In 1934 he stepped down from the CNT Metalworkers' Union.

Towards the end of 1935, some Libertarian Youth members came up with a plan to raid the Falange Española local (in the Calle General Riego, the Rua Alfonso XII these days) beside the Santiago church in Vigo to get hold of documents about its activities. When the leftwing socialists proposed in parliament that the Falange be banned, Dalmacio Bragado published an article echoing this and adding that "fascists must be eliminated in their dens". Quintas – who had received a tip-off that the Falangists "were out to get them" took this remark literally and, stepping outside of Vigo's libertarian organisations, orchestrated a raid on the Falange local in search of guns and intending to torch the premises. The raid occurred on 6 February 1936, with a dozen young libertarians involved. A ferocious gun-battle ensued in which the Falangist Luis Collazo was killed, several other fascists seriously wounded and Quintas took a bullet in the lung. The libertarians withdrew in orderly fashion and split up, but as luck would have it, Robustiano Figueira Villar was gunned down on the street by the police. Quintas was taken to the City Hospital, remaining there until April. He was then tried and convicted but secured his release shortly after the Popular Front's election victory.

He took an active part in resistance against the army revolt and was involved in the fighting around the O Calvario barricade. After resistance in O Seixo petered out, he was forced into hiding in that he was on the 'most wanted' list. Initially he stayed in a remote house in O Toural that belonged to Virginia González Pastoriza, staying there

up until July 1946. At around that point he adopted the identity of 'Clemente Cabaleiro Covelo', using the papers of a dead man. In 1946 the underground organisation relocated him to San Finx with the aid of Enrique Fernández Maneiro and other comrades. But Quintas was very much his own man and after a while he moved into Santiago. Using the papers of Clemente Cabaleiro Covelo he worked with Manuel Ceruelo Ares, cleaning up type-writers, including those in use at the police headquarters.

When Ceruelo was picked up in the police swoop on the CNT in March 1947, Quintas was forced to escape to Orense province and settled in Carballino around June 1948. He lived a quiet life there for a few years, working as, among other things, the parish priest's assistant and travelling salesman. He was arrested on 16/2/1950 on foot of information given, most likely as a result of an affair of the heart that had gone wrong. Tried before a Council of War held in Vigo on 28/10/1950 (Case 81/39), he was sentenced to death for armed rebellion although this was commuted to 25 years' close imprisonment. While in prison he was tried again before the High Court in Pontevedra over the events of 1936 (Case 37/36). At the request of the Conde de Pumpido, prosecuting counsel, he received a 30 year sentence. The judges went to town on him and added up all of the outstanding charges against him and not spent by 1960, meaning that – according to the sentencing record – he was not due for release until 27/9/2014. He served nearly 23 years in El Dueso penitentiary. He was going in just as the CNT personnel rounded up back in 1948 were coming home to Vigo.

He was released in 1973. Shortly after that he left for France where he made contact with the exiled anarchist organisation – specifically with Victor Francisco Cáceres who had moved to Toulouse after serving a sentence for the events of 1962 – and on his return he served as liaison with the CNT groups in Vigo. He earned a living as a bookseller. By this time the dictatorship was drawing to an end. During the early stages of the Transition, he took a hand in the re-organisation of the CNT, taking part in a variety of important meetings like the one in A Madroa, only to die unexpectedly on 17/8/1976, a few days after Victor Francisco died.

RAMOS, Enrique

At the regional plenum in A Coruña in September 1930 he represented the Vigo Group of Workers' Societies and Unions. And chaired the meeting of the Vigo Workers' General Union, Amalgamated Trades branch on 9/12/1930. A carpenter, he belonged to the Vigo CNT's Woodworkers' Union, representing it at the February 1933 regional plenum in Santiago. Later he switched trades and became a confectioner, joining the CNT Foodstuffs Union, Confectioner' and Allied Trades branch. And was secretary of the Local Federation of CNT Unions in 1936. He was part of the FIJL delegation that met at the town hall on 19 July 1936 with Heráclio Botana to propose an attack on the

barracks. Killed by Falangists in a '*paseo*', his castrated corpse turned up in the adjacent township of Mós.

RÍOS, Manuel

Taxi driver affiliated to the Drivers' branch of the CNT Amalgamated Trade Union and a member of Vigo's Libertarian Youth during the Republic. He also ran a bar. He was active in the postwar underground, his car ferrying into Portugal lots of foreigners surreptitiously crossing Spain on their way to Britain and using the CNT's escape lines.

RODRÍGUEZ, Gumersindo (Tuy-Pontevedra, ?/8/1936)

Baker and member of the Tuy CNT's Workers' General Union, he was active in events in Sobredo in 1922. In October 1924 he was active in the sawyers' strike which started at the Salcedo sawmill, lasting five months and ending with the closing down of the Local Federation until 1930 and his banishment to Lugo for five months.

A member of an anarchist (FAI?) group, he organised unions throughout the *comarca* (county). He took part in the CNT congress on 11/6/1931 as the representative of the Tuy Workers' Federation.

He played an important part in setting up peasant unions around Tuy, in places like Guillarei and Randufe. In this capacity he attended the August 1931 regional plenum in Vilagarcia, a get-together by the nascent Galician peasant unions and reviewed the campaign record so far. He represented the Galician Regional Confederation (CNT) at the National Peasant Plenum held in Madrid around Christmas 1931 at which the Republic's draft agrarian reform and creation of a National Federation of Peasant Unions were debated. In 1932, when the Workers' General Union was banned again, he was jailed, initially in Tuy on 8/6/1932 (alongside Bragado and Costas) and right after that, in Pontevedra. He was freed when the Popular Front came to power. Tellingly, Gumersindo was picked to serve on the Tuy city management board, which position was never taken up.

In the wake of the Uprising, Tuy was the southern Galician town that held out the longest – until 26 July 1936 – thanks to carabineros under the command of Captain Marcelino Rodríguez Blanco (later shot after a Council of War) and the CNT under Gumersindo Rodríguez's leadership. On 26 July those who refused to surrender to the rebels – about twenty of the former – were forced to flee into the vicinity of Monte Aloia where they were surrounded by the army which was hell bent on revenge. On 27 July two trucks fetched the bodies of the last resisters back to Tuy. Gumersindo Rodríguez was in agony from a wound to the temple, but it did not kill him. He was removed to Pontevedra hospital; where his life was saved, although he lost his sight. After a month, when his wife called to visit him, she was told that her husband had been discharged: the victim of a *paseo*. He wrote articles that appeared in the Tuy republican paper *Tribuna* (1933) and in the Galician (CNT) Regional Confederation *Solidaridad Obrera* (1933).

RODRÍGUEZ CAREU, Manuel aka *El Chato* (?-Bouzas, 15/9/1937)

A member of the Vigo CNT, he took part in the strike waged by the Fishing Industry Union against the bosses' 'La Maritima' society and was arrested by the Civil Guard, accused of hiding guns, bombs and gasoline in the basement of his home in Bouzas. He was the CNT's Marine Transport Union at the national plenum held in Gijón in July 1933. His attendance at that plenum sparked an argument with Bragado and other Vigo CNT members in the pages of *CNT*. For most of the republican era, he retired from militant activity. He was murdered in Bouzas on 15/9/1937 by Civil Guard Lieutenant Rodriguez.

RODRÍGUEZ RIAL, Fernando

Elected at a meeting as the president of the Ship's Porters' branch of the Vigo Workers' General Union on 29/10/1930. As a merchant seaman, he was a member of the Vigo CNT's Marine Transport Union's Boatmen's and Lightermen's branch under the Republic, representing it at the regional plenum in Santiago in February 1933. He chaired the CNT-affiliated 'La Resistencia' Port Motor Launches' Association at the beginning of 1936. It was he that fired the burst of machine-gun fire from the steps of the Puerta del Sol (today's Rúa da II República) at the rebel troops during events on 20 July 1936. He was then forced to go to ground before turning himself in in 1939 following the general amnesty. Shortly after that, having gone to sea as a crewman, he went ashore in Panama and became an exile. Only to return around 1955.

ROMÁN RODRÍGUEZ, Fernando (Moledo, Sárdoma 1912-Moledo, Sárdoma, 28/11/2001)

Mechanic belonging to the Vigo CNT's Metalworkers' Union. He started out working at the Sanjurjo works, only to quit after seeing the boss slap one of his staff. He later found work at the Barreras shipyard. He was a member of the founding Libertarian Youth group in Vigo in 1931. In 1934 he found himself doing military service in Asturias and he took a hand in those revolutionary events, allowing himself to be taken prisoner and swapped for other libertarians. On returning to Vigo in 1936, he threw himself into trade union work, acting as general secretary of the Metalworkers' Union. He also belonged to the 'Agrupación Cultural El Libro' in Sárdoma. And to the confederal defence groups. He was involved in the 1936 raid on the Falange local in which the CNT's Robustiano Figueira Villar and the fascist Luis Collazo lost their lives. He took part in the libertarian resistance to the Uprising in Vigo, particularly on the Os Choróns barricade. After the defeat he was forced into hiding and later turned himself over to the authorities. Held captive in the Frontón court in the Calle Maria Berdiales, he managed to escape. From 1940 onwards he was involved in rebuilding the CNT and active in trade union matters as well as in unmistakably insurrectionist activity such as the procurement and storage of fuses for bomb manufacture. At that time he was also the driving force behind the Barreras staff Mutual Society. Arrested in 1947, he was tried

before a Council of War in Vigo and sentenced in June 1948 to a year in prison. On his release from prison, his militant activity dropped off.

ROSAS BERMÚDEZ, César (Nerva, Huelva 1903-O Toural, Teis, 3/4/1939)

Metalworker who belonged to the Vigo CNT and Libertarian Youth. During the Republic he was a FAI member. When he first arrived in Vigo he worked at the Vulcano plant from which he was sacked over a dispute. His activism led to his being denied employment and he was forced to turn to taxi-driving. He used a Hudson bought with funds from the Vigo Local Federation and registered in the name of Benito Paz Piñeiro.

On 9/6/1932 he was brought before the courts for leaflets urging workers to strike. He was the signatory to the report that the Galician CNT forwarded on 3/9/1932 to the entire confederal press over remarks that Federico Urales had made about José Villaverde. When the dispute between the fishermen and the bosses' 'La Maritima' society ended, he was embroiled in a court case for possession of explosives when he was general secretary of the Local Federation of CNT unions and was jailed in Pontevedra before being acquitted and released on 1/6/1933. In July that year he took part in the CNT's campaign in Vigo and thereabouts pressing for an amnesty. A few days after that he was involved in a further conference – on 17/7/1933 – in the parish hall in Beade, at the 'Asociación Cultural La Antorcha del Porvenir' and then at the seamen's hall in Chapela. On 22/8/1934 he was again hauled in front of the courts for mootng a drivers' strike in Vigo and on 7 November he was arrested and charged with holding clandestine meetings along with leading militants from the Libertarian Youth. At the Zaragoza congress (May 1936) he represented the Amalgamated Trades Union, being its general secretary.

In the days leading up to the army revolt he was one of that group of libertarians that patrolled Vigo's streets in anticipation of any coup attempt. He was one of the leaders who took the initiative when the first news of rebellion broke. He took part in the meeting that the Libertarian Youth held at the town hall with Botana on the morning of 19 July 1936. He led the attack on the Civil Guard (carabineros?) barracks in Teis in search of guns but all that was found was some rifles and handguns, but no ammunition. The police also accused him of leading the raid on the 'Las Cosmopolita' armoury and the Customs house. He was among those who faced the troops across the Os Choróns barricade. After the attempt to resist the Uprising failed, he went to ground for nearly three years. The Civil Guard, who accused him of having been involved with Quintas in the hold-up of a bar in Sello (Cabral) on 27/1/1939 in which one man died, finally ran him to ground at the home of Lucia Dominguez Eiroa in O Toural, where he was in hiding with Iglesias. Cornered, they wrote a note for their besiegers exculpating their hosts and chose suicide rather than create a bloodbath. Then shot each other in the chest. He wrote articles for *CNT* (Madrid).

SILVEIRA CORREA, Juan (Beade 1907-Brazil)

A member of the UGT-affiliated Vigo General Coal, Salt and Allied Substances Loaders' and Unloaders' Society, he was elected as its vice-president at the meeting on 28/11/1930. He was one of the chief lobbyists for this union to federate with the CNT after the Zaragoza congress in 1936, when its name was changed to the Vigo CNT Coal and Ore Unloaders' Union. He was also a member of the local FIJL. And of the 'Asociación Cultural La Antorcha del Porvenir' in Beade. He took part in the resistance in O Calvario as did his group. During the underground years he served as a member of the local CNT committee, serving as bookkeeper. And was in on Quintas's escape plans in 1946. In the 1947 round-up he was able to escape to Madrid and moved on to France before finally opting for exile in Porto Alegre in Brazil.

TABOADA (TABOADA MARTINEZ, José Manuel?) (?-Balaidos, Vigo 1936)

Member of the Vigo CNT. Organiser of the Fishing Industry Union, the Boatmen's and Lightermen's Union and other unions in towns adjacent to Vigo. Driving force behind the Ateneo Sindicalista Libertario and the Local Federation of CNT Unions. In early 1932, he withdrew from union activism after taking up a job as a foreman at the docks. During the resistance to the army revolt, a bomb exploded in his hands. Taken to Dr Troncoso's clinic, he was removed from it a few days later by Lieutenant Rodriguez aka El Rabioso from the Civil Guard who murdered him in Balaidos. There is no question but that he was the very first *paseo* victim in Vigo.

VALES LORENZO, Vicente

Seaman and member of the Vigo CNT. In November 1930 he served as the delegate from the Vigo Fisheries branch. And was general secretary of the Fishing Fleet branch of the Vigo Workers' General Union in December 1930. He played an active role in the dispute between the Fishing Industry Union and the bosses' 'La Maritima' society and was general secretary of the former. In November 1932 he signed up to an initial agreement that failed to win the support of the membership. He was accused of having been the man that shot at Valentin Paz Andrade – who was acting as an advisor to the employers' group – on 22/11/1932. Arrested, he spent upwards of a year behind bars but when brought for trial he was defended by Agustín Ribas and Isidoro Millán and was acquitted. He was a contributor to *Mar y Tierra* newspaper.

VEGA, Ricardo

Seaman member of the Vigo Fishing Industry Union and of the Libertarian Youth. He was arrested on 30/11/1932 and accused of possession of explosives together with César Rosas but acquitted after a trial.

VILLAR, Francisco (VILLAR RODRÍGUEZ, Francisco?) (Beade 1899-Puxeiros, Cabral 1/1/1937)

Farmer who belonged to the Vigo CNT. He was one of the organisers of the 'Agrupación Cultural La Antorcha del Porvenir' in Beade in 1930. He took part in various

conferences sponsored by the Agrupación in the Vigo area during the years of the Republic. His body was found out by the cemetery in Puxeiros. He had been a contributor to *CNT* (Madrid) and *Solidaridad Obrera* (Barcelona).

Published by the Ateneu Libertário “Ricardo Mella”, 2003.

THE ANARCHIST HOMES OF LIBERTARIAN WOMEN
(ANARCHIST WOMEN'S RESISTANCE IN THE WAKE
OF THE 1936 FASCIST REVOLT)
by Carmen Blanco

Foreword

When my comrade Claudio Rodríguez Fer and I, back in the spring of 2006, were putting together No 11 of *Unión libre, Cadernos de vida e culturas. Vermelhas*, devoted to the fascist repression of women unleashed in Galicia in 1936, we received a piece commissioned from Dionisio Pereira and Eliseo Fernández about anarchist women, entitled “Unha achega a represión franquista contra as mulleres libertarias na Galiza” [“An approach to the Francoist repression of libertarian women in Galicia”]. I was greatly impressed by the significant part actively played by the most unassuming anarchist women in the resistance and in the libertarian movement's underground recovery, through the creation of a network of safe-houses, against the backdrop of (civil) war-time repression and Francoist dictatorship.

I made the decision then to highlight and investigate the matter of anarchist safe-houses rather further by way of a contribution towards recognition for these women and in order to afford them a fair and well-deserved tribute for their defence of freedom, which I was able to do since Eliseo sent me Case File 992/37 dealing with the Atochas raid. On this basis I drafted the paper I had been asked to present at the symposium *Destecendo a desmemoria. Galiza na loita antifranquista (1936-1977)* [Unravelling memory loss, Galicia in the anti-Francoist struggle] held in Pontevedra in November 2006 (...) and which I entitled “The Anarchist Homes of Libertarian Women”.

Rosa Bassave Roibal was in Pontevedra to hear my enthusiastic talk about the dogged solidarity and resistance offered by these working women and in March 2007 she invited me to give a talk during the libertarian festival held on the premises of the CNT in Compostela. At the invitation of Rosa and Pancho Valle-Inclán, I was there on 5 March to address and discuss the topic with a mixed and interested audience under the title “The Anarchist Homes of Libertarian Women. Commemorating the leading role and revolutionary solidarity of Galician women during the civil war.” It was a pleasure for me to take part in a gathering that attracted folk of all ages, many of them women. At the end of a long day, Alberte de Esteban Gracia asked if he could have the text for publication by the CNT. Which is how my modest essay *Casas anarquistas de mulleres libertarias* came to be published by the Galician CNT, a great pleasure and honour for me. To that end I elaborated upon my references to Basilisa Álvarez González *aka* Sofía Rodríguez *aka* A Corales, using the records of the two trials in which she was indicted, files to which I was afforded access with his usual generosity

and solidarity by Eliseo Fernández, with Dionisio Pereira this time acting as intermediary.

I am not a professional historian, merely a writer, a teacher of Galician literature, a feminist and non-aligned libertarian unearthing women's history since the late 1970s at a time when no one else was and who is still at it in that what I do nobody else can do for me.

My thanks go first to my comrade Claudio who brings me libertarian publications from his travels all around the world; to my brother Martín Blanco, a CNT member who keeps me abreast of anarcho-syndicalism and who handles my subscription to the newspaper *CNT*, and to my advisors in matters relating to the libertarian movement's history, Dionisio Pereira and Eliseo Fernández. Secondly, they go to those who attended the CNT talk in Compostela; their queries helped me polish the definitive text. Thanks are due also to Jesús García for sending me libertarian publications from Betanzos. And thanks too, of course, to Rosa Bassave, Alberte Esteban and Pancho Valle-Inclán for the invitation to the libertarian festival and publication of this tribute to anarchist women.

Saúde e anarquía

Carmen Blanco. Lugo, 31 March 2007

Libertarian Women

From Dionisio Pereira and Eliseo Fernández, on whose work we essentially rely in this essay, we know that the libertarian movement enjoyed considerable growth during the Second Republic, as did the women's libertarian movement. According to data unearthed by these two investigators, in the spring and summer of 1936 some 6,000 women belonged to CNT unions in Galicia, and some 2,000 to 2,500 of these belonged to the La Coruña Local Federation, a small enough number in absolute terms, but accounting for 15%-20% of the total number of affiliated Galician anarchists. But it was a comparatively large figure in qualitative terms if we consider the small female working class contingent in the region – albeit that it was one of the highest in Spain, after Catalonia – and the heavy burden of conservatism's grip on Galician society.

So such libertarian women were a significant socially progressive working class minority, made up of cigarette-makers, match-sellers, *chavoleiras*, female dockworkers, packers, binders, netmakers, chandlers, fishmongers, shellfish sellers, cannery workers, fish processors, messengers, porters, miners, metalworkers, lithographers, telephonists and textile workers, shoemakers, food-workers, construction workers and workers from a range of trades who lived, for the most part, in the city of La Coruña but who were also to be found wherever anarcho-syndicalism had a presence: in Vigo, Cangas, Aldán, Marín, Lourizán, Carril, Vilagarcía, Vilanova de Arousa, A Pobra, O Grove, Robeira, Escarabote, Boiro, Porto do Son, Camarinas, Sada, Ares, Xubia, Mugardos, Cariño,

Cedeira, Celeiro, Viveiro, Lousame, O Freixo, Verín or Negreira. To these trail-blazing female workers must be added another vanguard made up of the minority of women belonging to the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI), the Libertarian Youth, the FAI's own Vanguardia Feminina and the Mulleres Libres, as well as the ones connected in some way with the Ateneos Libertarios, social studies centres, rationalist schools and the various libertarian publications that blossomed prior to the summer of 1936. It is thanks to all of them that libertarianism in Galicia also came with a woman's face and form.

Women's Resistance

As we know, the strength built up by the Galician libertarian movement was destroyed as a result of the fascist military revolt in July 1936 and with it the pioneering ranks of libertarian women were ravaged. A number of them perished right at the outset, in the street-fighting and most perished later on at the hands of the rebels' repression ... murdered, harried, arrested and jailed. Only a few managed to go to ground without being discovered, or fled or went into exile. The libertarian strides made by these women were halted, like a tide being rolled back. But the memory of their glory days under the Republic and their resistance in the face of the fascists' determination to annihilate them lives on in us as a certain hope for the present and future.

Because, confronting the scale of the horrors and the disaster of fascist repression, a minority of libertarian women stood their ground, resisting the attempt to wipe out the revolutionary movement, keeping a low profile and standing by their anarchist comrades and working discreetly to re-organise revolutionary activity. In this stressful and very difficult effort to sustain and strengthen the libertarian movement, women took action by exploiting the functions traditionally associated with their gender, temporarily making hay out of the sexist ideology of the new regime and what opportunities the culture peculiar to women offered them. But they also stepped far beyond that women's culture and subverted the traditional roles attributed to their gender and strove to rebuild the FAI and a libertarianism which had its back to the wall. In so doing, they played an essentially infra-structural role within the anarchist movement, a vital function if anarchism was to survive. Essentially their role consisted of acting as liaisons between different militants and leaders, a task made easier by the fact that they enjoyed more freedom of movement given that their gender made them less likely to be suspected of subversion by the fascist reactionaries. The other essential role performed by libertarian women in the resistance was as auxiliaries, harbouring and tending to male comrades on the run. In pursuit of this work the women set up a network of safe houses and a food distribution network, doing the laundry and procuring papers for fugitive or imprisoned comrades. By way of a tribute we mean to commemorate some

of the women that we know about and who were to the fore in this very important role of sustaining the anarchist underground.

Anarchist Safe-houses in La Coruña

As said, the city of La Coruña was the main centre of the libertarian movement women-folk who took part in the resistance to fascism, with a network of safe-houses maintained right up until the “Atochas Raid” (so called) on 10 July 1937, a raid made possible thanks to a disgraceful infiltration that produced the “Brandariz Report”. The process whereby the anarchist resistance in La Coruña was snuffed out has been studied mainly by Luis Lamela, Emilio Grandio Seoane and Eliseo Fernández and Dionisio Pereira. We shall analyse the essential role played by women in the resistance, taking into account the research carried out by the above and using as our source Case File 992/37 from the Northwest Regional Court Martial.

Pride of place in the resistance in Atochas goes to **María Otero González** who was murdered on the morning of 10 July 1937 in her home at Atocha Alta, 55, 1° at the age of 33: she was shot by the Civil Guard. María had been born in Allariz and by that point was a widow, her husband having been shot by the military in La Coruña. Her role in the libertarian resistance consisted of acting as runner for the Argentinean anarchist of Greek descent, Antonio Fournarakis *aka* Antonio Fernández ‘El Viejo’ in his efforts to rebuild the FAI, and maintaining a safe house in her Atocha Alta home for male and female comrades on the run. Hiding in her home was Elisa Vázquez Rozas, the sister of the anarchist José Vázquez Rozas. Elisa had been arrested right at the beginning of the army revolt in 1936 and she would be arrested again following the case arising out of the raid on María Otero’s house and was finally sentenced to 20 years’ imprisonment in December 1937. And at the time of the raid on María Otero’s home it was harbouring the anarchists Fernando Caamaño Pérez, newspaper vendor, (who was killed), Carlos Miguel Pérez *aka* Moreno (25 year old labourer, who was also killed), Jesús Rodríguez *aka* Chucho de Ares (a Libertarian Youth member, also killed), José González (secretary of the FAI, arrested) and his brother Rogelio González (waiter, wounded during the taking of the house).

The second name featured in the Atochas raid was that of **Alicia Dorado** who was murdered on the evening of 10 July 1937 (María Otero having been killed that morning) in the attack on her home at Rúa do Carme, 6, in a building known as the Villa Rosalia. Alicia was a tenant there and at the time of the raid on the house she was working as a baker but had earlier been sacked from the ‘La Primera Coruñesa’ textile plant for her revolutionary activities. By that point she too had been widowed and her lover was the Portuguese anarchist Julio Acebedo Veiga, active in the Federation of Exiled Portuguese Anarchists (FAPE). According to statements made by her sister-in-law Marina Rey Sánchez (who may have been making excuses for her), this liaison with Julio

Acebedo led to a coolness between the two women who had no truck with one another, since Marina had fallen out with Alicia over her failure to remain in mourning for her brother. Marina herself was the partner of the anarchist Julio Lores Taboada who had gone on the run at the start of the revolt in 1936 and she herself had been sacked from the 'La Primera Coruñesa' textile plant for her revolutionary activities (like Alicia) and she acted as a runner for FAI militants. She was arrested in the Atochas raid and was eventually sentenced to 12 years in December 1937. Alicia Dorado acted as the liaison between Julio Acebedo and Antonio Fournarakis in their efforts to refloat the FAI and she was harbouring both these anarchist leaders in her home. Her home was also in use for lovers' trysts between Fournarakis and Pilar Suárez Marantes, an embroidress whom sources describe as beautiful and refined (she came from Santa Margarita or Rubine) who was to abort her child in April in a village, using German brandy procured by Maria Otero and who helped Fournarakis while he was on the run: she was to be questioned in the case arising out of the Atochas raid but was acquitted in December 1937. At the time of the raid, Alicia's home was harbouring the two anarchists Acebedo and Fournarakis who resisted the attack. Alicia Dorado and Antonio Fournarakis were killed right at the outset, whilst Julio Acebedo managed to escape across the roof and clamber on to the balcony of Vereá do Polvorin, 1, 2º esquerda, where he was finally shot down from the terrace opposite.

Josefa Calvo Cortes is another name linked to Alicia Dorado and those who put up a fight at her house. Josefa was the partner of the anarchist Enrique Rosende Huerta, a waiter at the 'Asturias' cafe and she was a runner for the FAI. She was arrested and at the time of arrest was a 47 year old fishmonger and greengrocer whose son, Enrique Rosende Calvo was under arrest and she had another son, José Rosende Calvo who had been killed by the Civil Guard in Elvino. Her home was in the Rua da Torre. M R., and the sources say that she was prominent in the demonstration organised to pressurise the Popular Front into setting the prisoners free; she spoke slightly of the military and put up notices disrespectful of the Nationalist Army. She was in charge of supplying fish, fruit and vegetables to Alicia's safe house since Alicia was working as a baker and could not go to the public square. On the day that Alicia, Acebedo and Fournarakis were killed, Josefa brought them sardines and cherries. Her son Enrique was to be sentenced to life imprisonment and she herself would be acquitted in December 1937.

Another safe house of the Atochas anarchist group was the home of **Aurora Miguelez Pena**, the mother of the anarchist Antonio Varela Miguelez, victim of a '*paseo*'. Aurora's house was located in the Agra de Orzán, Observatorio, Letra S. She acted as a courier in efforts to reorganise the FAI and harboured Antonio Fournarakis in her home up until March 1937, before he moved on to Alicia Dorado's house. As a result of the raids on both the Atochas houses and on the anarchist group connected with them, she was arrested and given a 12 year plus one day prison sentence, subsequently

reduced to 6 months and a day of *prisión menor* (standard detention) in December 1937. In her trial statement, in Aurora's own handwriting, just above her signature, were the words "my son did not bring him", an attempt to rebut the claim ascribed to her by the Civil Guard above that she had harboured Fournarakis because he had been introduced into the house by her son. This was her attempt to save her son who would also find himself arrested and who perished in a '*paseo*'.

We find a network of women and men in the case of the safe haven used by the anarchist José Torres Regueira who was involved in the defence of La Coruña before fleeing into the hills, only to return and hide out in La Coruña thanks to help from his partner **Consuelo Meitin Rodríguez**, residing in Vereá do Polovorin, 5, 1°. He had several children by her and she made it her business to find him a hiding place until he was eventually arrested and subjected to a '*paseo*' on 16 July 1937. So Consuelo is to be numbered among the libertarian women who were crucial to the resistance. She was a member of the 'Germinal' Social Studies Centre in March 1932 and active in the Libertarian Youth under the Republic. She was arrested in July 1937 following the arrest of her partner José Torres and was given a 12 year prison sentence in December 1937.

Among the safe houses used by Consuelo Meitin's partner José Torres was the home of a certain **Paca**, a carpenter's wife, in the Rúa de San Amara, where he hid for two months. As was the home of a prostitute by the name of **Alejandra** who lived in the Rúa Cartuchos beside the Café de la Cuesta. And the home of **Teresa Lamas Conchado**, who, at the time she was arrested, was a 44 year old widow with a home in the Rúa de San Amaro where Torres spent one night. And the home of **Maria Seijas Sánchez**, the partner of the La Coruña anarchist baker Alejandro Basilio Palacios who was harbouring José Torres at the time he was caught, for which she was arrested in July 1937 following the Atochas raid. She would eventually be acquitted in December 1937, but her house at Santa Catalina, 30, 4°, had harboured not only José Torres but, prior to that, Antonio Fournarakis on two occasions, prior to the revolt in July 1936 and in 1934 during the construction industry strike.

Another safe house in La Coruña was the home of **Basilisa Alvarez González aka A Corales or Sofia Rodríguez**. Basilisa was a very humble woman who had worked as a prostitute from an early age and then sold fish in La Coruña. She was a libertarian, a member of the Packers' Section of the Fishing Industry Union, of which she was a delegate and she belonged also to the Mujeres Libres. After the revolt in 1936 she was actively involved with the support network for runaways (*fluxidos*). In her home in the Atochas district, located at Atocha Alta, 2, baixo, she harboured the anarchists Fernando Caamaño, Antonio Chamorro Castro (an 18 year old tailor who belonged to the Libertarian Youth and who took part in resisting the revolt in La Coruña) and Jesús Rodríguez (a 19 year old railway worker from Betanzos) up until 18 June 1937 when

they were discovered and when her house was raided. In the round-up, Antonio Chamorro was arrested there but the rest of her 'house-guests' managed to escape through a window. Later she went underground herself, using the name Sofía Rodríguez, mentioned above. In the meantime she was indicted in the case against Antonio Chamorro, was pronounced a fugitive and a search-and-arrest warrant was issued for her. During her time underground, she led a tough life as she wandered through the villages and the hills, begging, until she returned to La Coruña to seek shelter in A Gaitera, in the home of the widow **Emilia Calderón**, and she was involved in the escape attempt involving the tug *Tres Hermanos*. As a result of that escape bid she was arrested in the autumn of 1938 and sentenced to 20 years in prison on 16 November 1938. Case files 861/37 and 566/38 relating to her record her tough life and her unwavering militancy whilst also mentioning potentially significant details such as the fact that she was 42 years old at the time of arrest, that she was very staunch opponent of religion and that she had led the 1 May 1936 demonstration, brandishing a red flag and dressed in red from head to toe.

Another libertarian woman who kept an open house in La Coruña following the revolt in 1936 was the leading anarchist militant **Sebastiana Vitales Gascón**. Sebastiana was from Aragon and had moved to the United States where she embraced anarchism when she was a member of the 'Francisco Ferrer' Colony in Stelton, New Jersey, together with her partner, Francisco Ballón Pequeño, from Fisterra. On her return from the USA she settled in La Coruña and joined the FAI in which she was very active and stood out as a public speaker at many libertarian rallies during the latter years of the Republic, speaking in places like Cabovilano, Vilagarcía, Viveiro, Elvina, Sada, Inxoá, Betanzos, San Pedro de Nos or La Coruña. In December 1935 she accompanied Federica Montseny to a rally held in Betanzos. Federica placed her impressions from a trip to Galicia on record and they were published in *La Revista Blanca* and as we can now read thanks to an edition issued by the 'Ricardo Mella' Ateneu Libertario, that Sebastiana was a kind, courageous, serious and a selfless comrade. She was a member of the FAI's Vanguardia Feminina group in La Coruña and founded the local Mujeres Libres chapter in the spring of 1936. After the army revolt in 1936, she and her partner kept resisting until he perished in a '*paseo*'. Into her home she welcomed victims of persecution until she was arrested herself and spent some time in prison. On her release from prison she kept a low profile, surviving first by fetching white bread from Sada to La Coruña and later by selling fruit in the wolfram mines in Augulada-Constancia, walking the fourteen kilometers a day with her daughter Luz. Those were hard times during which she knew what it was to go hungry, but even so she used to fetch food for the prisoners whenever she could. In 1954, she decided to leave the country and left for Venezuela with her two daughters and over there she was in contact with the Galician-born teacher Ángel Rama, the Catalan anarchist Germinal Gracia

Ibars (*aka* Victor Garcia) and the group publishing the review *Ruta* of which the Catalan was one of the prime movers. She died in exile in 2000. It was largely due to her that there had been a Vanguardia Feminina and Mujeres Libres in Galicia at all. As we have seen, fascist harassment of her and others like her cost Galicia these pioneering free women. (...)

In Arousa

Anarchism was strong on land and at sea in Arousa as well. Here **Josefa Barreiro González** and **Pilar Fernández Seijas** stood out for their libertarian activism and both women died brutal, needless deaths.

Josefa Barreiro González came from Trabanca, Badina (Carril) and she lived in Torre, working in the fields and cleaning homes. She belonged to the Vilagarcia CNT. Her husband, a merchant seaman, was the cousin of another libertarian, Otilia Tobio, a well known female militant of the Vilagarcia CNT who worked as a day labourer and midwife and after the 1936 revolt supported the runaways in the hills, including her own son Ricardo. It was actually through the good offices of Otilia Tobio that Josefa Barreiro welcomed the anarchist Urbano Tarrío into her home. In March 1937, Josefa was tortured and murdered for harbouring Tarrío, who was also murdered. After Josefa's death, Otilia took her two young orphaned sons into her own home but was forced to move away to Bilbao where she ran the 'Ria de Arosa' bar. After two years there, Josefa's sons managed to cross into France from the Basque Country, with help from a relative, to rejoin their father who had been captured at the end of the civil war before leaving Spain for exile in France.

Pilar Fernández Seijas was also from Trabanca, Badina (Carril) and she was employed as an operative at the 'Vasco Galaica' wire factory. She was a member of the CNT's Metalworkers' Union in Vilagarcia and her cottage in Cea had given safe haven to the anarchists Rodrigo Beruete, Antonio Sayanes and Manuel Limeres. In February 1937 her cottage was burned down, with Pilar and her 'guests' inside.

Safe Houses In Vigo

Another important focus of anarchism was the city of Vigo and in relation to libertarian resistance in Vigo following the 1936 revolt we come across another two women's homes.

Virginia González Pastoriza was a cleaner and bread-server with a house in Teis where she harboured the Vigo anarchist José Luis Quintas Figueroa from August 1936 until 1946, in which year the underground anarcho-syndicalist moved on to the San Finx mines in Lousame. Virginia was arrested in 1950 when Quintas himself was captured and she was sentenced to a prison term of 6 years and 1 day.

Amparo Rivas Comesaña ran a drinking establishment on the Estrade de Pereiro where she stored a copy machine for the Vigo CNT and where clandestine meetings were held. Her establishment hosted the meeting called to lay the groundwork for José Luis Quintas Figueroa's escape from Vigo to the mines in Lousame.

A Safe House In Lousame

Maria Josefa Becerra Laino harboured the anarchist miner Perfecto Vilas Romero, a member of the Lousame CNT's Miners' Union in her home in Marselle (Lousame). She was murdered on 24 February 1938 in Marselle alongside Antonio Vilas Romero, the brother of the anarchist she had been harbouring.

A Safe House In Xubias

Primitiva Lodeiro Otero was a La Coruña seamstress who was the sweetheart of the anarchist Antonio Torres López. She had a house in Xubias where she hid Antonio from July 1936 until August 1937, at which time the pair was arrested as part of an investigation into an escape attempt involving the fishing smack *Explorador* in which Primitiva's own brother, Manuel Lodeiro Otero, was also implicated. Primitiva was sentenced to 12 years and a day in prison in November 1937.

Free Women And Safe-houses

We have looked at a few representative examples of the libertarian resistance wherein a number of free women kept safe houses welcoming wanted anarchists and other leftists on the run. The generic Galician mind-set (and it is not exclusive to Galicia) associates and indeed identifies women with the home, hospitality and shelter. These free and libertarian women were hospitable and the homes they kept were forward-looking havens and escapes from the horrors of the terrifying fascist repression that was butchering the flower of libertarian freedom. These libertarian women were unassuming and had next to nothing, yet they gave their all in a spirit of solidarity. Into their homes they welcomed the director of the anarchist paper *Brazo y Cerebro*, Antonio Fournarakis, with his ties to anarchism around the globe, especially in the Americas and who was beavering away to rebuild the FAI in Galicia, and in trials mounted against the heart of Galician anarchism in Atochas in La Coruña he affirmed the unwavering libertarian and FAI watchwords "Splendour in the abyss", "No God, no Fatherland" and "No God, no borders", as well as the name of the splendidly revolutionary Ateneo Libertaria 'Nueva Era'. May these free women, their safe-houses and the free world within remain in our hearts forever.

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Dionisio Pereira and Eliseo Fernández *O movemento libertario en Galiza (1936-1976)* (Vigo, Edicións A Nosa Terra, 2006)

Dionisio Pereira and Eliseo Fernández “Unha achega a represión franquista contra as mulleres libertarias na Galiza” in *Unión libre, Cadernos de vida e culturas, 11, Vermelhas* (Sada, La Coruña, Edicións do Castro 2006, pp. 75-87

This talk by Carmen Blanco on “The Anarchist Safe-Houses of Libertarian Women” leaves us stunned for many reasons: first, the organisation and commitment of the anarchist women and men in fascism’s earliest years: secondly, the selflessness with which they acted, risking their very lives in to rescue people who sometimes had no connection with the libertarian movement.

Finally, there is the statement made in March 1937 by Aurora Miguelez Pena, mother to the anarchist Antonio Varela Miguelez (who was murdered in a *paseo*), who made her house available to Fournarakis, a well known anarchist who was re-organising the FAI. Arrested and question about this, she attempted to save her son by adding to the foot of her statement the words: *My son did not bring him*.

Words are redundant.

The text of this talk which you now have in your possession is offered as a tribute to those courageous women.

Published as *Casas Anarquistas de Mulleres Libertarias* by CNT da Galiza, (La Coruña-Compostela) 2007

**ALCATRAZ -
UNCLE SAM'S DEVIL'S ISLAND
EXPERIENCES OF A
CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR IN
AMERICA DURING THE FIRST
WORLD WAR BY PHILIP GROSSER**

Philip Grosser was sent to Alcatraz because he didn't want to murder anyone, even on government orders. He was a Boston anarchist and anti-militarist who refused to be drafted into the slaughter of World War One. He was, in his own words, 'not a very good example to other drafted men', and stayed a stubborn rebel who could not be turned into a soldier. As an anarchist he denied the government's right to run or throw away his life. For that reason he had to face the inhumanity of authority defied.

Grosser's account of his time inside is an early exposé of official brutality in America's most notorious prison. It's also a powerful account of resistance and endurance. The original pamphlet was first published by Grosser's friends after his death in the 1930s. It's been expanded with letters by, to and about him from the Alexander Berkman papers at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam. They shed a little more light on the life of a rebel who could be counted on in the struggle for human freedom.

"Phil was one of the finest comrades it has been my good fortune to meet. And well I remember his stand during the war. I know all the humiliation and tortures he had to go through because of his loyalty to a high ideal." – Alexander Berkman

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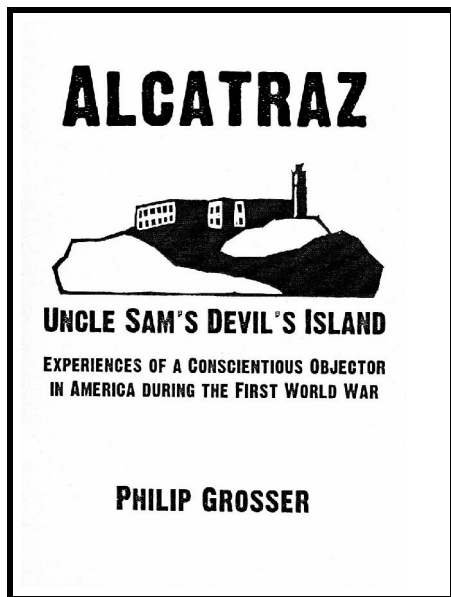
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Anarchism In Galicia

Organisation, Resistance and Women in the Underground

Essays by Eliseo Fernández, Antón Briallos and Carmen Blanco

Edited and translated by Paul Sharkey

Free online review copy edition

The Anarchist movement in Galicia is unknown to English-language readers. These essays tell the stories of the men and women who built it, fought for it, and how they kept it alive in the face of incredible odds.

‘The FAI in Galicia’ by Eliseo Fernández gives a brief history of Galician anarchism before the foundation of the FAI (Federación Anarquista Ibérica: Iberian Anarchist Federation) in 1927. It goes on to detail the structure and activities of the FAI in Galicia, and shows how the tensions and tactical disagreements within Spanish anarchism played out at a local level, including within the CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo: National Confederation of Labour).

‘Vigo 1936’ by Antón Briallos records the desperate – and ultimately unsuccessful – battle in the streets against the fascist revolt of July 1936. Full biographical details of anarchists mentioned show the roots, structure and fate of the anarchist movement in Vigo before, during and after the Spanish Civil War.

‘The Anarchist Homes of Libertarian Women’ by Carmen Blanco tells how Galicia’s anarchist women sheltered other militants and were central to attempts to rebuild the anarchist movement. This tribute reveals the extent of their involvement and the terrible price they paid.

Contents:

The FAI in Galicia by Eliseo Fernández

Vigo 1936 by Antón Briallos

The Anarchist Homes of Libertarian Women (Anarchist Women’s Resistance in the Wake of the 1936 Fascist Revolt) by Carmen Blanco

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