

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



All Our Lives

English translation of De Toda la Vida

Lisa Berger and Carol Mazer

Lisa Berger and Carol Mazer
All Our Lives
English translation of De Toda la Vida
1986

Scanned from print version on file in CIRA Lausanne archive
No translator listed in CIRA original

theanarchistlibrary.org

1986

Suceso: Lucia walked in, sat down, took out her pencil, and within
a few minutes, wrote the first verse of “Mujeres Libres.”

(sings Mujeres Libres Hymn)

CREDITS

+++

Mujeres Libres’ Anthem (Originally in Spanish)

Lucia Sanchez Saornil Valencia 1937 accessed July 26, 2013 at
http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/spain/song_mujeres.html

Fists upraised, women of Iberia
towards horizons pregnant with light
on paths afire
feet on the ground
face to the blue sky.
Affirming the promise of life
we defy tradition
we mold the warm clay
of a new world born of pain.
Let the past vanish into nothingness!
What do we care for yesterday!
We want to write anew
the word WOMAN.
Fists upraised, women of the world
towards horizons pregnant with light
on paths afire
onward, onward
toward the light.

Contents

Mujeres Libres’ Anthem (Originally in Spanish) . . . 22

Dolores: After so many years of struggle, you still go on. Don't you ever get tired?

Federica: I do get tired. Frankly, right now I'm tired. But, I'll go to bed and by tomorrow, I'll be ready to go on again.

Lola: You asked me why I wrote the book. Well I wrote it, simply, so that those women would not be forgotten in the silence of history. Because many companeros have written books, but they cite few women apart from Soledad Gustavo and Teresa Claramunt. I wanted to present others who participated as actively, but who are not well known.

Narration #26: Concha Perez spent a year in the concentration camp at Argeles, and later lived through the years of dictatorship in Barcelona.

Concha: I believe in the anarchist ideal. It's something I have very deep inside me, all my life. It means creating equality for all human beings, eliminating the enormous social differences that leave some people dying of hunger and others trampling over everything. This doesn't come about by simple acts of magic. You have to take steps to create it. All that I've done has been precisely in search of this ideal of anarchism.

Narration #27: Pepita Carpena and Juan Martinez met after the war in Marseille, where they still live today.

Pepita: I'm currently in charge of an information center, an archives, the International Center for Anarchist Studies, a branch of the one in Geneva. We archive everything about anarchism that gets printed in any publication, internationally.

Dolores: I work with the organization, International Antifascist Solidarity. I'm also secretary of the local of the general trades union here in Toulouse. It's not hard work. My activities give me life. I live alone. The older I get, the better-natured I become. I take life as I feel I have to, not always happy maybe, because my work is visiting sick people.

Sara: So, we went on talking and talking, and here we are, still talking.

got in front. He came up to here on me. I gave our names... As we were leaving, we hadn't even gotten past the gate and he turned to me, "Now I'll call you mother because I am your son."

Narration 23: The French authorities placed them in camps, hastily erected on beaches and fields, in mid-winter, without even minimum shelter or sanitation. Of those who survived, some stayed in France, some returned to Spain, others went elsewhere.

Hortensia: That reality was catastrophic. You couldn't say what you really thought because people couldn't bear to hear the truth. I had to start relearning then. I turned fifteen in a French camp, and began to learn how to lie. After my early years with my parents, three years of war, to find myself with all that, was overwhelming.

Sara: I wouldn't want to go back because we suffered a lot. But I find everything I've done, well done; because I did it willingly, and in good faith.

Sara: And since then we've continued collaborating for our ideals. As soon as we could, Mariano, Conchita, Jesus and I, we toured the south of Spain, showing films about the movement, the FAI, Durruti. We went to Lorca, Aguilas, an unending list of places, the four of us. Mariano's car was so stuffed to the brim on those old roads that it's a wonder it never broke down. So after all these years, now with white hair, we're still going around disseminating our ideas.

Narration #24: Suceso Portales and Acracio Ruiz returned to Spain following Franco's death, after almost 40 years in exile.

Narration #25: Federica Montseny travels frequently from her home in Toulouse to Barcelona.

Federica: The commemoration of May First began as an international protest against the assassination of five anarchists in Chicago. It was never meant to be a celebration, but an act of protest, an act of remembrance of the crime committed in Chicago a century ago.

English Transcript

Teresina: Back then wearing trousers was a very odd thing. I remember I wore my hair short like a boy. And as I never wore earrings, because I didn't like them, when we went around to the villages people would look at me and say: "A woman in trousers!" And someone else would say, "No, it's a boy!" But then they'd notice my breasts and say, "No, it is a girl!" Well, we used to joke a lot about that. But the fact is that my parents kicked me out of the house for wearing trousers.

Narration #1: At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, a large segment of the working class collectivized industries and agriculture on a wide scale. These women participated in that experiment, which a few years later, was to be buried under Franco's military dictatorship and the war in Europe. Their stories form part of the history of the Spanish anarchist movement, who, on their own, tried to improve the human condition.

Narration #2: Dolores Prat lives in Toulouse, France. She was born in a small village near Ripoll, Gerona, in Spain.

Dolores: When I was little, my mother was ill much of the time. Although she prayed to the virgin; she never regained her health. That's when I saw that religion was a lie.

One day, I remember it was Christmas, the day of the magi, the year my mother died, we went into town to go shopping. We passed by a square like this one. There were some huge balconies filled with toys—the best in all of Spain. I said to my mother, "Why do the Magi bring so much to the rich kids and nothing to us?" She said, "They can't find us because we live in a granary." I said, "How can that be? If they really come down from the sky, they should see us first. It's not fair that I don't even get a cardboard doll while they get so much." It seems to me my mother should have told me the truth. But she was very devout and she couldn't do it.

I went to a parochial school, but was afraid of the nuns. After about a year or so my father gave me something to read. I held the paper upside down. My father, who was illiterate, said, "Don't you know how to read?" "No." "Don't you go to school?" "No." "Why not?" "Because I'm afraid the nuns will lock me up and beat me." My father said, "If you had only told me. I could go to city hall and get you into the public school." And he did. So the little I know, I learned in one year.

Narration #3: By 1919, Catalunya was one of the few industrial regions of Spain. In Barcelona and numerous towns, textile mills and clothing factories provided work for many people, especially women.

Lola: I began working as a dressmaker's assistant, and they paid me fifteen cents a week. I went in at eight in the morning, -but never finished at a set time. Because there were days when we'd have to return to the workshop with these big wooden crates that were used to deliver the dresses to the senoras. The apprenticeship consisted of running errands. And you learned over long years and through suffering. You went in at eight in the morning and might finish at 8 or 9 at night. So I thought, I earn very little here, and it's a difficult situation. So I started working as a seamstress with trousers, and I got one real a week.

Dolores: There was a strike all over Catalunya in 1919. I first went to work around the time it was over, when I was 15. I was always a good administrator and never needed luxuries. The little money I had seemed to multiply in front of me; I'm not sure how. My father said, "Why don't you become a teacher?" I said, "Me, a teacher? Around kids all day long? No!" So he said: "I could help you set up a vegetable stand..." "With all the poverty in Ripoll, I'd give it all away. It wouldn't be worth it." "Well, what do you want to do, you have to do something?" "I want to go to work in a factory so I can protest."

Narration #4: In the mills, the metal, building and printing trades, union activity had been growing. Government authorities and

chance. Because they were three years of instruction and lessons. Just one year represented ten in the life of a person. I mean, we lived those years intensely. It was constant struggle, revolution, emancipation; where people could finally say, "Go to Hell!" to the boss who had exploited them for years. Where you realize that freedom is necessary.

That was what those three years of war meant. Through all the misfortunes, all the struggles we had, even with bombs bursting, we continued going to the unions, everywhere, we didn't hide. We didn't even go to the bomb shelters. Like I said, three years that I wouldn't want to have missed.

Lola: The thousands of women, thousands, who were executed during the war, should live on in eternal memory. Not just the prisoners, but those who were executed. There was one, only an example of the many, Soledad Amaros from Almoradi, a small village in Alicante. When they told her she was going to be shot, she said, "Let me get dressed." She went to her cell, dressed herself well, put on make-up; and when she entered the patio where they were about to shoot her, she shouted, "Companeras, they are sending me to my death. Long live freedom!"

Narration #21: By early 1939 the last antifascist front fell...and the number of executions continued mounting.

Suceso: I was in' Spain until the last moment. I left with the fascist rifles already pointing at us. But I was lucky; I got out.

Narration #22: More than half a million people fled across the Pyrenees without any idea of how long their exile would last.

Dolores: We took the train to Puigcerda. We were there for two days. One day there was a bombing. Carlos was terribly afraid of planes. He got away from me. I managed to find him in the shelter, by a miracle. I thought they would kill him. That was the twenty-sixth of January. On the twenty-eighth we crossed the border at Bourg-Madame.

Dolores: At the first border control I thought to myself, "You're in France now. Pretend he's your son." We got up to the gate. He

Federica: In the government ministry I did What I could: set up homes and camps for children, converted former mansions into homes for older people, and centers for women to learn a-Skill so they could leave prostitution. Most important was the attempt to extend unconditional legal abortion from Catalunya to the rest of the country.

Dolores: The fascists were bombing Madrid, so women and children were being evacuated There wasn't enough food in the towns so the union suggested that the families that could, take in a child. I told the committee I wanted a little one.

I remember the day. they arrived. It was November and raining. hard. We went to the auditorium in the Town Hall to pick up the children. The committee said, "We have a problem. There's a girl here with her three brothers. They don't want to be separated. But I said, "There's nobody who can take four." I was up in the top gallery with two neighbors. I knew that one wanted an older child, the other, a girl. And I wanted a young one. But they had already given one away—to some Republicans, very good people. So that was taken care of. I asked to be called on. "It's solved: Leonor can take the girl, our other neighbor, the older boy, and me, the small one."

Dolores: And that's how we worked it out. When it was over I went to pick him up. He was all covered in chocolate. They had just gotten a snack. He was little, but very sharp. He was wearing overalls and slippers. I carried him in my arms so his feet wouldn't get wet. He was five years old. You can see how strong I was. I asked him his name and in a very pure Castilian, he said, "Carlos Fernandez Medrano. And you?" Right away he addressed me informally. "I'm Dolores." He said, "I think we're going to become good friends." I said, "Me too."

Pepita: I lived that period of CNT union struggles, the revolution, the anarchist youth: groups, during three years of war. And I want to make it perfectly clear that those were three years that I would have wanted to live through if I hadn't already had the

factory owners responded with repressive, often violent tactics. Given this chaotic situation, some elements among the workers felt that certain strategic acts of violence were their only recourse. Most workers did not, but were frequently jailed anyway.

Sara: There were so many prisoners in those days that they took my father and many others to the slaughterhouse. The jail was full. They lined them up, handcuffed from behind, and the policeman who my father had punched, walked down the row, saying, "Where's that blond son of a bitch who hit me?" And when he got to my father, whose hands were tied, my father kicked him. That, of course, got him the death penalty; for rebelling against authority. The death penalty wasn't just given for one's ideals, but, for being an anarchist, and having rebelled against the authorities.

Lola: My house was a refuge then. It was almost 1920, with the repression under the governor of Barcelona province, Martinez Anido. My house was a shelter for men who were wanted by the law. We had pamphlets and propaganda there as well.

Concha: I grew up in a house where that's all we knew. Ever since I was old enough to reason, I lived in an atmosphere of anarchist ideology. My father was an anarchist all his life; how could I have turned out differently?

Lola: I always bore a kind of internal drama because of my "extralegal" birth in those days. With those men I felt accepted and 'protected. I didn't feel like less of a person. And this acted as an impetus for me to begin to learn about anarchism.

Dolores: I joined the CNT because I saw that the other union, the UGT, was more middle class...I saw the revolutionaries in the CNT. So I joined the CNT.

Narration #5: Since 1910, the Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo, the CNT, was the trade union based on anarchist principles, independent of any political party. In 1923 the Primo de Rivera dictatorship declared all unions illegal. Union activity, however,

continued clandestinely.

Concha: They tried to send me to school, but my father was in prison half the time. So we might go for a few months, then they'd arrest my father again, and there would be no money. So we'd have to leave again. When he got out, we'd find another school, another two or three months, and the same thing all over again. So by the time I was fourteen, I'd had practically no-education.

Narration #6: Hortensia Torres talks about the atmosphere at home when she was a child.

Hortensia: I think it was the sum of everything I experienced at home: my father was a dreamer, my mother, even more so. They loved literature. They read a lot, aloud for the children. And we always took part in conversations. When they spoke they didn't make distinctions between children and adults. We were all equal when we talked around the table. Nor did they explain things this way to one and that way to another.

Federica: My mother was already an anarchist activist. She wrote in all of the libertarian papers of the time, mostly in the Free-thought weeklies. She took part in events with Fernando Tarrida del Marmol, Anselmo Lorenzo, and Pedro Esteve. It was an exceptional thing for that time, for a woman to travel and give speeches accompanied by three men. Imagine what that meant at the end of the last century.

Narration #7: Soledad Gustavo and Federico Urales were Federica Montseny's parents.

Federica: I first began in the CNT writing for various periodicals: Nueva Senda in Madrid, Redencion of Alcoy, Accion Social Obrera in San Feliu de Guixols. And above all, Solidaridad Obrera, the major anarchist newspaper, where I was already an editor. It lasted briefly because of Primo de Rivera's rise to power. But in spite of the dictatorship, my parents continued publishing the Revista Blanca, which they had refounded in 1923.

more widespread, with an estimated 1,700 agrarian collectives throughout Spain, directly involving over three million people.

Hortensia: In the collectives there was a lack of manpower because so many young men were at the front, but there was solidarity and mutual aid. We didn't operate with money; it was all a matter of barter: of work, of goods, exchange in every sense. When there was a meeting, or a talk, it was held in a place where all the collectives could attend, to assure that nobody was left out. So, for example, if the grapes ripened earlier in one area, all the nearby collectives were notified. And if there were no other problems, we'd all go to harvest those fields. Sometimes it would strike you funny in a meeting when they'd say, "My borasas." (Translation note: Borasa is the Catalan word for the tarp used to collect falling nuts from a tree.) They still hadn't developed the consciousness to say, "Our borasas." Or my horse, instead of our horses. But that was about the worst, after all, they did need time to change. It doesn't happen overnight.

One of the things that many of the people didn't understand was that one of the first to join the collective was one of the richest farmers in the village, a single man, who later was murdered by the fascists. But he had a conviction about anarcho-syndicalism and collectivization that the others lacked. They wondered, what was someone who had everything doing in a collective? Collectives were for people who didn't have anything and this way at least they could eat.

Generally there weren't any problems about who was working more or less. There's always someone who'll try to get away with doing less. That can happen anywhere and under any circumstances. The fact is that the collectives continued successfully. The men were fighting the war, because by then we knew that the revolution was lost.

Narration: #20 In the midst of the war four members of the CNT entered the government. Federica Montseny was appointed Minister of Health.

factory, but working at their jobs too. And we went to talk to the technical director, who was a young French engineer with two or three diplomas. We said, "From now on things will be different. You will continue to oversee the technical functioning of the factory, and that we have the necessary materials. And we'll take care of the rest."

Concha: I realized that maybe I could do something more useful in the rear-guard. So I came back to Barcelona. It was one hell of an odyssey trying to find appropriate work. I was in a childcare center, but didn't last more than two weeks; it wasn't for me. I got very depressed. There were other jobs, but I didn't feel satisfied with any of them. So my brother, who was working in a weapons plant, suggested I come there. I did, and I saw proof of how well collectives could work.

It had been a small workshop before, employing thirty people. We built another floor. There were maybe a hundred people on each shift. We had three shifts a day so we didn't have to stop the furnaces. The workers were content because they earned good wages. There was even a cash overflow. We organized a small cooperative to find food, which was distributed among all the workers. Some of us also went to the nearby villages to look for food we couldn't get in Barcelona. And that too was distributed.

Dolores: When I was secretary of the union, I said to the council, "Let's have a joint meeting with the UGT to find a solution to the unemployment problem." Because I Couldn't understand why anyone should be out of work if the workers are in charge. So we held a joint meeting in the Town Hall. And we decided to distribute the ones without jobs in the various factories.

Narration #19: Each workplace created its own structure, the results were increased efficiency and productivity, reduced hours, and a process of equalization of pay.

In Catalunya collectivization included most factories, utilities, and transport. Other collectivization was realized in Valencia, Castilla, Aragon and Andalucia. Rural collectivization was far

At home we produced an enormous amount of work, publishing...books written by my father, Reaccion y revolucion by Pi i Margall, the great works of literature of the nineteenth century. Works by Brandes, Nettlau, Kropotkin. Who knows just how much came out of that house. The two people who carried out all of that work were my mother and Maria.

Narration #8: Placing great importance on education, the anarchists founded their own schools. They adopted new ideas like those based on Francisco Ferrer Guardia's Modern School, encouraging the development of children's native curiosity and initiative.

Narration #9: Hortensia Torres was a student in the rationalist school that her father directed.

Hortensia: And that flat was ideal. There was space to live in, and space for the school. Next door we had an open field, because back then there were still a lot of unconstructed areas; and that field served as our schoolyard. The parents, the older children, everyone, came to work to help the teacher. They built the desks and drawing boards, everything. All by hand so it would come out much cheaper. And then the education problems of our community ended, because we had a school that the authorities couldn't close down.

Narration #10: Politically and socially the 30's brought an atmosphere of opening up. Ten years of dictatorship under a monarchical system gave way to the election of the Second Republic. Union activity again became legal and helped foster an environment of 'hope for social change for the working class.

Narration #11: Pepita Carpena, from the Barcelona neighborhood of Pueblo Seco, joined the union when she was 13.

Pepita: Those union men from the CNT didn't just say, "Companeras, try to earn one more peseta and you can live better." They educated us. They said that there was more to life than fighting for another peseta. But how could we educate ourselves? Parallel to the unions, there were the Anarchist Youth Organization

and the ateneos (the workers' cultural centers) where they gave literacy Courses.

Hortensia: To learn how to run meetings, how to get to know one another, how to express ourselves, and do it clearly in front of others. Because ignorance breeds timidity. That shyness, that keeps you from opening your mouth, even though you've got something to say. And that's what they learned in the ateneos, to say, "I don't understand this; what does that mean?"

My father used to give talks on subjects suggested by the young people. Well, there were people there who didn't understand a thing he was talking about. But they had the patience to listen until the end. And when everyone had gone, they'd say to him, "Now could you please explain what all that meant?" And the talk he had just finished was nothing compared to what began afterwards. He would sit and explain everything, so that they finally began to understand. And the result was, that the next time, they understood much better.

Concha: The conflicts at home started once I got involved with the youth group at the ateneo. It was such a full life; every day there was something to do. One day our theatre group, another day an excursion (frequently there were excursions out of the city), another day general education or Esperanto. There was something every night. My father, having lived a life of workers' struggle, of course understood, but my mother didn't. Freedom for a woman wasn't what it is now. A young woman who went out every night was looked down on. We argued daily, so much so, that I finally had to leave home.

Narration #12: Lola Iturbe published articles, and with her companionero, Juan Manuel Molina, edited the newspaper *Tierra y Libertad*.

Lola: It's important to emphasize the influence of the publications edited by *Tierra y Libertad* and the *Revista Blanca*. You could say they ignited all of Spain. And one sensational thing occurred one May first in Barcelona when there was a book fair. And for the

Concha: I think we did useful work while we were in La Zaida.

Despite the fact that we felt obliged to fight a war we didn't want, we talked with the people. We explained that what we did want was a social revolution. And we explained exactly why. Also, we formed a kind of cooperative there to exchange goods with other villages. If one didn't have oil, for instance, another would bring it in exchange for what they lacked. Collectivization hadn't yet begun.

Suceso: We weren't fighting fascism in the ordinary sense of one side against another, struggling for control, no. We were fighting for a more just and humane society. And to create a more just and humane society, we felt that women's participation was necessary. We understood then, as we still do, that both angles of vision, that of men, and that of women would converge in the formation of a new society, you can never make a revolution. That revolution implies a basic change in social principles to create a society which functions for the benefit of all.

Sara: When I came back in the afternoon, the whole committee was in a meeting. So I didn't enter, for fear that they didn't want me to come in again like that morning. They called me, and sat me down next to the secretary. "Look, " they said, "we know you're very brave, and that you've always done everything well and that..." I said, "Well now I know. You don't have to tell me. They've killed my 'father.'"

Dolores: It seemed like the earth had swallowed up all the factory owners on July 19th. They hadn't been killed either, because in 1939 they all sprang right up. They just disappeared.

Narration #18: In this emergency situation, the workers collectivized factories and public services.

Dolores: The CNT council chose the factory committees. Three of us on the committee were also in charge of distribution of the workers. If something went wrong, they'd come to us. Also, there were two members for the business council, one from the CNT, the other from the UGT. They represented the interests of the

something for the revolution, come with me.” And he took me to-the neighborhood revolutionary committee.

Sara: Concha Perez, yes. She was the only woman from our neighborhood who went to the front.

Concha: Our FAI group got’ together and decided to go to the front, on our own initiative. We left for Sastago. There, we entered a militia company and went to the front in La Zaida. We were in La Zaida for three or four months.

Pepita: I had lived those first three days of the revolution totally enthused. I wanted to go to the front too, and they picked me up in one of the trucks. Durruti, who knew me well, said, “Hey little one, where are you going?” They called me the little one. Then he said, “No, no, no, you’ll be needed right here, because when we go to the front, there will be a lot of work to do in the rearguard.” And he was right.

Teresina: By the nineteenth of July, in Terrassa we had already formed a good group of women, capable of getting things done. We met on the twentieth, and decided we needed a hospital in Terrassa for the wounded coming from the front. Since nobody else was doing anything, we started it ourselves.

Narration #17: Mujeres Libres published a periodical. They worked in the rearguard organizing communal dining rooms, childcare centers and camps for refugee children. They proposed creating centers for women who wanted to leave prostitution. They created centers for general and technical education. With the CNT and the Anarchist Youth Organization, they trained women to take over jobs in industry, transportation, and daily life.

Suceso: I think this is a unique case. I don’t know about other countries, but in Spain, never before had there been an organization of people, who society had so totally ignored and denied an education, that could react in such a magnificent way. Thousands and thousands of women learned to read in schools formed by Mujeres Libres. They learned skills, they learned to deal with what was happening around them.

first time, they set up an anarchist book stand, a big one, exclusively from the publishing house of Tierra y Libertad. There were a few young women who picked up some pamphlets by Doctor Lazarte and were saying: “The sexual freedom of our times, the sexual freedom of our times.” You can well imagine what a Sensational thing that was then. Because it was the first time that anarchism came out on the street, not in a violent form, but as a cultural thing.

Hortensia: It’s a work of titans. But, all this helped shape the men and women of 1936, of July 19th. Because if it hadn’t been for this work of titans which had been going on for many years before, we wouldn’t have gotten as far as we did in ’36.

Narration #13: Suceso Portales, from Extremadura, who was an organizer with the first autonomous working class women’s organization, Mujeres Libres (Free Women), intimately tied to the anarchist movement, talks about one of its founders, Lucia Sanchez Saornil.

Suceso: Lucia was a telephone operator and a member of the CNT. After the big telephone strikes in 1931 she realized that most women were not really participating. That there was a lot of work to be done if women were to start taking the initiative to educate themselves, to contribute to the movement, to stand up for themselves.

Sara: When Mujeres Libres was first formed I couldn’t see the need for it. It seemed to me that men and women had to work together as we do in daily life; that the struggle for freedom involved us both equally. So I thought, what were women going to do on their own? In my case, for example, when I was in the neighborhood revolutionary committee, I was usually the only woman in the office except for the first few days of the revolution when the People’s Committees were there. I was just one of the rest.

Suceso: When we went to the villages, we’d invite all the women to a discussion about what Mujeres Libres was trying to do. It was so impressive with the way they opened up. Many of them didn’t

know how to read or write. And they came up with some very concrete questions about women's situation and what could be done. It was beautiful to see.

Sara: A meeting was announced for Mujeres Libres. Two or three companeros came in and started making fun of Mujeres Libres in a very obnoxious way, putting them down in a way that turned my insides. "What do women have to say in a meeting?" But I thought, "A woman has as much right to speak in a meeting, or anywhere else, as a man." Well, these three young men came to the meeting. Afterward there was an open discussion. Boy, did I let them have it then! Everything I had ever held inside came pouring out.

Narration #14: Pepita Carpena was also involved in the organization created in 1936 by Lucia Sanchez Saornil, the doctor Amparo Poch and the journalist Mercedes Comaposada.

Pepita: Lucia Sanchez Saornil spoke to us about liberation and about her own life. To me, she seemed different. Later I learned, because she never hid it, she always assumed the responsibility, that she was a lesbian and lived with another woman.

I also want to mention that Mercedes Comaposada gave us lessons. She taught Spanish to all the companeras. We had left school very young, and although now it's probably hard to believe, back then we were semi-illiterate. At twelve we knew little more than the basics of reading and writing.

Narration #15: The problems the Republic faced were enormous. The semi-feudal agrarian structure demanded reform, the Church continued to be a major political power as in centuries past, Spain's dependent economy relied heavily on foreign capitalist interests. And the background against which Spain moved was a worldwide depression. The government's response to the 1934 uprising of the Asturian miners was a glaring example of repression.

Lola: They set up some very interesting experiments in communal organization or work in the mines. But the government realized

just how important this was, that it was not just another uprising. The miners were initiating a true social revolution. So they sent all their troops, including the foreign legion, to Asturias. And in a few days, they suffocated the movement.

Narration #16: When the Spanish went to the polls in February 1936, they elected a coalition government of left and liberal Republicans: the Popular Front. For the right-wing sector of the military, church and propertied classes, the prospect of political and social reforms was too great. On July 18, four generals launched a coup against the Republic.

Pepita: They call it the eighteenth of July, because that's the day of the insurrection. But the CNT, who already knew that 'the generals were going to attack, was out on the street on the nineteenth of July.

Federica: The fact is that the major single force, which inspired the most fear in the army, the state and the capitalist system, was the CNT.

Lola: There was a total change in the atmosphere of the street. People dressed differently, talked differently. Cars honked out CNT, CNT, FAI. People who had never met, called each other "comrade".

Pepita: It was in the old fortress of Atarazanas near the port. in Barcelona, where they attacked us on the nineteenth of July. It only lasted three days, because we beat them. From there, we went to the Ramblas where the first columns of the peoples' militia left to go to the front. The metal trades unions constructed the first armored tanks, from whatever materials they could find.

Sara: My father came home and said, "Look, Sara, we're going to the front, but don't tell your mother until after I've gone. I don't want her to get upset. You'll know that I won't come back right away, but it'll be alright." So I wanted to go with him. I was sixteen and a half, no seventeen. "No", he said, "only men go to the front." And I said, "But I want to come too. I want to do something for the revolution." So he said; "O.K., if you want to do