

The Anarcho-Statists of Spain:

An Historical, Economic, and Philosophical Analysis of Spanish Anarchism

by

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**In the spirit of F.A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* , I dedicate
this essay to anarcho-socialists of all factions.**

Preface

In "Looking Back on the Spanish War," George Orwell writes, "I have little direct evidence about the atrocities in the Spanish civil war. I know that some were committed by the Republicans, and far more (they are still continuing) by the Fascists. But what impressed me then, and has impressed me ever since, is that atrocities are believed in or disbelieved in solely on grounds of political predilection. Everyone believes in the atrocities of the enemy and disbelieves in those of his own side, without ever bothering to examine the evidence." The same remark applies with equal force to much of the recent debate about the behavior of the Spanish Anarchists during the Spanish Civil War. Seeing that it was very difficult to unravel the truth behind the conflicting accounts and citations, I decided to look at the evidence for myself. The following essay is the product of my investigations. Quotations may sometimes seem overlong, because I avoided cutting them whenever possible to eliminate any suspicion of creative editing.
--Bryan Caplan

**"Suffer no man and no cause to escape the undying
penalty which history has the power to inflict on
wrong."**

--Lord Acton, "The Study of History"



If you would like to volunteer to translate this essay into Spanish, please e-mail me at bdcaplan@princeton.edu.

1. Introduction

The Spanish fascists used barbaric methods throughout the Spanish Civil War in order to establish a brutal dictatorship.[1] The Spanish Communists used similar wartime measures in their failed effort to give birth to an even more totalitarian regime.[2] But many discussions of the Spanish Civil War overlook, minimize, or apologize for the atrocious behavior and tyrannical aspirations of perhaps the most powerful faction of the Spanish Republicans: the Anarchist movement.

The present essay aims to redress the balance. It first summarizes the historical details of the Anarchists' behavior during the Spanish Civil War, scrutinizing both the behavior of the upper echelons of the Anarchist movement as well as the rank-and-file militants. The essay then examines the economics of Anarchist-controlled Spain, focusing on both the policies adopted, their aims, and the results. I conclude with a philosophical dissection of the Spanish Anarchist movement, showing that their horrific behavior was largely the result of their incoherent view of human freedom, their unsuccessful attempt to synthesize socialism and liberty, and their uncritical and emotional way of thinking.



2. History and the Spanish Anarchists

Many recent discussions of the Spanish Anarchists center around Ronald Fraser's *Blood of Spain* [3]. While the present essay uses Fraser as a source, there is always a concern in a work of oral history that the experiences of the (necessarily small) number of people interviewed may not be representative. Instead, my primary reference source for the history of the Spanish Anarchists is Burnett Bolloten's *The Spanish Civil War* [4]. Bolloten's objectivity and clarity enjoy widespread approbation, even by many informed individuals highly sympathetic to the Spanish Anarchists. Noam Chomsky praises Bolloten's work in "Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship," and relies heavily upon Bolloten's earlier, less developed work throughout that essay.[5] Bolloten was moreover the key historian who documented the Communists' atrocities against the Spanish Anarchists, and one of the first historians to demonstrate that contrary to the propaganda of the Republican government, the Spanish Anarchists experimented with radical social changes on a vast scale during the war. Finally, Bolloten's objectivity speaks for itself, for he takes painstaking effort to confirm every fact and carefully note the existence of any conflicting evidence.

A. The Militants and Terror

In July of 1936, officers throughout Spain tried to orchestrate a coup d'état against the Republican government.[6] In Catalonia, Aragon, and other areas, Anarchist militants defeated the military uprisings. Finding themselves more powerful than the regional governments and possibly the central government, the Spanish Anarchists seized the moment to implement some radical changes in those regions of Spain where they had a large following.

One of these radical changes was the beginning of large-scale murders of people believed to be supporters of the Nationalists. In most cases, these supporters had taken no specific action to assist the Nationalist rebellion; they were singled out for their beliefs, or what people guessed their beliefs were. As Bolloten explains:

"The courts of law were supplanted by revolutionary tribunals, which

dispensed justice in their own way. 'Everybody created his own justice and administered it himself,' declared Juan Garcia Oliver, a leading Anarchist who became minister of justice in November 1936. 'Some used to call this "taking a person for a ride," [paseo] but I maintain that it was justice administered directly by the people in the complete absence of regular judicial bodies.'"[7] This distinction no doubt escaped the thousands of people who were murdered because they happened to have political or religious beliefs that the Anarchists did not agree with. "'We do not wish to deny,' avowed Diego Abad de Santillan, a prominent Anarchist in the region of Catalonia, 'that the nineteenth of July brought with it an overflowing of passions and abuses, a natural phenomenon of the transfer of power from the hands of privileged to the hands of the people. It is possible that our victory resulted in the death by violence of four or five thousand inhabitants of Catalonia who were listed as rightists and were linked to political or ecclesiastical reaction.'"[8] De Santillan's comment typifies the Spanish Anarchists' attitude toward his movement's act of murder of several thousand people for their political views: it is a mere "natural phenomenon," nothing to feel guilty over.



One of the most influential members of the *Comité Central de Milicias Anti-fascistas*, created in Barcelona soon after the rising in July 1936, was the anarchist Juan Garcia Oliver, responsible for the Committee's War Department.

Bolloten's account of the Anarchist militants' wave of murders is well-corroborated by other sources. Thus, Hugh Thomas' *The Spanish Civil War* (a work which Bolloten takes issue with on a number of points) explains that: "All who could conceivably be suspected of sympathy for the nationalist rising were in danger. As among the nationalists, the irrational circumstances of a civil war made it impossible to lay down what was or was not treason. The worthy died, the unworthy often lived. In East Andalusia, lorries manned by the CNT drove into villages

and ordered mayors to hand over their fascists. The mayors had often to say that they had all fled but the terrorists would often hear from informers which of the better off people were still there, arrest them and shoot them in a nearby ravine." [9] Thomas adds that, "In the vast majority of cases, the murders were of the rank and file of the Right. Often members of the working class would be killed by their own acquaintances for hypocrisy, for having kow-towed too often to their social superiors, even simply for untruthfulness. In Altea, near Alicante, for example, a cafe proprietor was killed with a hatchet by an anarchist for having overcharged for stamps and for the glass of wine that buyers of stamps were forced to take while waiting." [10]

Political belief was not the only kind of heterodoxy which the Spanish Anarchists refused to tolerate. Mere acceptance of theism, typically in its Catholic variant, provoked many of the Anarchist militants to violence. The burning of religious buildings, from cathedrals and churches to convents and monasteries was widespread, as was the murder of priests and nuns. This might puzzle the naive observer; after all, is not the Catholic church a perfect example of a communal, non-profit organization? Is not church property "held in common" by its adherents? At least in theory, the clergy's vow of poverty obliges them to hand over all of their personal property to the Church, which then provides for their needs out of the communal stockpile. The Catholic church seems to satisfy many of the social postulates that the Spanish Anarchists embraced. This did not save the lives of the unfortunate clergy, since militant atheism had been a feature of European anarchism at least since the time of Bakunin, and because the Catholic church had historically allied itself politically with conservative monarchism.

As Bolloten states, "Hundreds of churches and convents were burned or put to secular uses. 'Catholic dens no longer exist,' declared the Anarchosyndicalist organ, *Solidaridad Obrera*. 'The torches of the people have reduced them to ashes.'... 'For the Revolution to be a fact,' ran an Anarchist youth manifesto, 'we must demolish the three pillars of reaction: the church, the army, and capitalism. The church has already been brought to account. The temples have been destroyed by fire and the ecclesiastical crows who were unable to escape have been

taken care of by the people." [11] As Bolloten sums matters up: "Thousands of members of the clergy and religious orders as well as of the propertied classes were killed, but others, fearing arrest or execution, fled abroad, including many prominent liberal or moderate Republicans."

Thomas amply confirms Bolloten's description of the Anarchists' religious persecution and intolerance. "Do you still believe in this God who never speaks and who does not defend himself even when his images and temples are burned? Admit that God does not exist and that you priests are all so many hypocrites who deceive the people': such questions were put in countless towns and villages of republican Spain. At no time in the history of Europe, or even perhaps of the world, has so passionate a hatred of religion and all its works been shown. Yet one priest who, while 1,215 monks, nuns, and priests died in the province of Barcelona, managed to escape to France through the help of President Companys, was generous enough to admit that 'the reds have destroyed our churches, but we first had destroyed the church.'" [12]

Fraser documents many other instances of the Anarchists' religious intolerance, but also brings out an interesting case in which the Anarchist leader Carod forbade violence against religious buildings and personnel. "You are burning the churches without thinking of the grief you are causing your mothers, sisters, daughters, parents, in whose veins flows Christian, Catholic blood. Do not believe that by burning churches you are going to change that blood and that tomorrow everyone will feel himself, herself an atheist. On the contrary! The more you violate their consciences, the more they will side with the church. Moreover, the immense majority of you are believers at heart.' He demanded that all lives and all property - not only religious - be respected." [13] Note that Carod merely appeals to the strategic folly of persecuting religious believers, since it leads people to "side with the church" (and presumably to side with the Nationalists as well). Carod's argument typifies the Spanish Anarchists' half-hearted self-criticism. One waits in vain for an Anarchist to defend freedom of thought, the individual's right to believe what he chooses; to say, in short, that mere belief is not a crime, but killing

someone for his beliefs is.

None of this implies, of course, that similar atrocities were not committed by the Nationalists and by non-Anarchist forces on the Republican side. It is to be expected that Communists, fascists, and the other bloodthirsty zealots of the 20th century would brutally murder people for their beliefs. One would be surprised if moderate Republicans, moderate Socialists, and moderate monarchists restrained themselves from widespread murder in the midst of a fratricidal civil war. But one would hope that a movement condemning the state for its age-old brutality, and advocating an end to all human domination, would have behaved differently. Instead, it is clear that Anarchist militants were at the vanguard of the murder squads on the Republican side.[14]

Apologists for the Spanish Anarchist movement often claim that the aforementioned killings simply represent the individual decisions of unorganized groups of Anarchist militants, rather than any sort of a party-line policy organized and desired by the Anarchist leadership. Stanley Payne finds the facts of the Republican repression to be rather more complex: "A common distinction between the Red and White terrors in Spain that has sometimes been made by partisans of the left is that the former was disorganized and spontaneous, while the latter was centralized and systematic, continuing throughout the war and long afterward. This distinction is at best only partially accurate. In the early months the Nationalist repression was not at all centrally organized, whereas that in the Popular Front zone had more planning and organization than it is given credit for. This is indicated by the many executions in areas where social conflict was not particularly intense, and by the fact that many of the killings were done by revolutionary militia coming in from other districts. Nor did the political executions in the Republican zone end after the close of 1936, though they did diminish in volume."[15]

In any case, whether the murders were centrally ordered, completely decentralized, or (as is most likely) somewhere in between, what difference does it make? Does it matter if the widespread Nazi attacks on Jews known as the Kristallnacht were centrally organized or "spontaneous"? No; if an ideology categorizes many people as sub-

human, urging ever greater brutality, and recommending restraint only when it is tactically convenient, it is perfectly reasonable to castigate the entire movement centering around that ideology, whether that movement be Nazism or Spanish Anarchism. It is quite clear that the rhetoric of the Spanish Anarchists focused on crushing the enemies of the workers by any means necessary; safeguarding the rights of innocent people who happened to despise everything Anarchism stood for was simply not on their agenda. Fraser's interview of Juan Moreno, a CNT day-laborer, merits notice: "'We hated the bourgeoisie, they treated us like animals. They were our worst enemies. When we looked at them we thought we were looking at the devil himself. And they thought the same of us.'" [16] Bolloten similarly notes, "According to Perez-Baro [a former member of the CNT who played a prominent role in the collectivization movement in Catalonia], thirty to forty years of revolutionary propaganda had made employers appear in the eyes of the workers not as 'class enemies,' but as 'personal enemies,' which resulted in a series of abuses against them." [17] In short, it is perfectly just to impugn the Anarchist movement as a whole for the numerous atrocities of its members, because these actions flowed logically from the central ideas of the movement rather than their misinterpretation by extreme fringe groups.



B. The Leaders and Collaboration

The complicity of the Spanish Anarchist leadership in the aforementioned atrocities is sometimes hard to untangle; obviously, most of the murder orders were not publicly recorded. However, public records concerning the Anarchist leadership's record of collaboration with the central and regional governments throughout Spain provides ample documentation of a long series of abuses and betrayals of whatever good principles the Anarchist movement held dear.

At the outset it is necessary to give some background on the pre-war organization of the Anarchists, which its supporters frequently claim was extraordinarily democratic. From at least 1927 on, the democratic procedures of the CNT were frequently compromised by a special faction known as the FAI, which Bolloten describes as the CNT's "ideological guide, whose mission was to protect the CNT from deviationist tendencies and to lead the trade-union federation to the Anarchist goal of libertarian communism." [18] Bolloten properly notes that many of the Spanish Anarchists would violently dispute this claim, but insists that the facts do not support them. "The FAI

attempted to accomplish its directive mission by virtue of the fact that its members, with few exceptions, belonged to the CNT and held many positions of trust. It was an established principle that any person belonging to a political party should not occupy any official position in the trade-union organization. The FAI, moreover, kept a close and constant supervision over the unions of the CNT, often threatening to use force to prevent deviationist trends when argument failed. To be sure, this domination - or at least attempted domination - by the FAI was not always openly acknowledged by the CNT and FAI and indeed was at times emphatically denied, but it was frankly admitted after the Civil War by other leaders of the CNT." [19] Fraser corroborates Bollothen's remarks. Josep Costa, a CNT textile worker explains, "The FAI was acting like a political group within the CNT, talking of liberty and acting like dictators..." [20] Sebastia Clara, a dissident treintista CNT member, adds, "Before the 1920's, the CNT was an organization in which the masses could express themselves democratically. Afterwards, this was no longer the case. Things changed with the creation of the FAI in 1927. It was they who now imposed their decisions..." [21] While this burgeoning authoritarianism in the guise of democracy makes it easy to understand how the Anarchist leadership often deviated from the viewpoint of the rank-and-file, the fact that the FAI was noted for its ideological purism makes its numerous deviations all the more puzzling.

While the CNT and especially the FAI repeatedly condemned political participation before the Civil War, it was simple to induce CNT leaders to accept ministerial positions in the central government. Initially, Prime Minister Caballero offered the CNT a single seat, which the CNT national plenum rejected. This was no principled rejection, however; the Anarchist put forward a compromise resolution according to which "'auxiliary commissions' were to be set up in each ministry comprising two representatives of the CNT, two of the UGT, two of the Popular Front parties, and one government delegate. This project would have spared the CNT the embarrassment of direct participation in the cabinet, but would nonetheless have given it representation in every branch of government." [22] This proposal failed; the next Anarchist initiative was to advocate "that the government should be replaced by a national council of defense composed of five members of

their organization, five of the UGT, and four members of the Republican parties." [23] Bolloten cites one Anarchist's acerbic critique of this Orwellian attempt to avoid joining the government by calling it something different: "'The purpose of this purely nominal change was to reconcile their fervent desire to enter the government with their antistate doctrine. What childishness! A movement that had cured itself of all prejudices and had always scoffed at mere appearances tried to conceal its abjuration of fundamental principles by changing a name... This behavior is as childish as that of an unfortunate woman, who, having entered a house of ill fame and wishing to preserve a veneer of morality, asks to be called a hetera instead of a whore.'" [24]

The Anarchists tried this tactic for about a month until CNT national secretary Horacio Prieto, who favored direct participation in the Popular Front government, prevailed. "Horacio Prieto decided to 'put an end to the last elements of opposition,' within the CNT and convoked a plenary session of the regional federations for 18 October. This time his arguments prevailed. The plenum accorded him full powers to conduct negotiations 'in his own way' in order to bring the CNT into the government. 'I was convinced,' he wrote after the war, 'of the necessity of collaboration, and I smothered my own ideological and conscientious scruples.'" [25] The end result of Prieto's dealings with the government was that the CNT won control of the ministries of justice, industry, commerce, and health. Bolloten notes and amply documents his remark that, "Not only did this decision represent a complete negation of the basic tenets of Anarchism, shaking the whole structure of libertarian theory to the core, but, in violation of democratic principle, it had been taken without consulting the rank and file." [26] This violation would not be the last one, as shall be seen.

The Anarchists were even more eager to assume governmental powers in Catalonia, where they were strong enough to overshadow the regional Catalanian government, the Generalitat. Rather than officially enter the Catalanian government, the Anarchists chose to retain the Generalitat as a legal cover; but real power shifted into the hands of the Anarchist-controlled Central Anti-Fascist Militia Committee. Bolloten indicates that for all practical purposes this Committee was *the* government of Catalonia under a new name: "the committee

immediately became the de facto executive body in the region. Its power rested not on the shattered machinery of the state but on the revolutionary militia and police squads and upon the multitudinous committees that sprang up in the region during the first days of the Revolution. The work of the militia committee, attests Abad de Santillan, himself a member, included the establishment of revolutionary order in the rear, the creation of militia units for the front, the organization of the economy, and legislative and judicial action." [27] After a few months the Anarchists formally entered the Generalitat, mainly because the central government seemed unwilling to provide weapons to any other Catalan organization.

It should be further noted that these Anarchist-run councils and committees were not mild-mannered minimal states, maintaining order while allowing the workers to organize themselves as they pleased. They were "modern" states, concerning themselves with the economy, education, propaganda, transportation, and virtually everything else.

The Anarchists' position in both the central government and in Catalonia slowly but surely declined after they entered into coalition governments with the other anti-Franco factions. A common pattern was for the non-Anarchists to push for some measure that the Anarchists opposed; the Anarchists would resist for a brief period; and finally, the Anarchists would agree to the original measure after changing some of the labels and minor details. By May of 1937, after a mere ten months in power, the Anarchists found themselves outmaneuvered on the national and regional levels by the Communists and other political enemies.

There were a series of cabinet crises in the regional Catalan government; the resentment of the non-Anarchists, especially the Communists, against the continued de facto Anarchist control of Barcelona burnt ever brighter. While the members of the CNT who held positions in the Catalan government kept trying to reach an understanding with their fellow ministers, the rank and file Anarchists seem to have become increasingly alienated from their leaders.

A raid on the Anarchist-controlled telephone company brought these

feelings to the surface. (The non-Anarchists objected to the Anarchists' use of wiretaps to listen in on important conversations.) The CNT ministers merely demanded the removal of the main people responsible for the raid; but hundreds of the rank-and-file Anarchists responded with rage, setting up barricades. As Bolloten describes matters, "That same night [May 3 -B.C.] the executive committee of the POUM met with the regional committees of the CNT, FAI, and the Libertarian Youth. Julian Gorkin, a member of the executive [of the POUM -B.C.], recalls: 'We stated the problem in these precise terms: 'Neither of us has urged the masses of Barcelona to take this action. This is a spontaneous response to Stalinist aggression...[The regional committees] made no decision. Their maximal demand was the removal of the [police] commissioner who had provoked the movement. As though it were not the various forces behind him that had to be destroyed! Always the form instead of the substance!'"[28]

The Anarchist leadership was, as this quote indicates, out of step with the rank-and-file; they urged the militants to stop the fighting. Their requests were not heeded, as Bolloten notes: "[T]here were forces intent on stoking the conflict. Not only were Rodriguez Salas's men initiating new offensive actions, but the tiny Trotskyist group of Bolshevik Leninists and the dissident Anarchist Friends of Durruti, joined by some of the more militant members of the POUM, were extremely active. While the activists ignored the Anarchist leadership, the CNT ministers desperately tried to hammer out a deal with their fellow ministers in the Generalitat, who were by this point willing to endanger Catalanian autonomy by allowing the armed forces of the central government to re-establish order. All the Anarchists managed to do was to obtain a few delays and haggle over the formation of a new government, while they cajoled the rank-and-file to fall into line. "CNT secretary Mariano Vasquez again begged workers to leave the streets. 'We tell you that this situation must end... We do not want this stigma to fall upon the Spanish Anarchists... This is not the moment, in front of piled-up corpses, to discuss who is right. It is essential that you disappear with your weapons from the streets... We must not wait for others to do so. We must do so ourselves. Afterward we shall talk. If you decide, when you discuss our conduct at our next assembly, that we deserve to be shot, then you may shoot us, but now you must obey

our slogans." [29]

The end result was that the reinforcements from the central government arrived and firmly placed power into the hands of the Generalitat. The power of the Communists was greatly enhanced at both the regional and national levels. A new central government was formed with Juan Negrin as Prime Minister. Bolloten amply documents that Negrin was a willing tool of the Communists, so it should be no surprise that the Anarchists lost all of their positions in the central government. One might think that by this point they would be thoroughly disillusioned with power, but the Anarchists now assumed the degrading role of the political beggar they held for the rest of the war. While condemning Negrin's government as counterrevolutionary, the CNT leadership tried to strike a new deal. When Negrin formed his second government, he threw the CNT a bone by giving them the ministry of education and health. This was enough to retain the CNT's collaboration until the Republic's defeat.

Soon after Negrin's appointment, the CNT lost all its seats in the Catalan regional government. Making a virtue out of necessity, Bolloten notes *Tierra and Libertad* announced that, "The CNT, with more than a million affiliates in Catalonia, is no longer with the government. This is because Anarchosyndicalism cannot get involved with professional politicians and cannot humble itself before anyone... [I]t refuses to defile itself with this kind of dirty politics." [30] In reality, the hangers-on of the CNT tried repeatedly to regain some role in the Catalan government even as Franco's forces prepared to capture Barcelona.

Once the CNT left the government, the Communists intensified their persecution and terrorization of the Anarchists. Moreover, while the Anarchists made up a very large percentage of the Republic's soldiery, the Communists had a vastly disproportionate representation in the officer corps. Thus, the Anarchists allowed themselves to become cannon fodder for the Communists at the front, while the Communist secret police unleashed its hatred against the Anarchists in the rear. As Bolloten describes it, "The spontaneous, undirected terror of the CNT and FAI during the height of the Revolution had now given way to the more sophisticated, centrally directed, and, hence, more fearful terror

of the Communists."[31]

Of course, one might wonder how it was possible for Anarchists to have joined forces with the Communists to begin with. How could the avowed opponents of the very existence of the state join forces with the pawns of the most murderous, totalitarian dictatorship that the world had ever known? Even if moral principle did not deter them, at least the Bolsheviks' propensity to exterminate their Anarchist allies might have given them pause. Even though many Anarchists eventually realized that the defeat of Franco would lead to the establishment of a Soviet satellite state, they kept fighting. Clearly the Anarchists' opposition to the Nationalists dwarfed their distaste for Leninist totalitarianism.

Then again, perhaps the CNT yearned so strongly for power that they were willing to sacrifice many principles for limited authority. After May 1937, they endured considerable humiliation in exchange for a paltry role in the Republican government. Were there any limits to what principles the Anarchists would sacrifice in order to be minor political players? Apparently not. Stanley Payne indicates that the CNT leadership actually tried to strike a deal with the fascists in 1945 and 1946. As Payne explains, a Falangist leader "began negotiations that summer with the new clandestine secretary general of the CNT, Jose Leiva, in Madrid. His goal was to rescue the Falange by gaining the support of opposition anarchosyndicalists for a broader, stronger, and more popular national syndicalism. Franco eventually rejected the CNT's demands, and the negotiations foundered the following year. Suppression of the CNT leadership was renewed."[32] What was the nature of the deal that the CNT sought with the Falange? "According to a report presented to Franco in May 1946, the CNT leadership offered a policy of cooperation, proposing to withdraw from the Giral Republican government- in-exile and accept three Falangists on their national committee, but in return insisted on freedom to proselytize." [33]

This was the Anarchism of the CNT: an Anarchism which not only allied with the Communist totalitarians, but attempted to strike a power-sharing deal with the fascist totalitarians six years after the end of the civil war.

C. The Urban Collectives

Burnett Bolloten was the first mainstream historian to document the radical social changes that occurred in Republican Spain; most earlier historians took the disclaimers of the Republican government at face value, in spite of the fact that the Republicans had every reason to conceal this radicalism in order to win military assistance from Britain and France. Bolloten explains that the CNT and to a lesser extent the UGT took advantage of the chaos to seize control of the means of production:

"In Valencia, a city of over 350,000 inhabitants, nearly all plants, both large and small, were sequestered by the CNT and UGT, as were those in the province of Alicante, while in the region of Catalonia, where the Anarchosyndicalists were in almost unchecked ascendancy during the first months of the Revolution, collectivization in many towns was carried out so thoroughly that it embraced not only the large factories but the least important branches of handicraft. The collectivization movement also infringed upon another preserve of the middle classes. In Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, with a population of nearly 1.2 million, the Anarchosyndicalist workers collectivized the wholesale business in eggs and fish and set up a control committee in the slaughterhouse, from which they excluded all intermediaries; they also collectivized the principal market for fruit and vegetables and suppressed all dealers and commission agents as such, permitting them, however, to join the collective as wage earners. The milk trade in Barcelona was likewise collectivized. The Anarchosyndicalists eliminated as unhygienic over forty pasteurizing plants, pasteurized all milk in the remaining nine, and proceeded to displace all dealers by establishing their own retail outlets."[34]

In fact, this policy of shutting down factories seems to have been as important to the CNT program as collectivizing the remainder. These factory closures were justified by several arguments: they were unhealthy for workers, or unhealthy for consumers, or just plain

"inefficient." As Bolloten explains, "after the first few weeks of widespread and uncoordinated seizures, some of the unions began a systematic reorganization of entire trades, closing down hundreds of small plants and concentrating production in those with the best equipment." [35] It is worth noting that Spain was still in the midst of the Great Depression, with overall Spanish industrial production in 1935 about 13% below the 1929 level. Production in July of 1936 was itself about 18% below the January 1936 level, so the existence of unused capacity is no surprise. [36] What is odd is that in the midst of massive unemployment the Anarchists closed down a large percentage of the remaining firms instead of inviting unemployed workers to join them.

Initially, the workers (rather than an Anarchist nomenklatura) usually assumed control over their places of employment. Quoting Fraser, "one thing dominated the libertarian revolution: the practice of self-management - the workers' administration of their factories and industries." [37] Yet government control quickly followed, or at least tried to. In October, the government of Anarchist-dominated Catalonia passed the Collectivization and Workers' Control Decree, which legally recognized many of the de facto collectivizations.

With government recognition came government regulation, as Fraser indicates: "Works councils, elected by an assembly decision of the workers and representing all sectors of the enterprise, were to administer the collectivized factory, 'assuming the functions and responsibilities of the former board of directors.' A Generalitat representative was chosen, in agreement with the workers, to sit on each council. Collectivized enterprises (and private firms under workers' control) in each sector of industry would be represented in an Economic Federation, in turn topped by a general industrial council which would closely control the whole industry. Fifty percent of a collectivized firm's profit would go to an industrial and commercial credit fund which would have to finance all Catalan industry; 20 per cent was to be put to the collective's reserve and depreciation fund; 15 per cent to the collective's social needs, and the remaining 15 per cent to be allocated by the workers as they decided in a general assembly." [38] Bolloten reports that this measure was "sponsored by the CNT and

signed by its representative in the government, Juan P. Fabregas, the councilor of the economy." [39] Thus, the principle of genuine worker control was quickly cast aside in favor of something much more similar to state-socialism; a mere 15% of the profits were, under the law, under the discretionary control of the workers.

There was some internal opposition to these measures; Fabregas' successor de Santillan indicated hostility to some features, and did not strictly enforce the law. More importantly, there was a huge loophole - firms had to pay a percentage of their *profits*. To eliminate the exaction, one merely need eliminate the profits. With worker control, there is a simple way to do this: keep raising wages until the "profits" disappear. Taxes on profits - which is what the Decree amounted to - will raise revenue if the workers and the owners are different people; but with worker control such taxes are simple to evade. Witness after witness reports the abolition of piece-work, improvement of working conditions, lavish non-wage compensation, and so on. This is initially surprising; if the workers run the factory, don't they pay the price of hampering production? Not if the government taxes away most of the workers' profits. As Thomas states, "[T]he industrial syndicalism of Barcelona kept, unlike the rural anarchists, to individual wages, and did not experiment with family wages. These wages probably increased, it is true, in late 1936 by about a third over July. But the effect was ruined by the inflation, due to a fall in production, shortage of credit, as well as an influx of refugees from Castille and Aragon." [40]

Thus, due to the weak enforcement and easy evasion of government regulations and taxes, it appears that some workers found themselves the new co-owners of their former employers' property. This created vague apprehension among many Anarchists, and experience soon enabled them to articulate their concerns. The Anarchist Jose Peirats aptly described their essential worry: "Fortified in their respective collectives, the industries would merely have replaced the old watertight compartments of capitalism and would inevitably lapse into bureaucracy, the first step in a new society of unequals. The collectives would end up waging the same commercial war against each other with the same combination of zeal and mediocrity that

characterized the old bourgeois businesses. And so they attempted to expand the notion of collectivism to include, in a structural and permanent way, all industries in one harmonious and disinterested body." [41] Joan Ferrer, secretary of the CNT commercial employees' union, was able to confirm Peirats' fear up close. "It came as a psychological shock to some workers to find themselves suddenly freed from capitalist tutelage. Exchanging one individualism for another, they frequently believed that, now that the owners were gone, they were the new owners. Though affecting white-collar workers in this instance, the problem was by no means confined to them..." [42]

In short, after being told that the workers now owned the means of production, the workers often took the statement literally. What is the point of owning the means of production if you can't get rich using them? But of course if some workers get rich, they are unlikely to voluntarily donate their profits to the other members of their class. This seems elementary upon reflection, but only practical experience was able to reveal this to the economic reformers of the Spanish Revolution.

Fraser explains that at a joint CNT-UGT textile union conference, "The woodworkers' union weighed in with its criticism of the state of affairs, alleging that, while small, insolvent workshops were left to struggle as best they could, the collectivization of profitable enterprises was leading to 'nothing other than the creation of two classes; the new rich and the eternal poor. We refuse the idea that there should be rich and poor collectives. And that is the real problem of collectivization.'" [43] Bolloten repeats a remark of CNT militia leader Ricardo Sanz: "[T]hings are not going as well as they did in the early days of the [revolutionary] movement... The workers no longer think of working long hours to help the front. They only think of working as little as possible and getting the highest possible wages." [44] Bolloten attributes this decline in enthusiasm to Communist repression, but it is at least as consistent with the simple observation that people often prefer improving their own lot in life to nourishing revolution.

In short, practical experience gradually revealed a basic truth of

economics for which theoretical reflection would have sufficed: if the workers take over a factory, they will run it to benefit themselves. A worker-run firm is essentially identical to a capitalist firm in which the workers also happen to be the stockholders. Once they came to this realization, however dimly, the Spanish Anarchists had to either embrace capitalism as the corollary of worker control, or else denounce worker control as the corollary of capitalism. For the most part, they chose the latter course.

As Bolloten writes, "[T]he Anarchosyndicalists, contrary to common belief, were not without their own plans for the nationwide control and rationalization of production. Rootedly opposed to state control or nationalization, they advocated centralization - or socialization, as they called it - under trade-union management of entire branches of production. 'If nationalization were carried out in Spain as the Socialists and Communists desire,' said one Anarchist newspaper, 'we should be on the way to a dictatorship, because by nationalizing everything the government would become the master, the chief, the absolute boss of everyone and everything.'"[45] The Anarchist solution for this danger of absolute dictatorship was to call absolute dictatorship by a different name. "In the opinion of the Anarchosyndicalists," explains Bolloten, "socialization would eliminate the dangers of government control by placing production in the hands of the unions. This was the libertarian conception of socialization, without state intervention, that was to eliminate the wastes of competition and duplication, render possible industrywide planning for both civilian and military needs, and halt the growth of selfish actions among the workers of the more prosperous collectives by using their profits to raise the standard of living in the less favored enterprises."[46] Of course, one could refuse to call a union with such fearsome powers a "state," but it would need all of the enforcement apparatus and authority of a state to execute its objectives. The "more prosperous collectives," for example, would be unlikely to submit voluntarily to industrywide planning funded by their profits.

The Nationalists conquered Catalonia before the government made any concerted, official effort to nationalize the workers' factories. But it is doubtful that the government would have met much resistance

from the CNT if and when the nationalization occurred.

Describing the CNT conferences of September 1937 and January 1938, Thomas states: "Although suggestions for reform were canvassed, most ideas put forward sought the improvement of the existing state of affairs; the millenarian aspect of anarchism had almost vanished. What was left seemed no more than a federalist movement, without effective national organization, which gave general, if grudging, support to the government. Under the influence of the realistic ex-secretary-general of the CNT, Horacio Prieto, anarchists were persuaded to accept the idea of nationalization of large industries and banks in exchange for collectivization of small ones, and on the land, as well as the 'municipalization' of local services." [47]

While the formal expropriation of the workers did not occur, the government frequently used its control over the Spanish money and banking system to quietly nationalize the means of production. For ideological reasons, Anarchists had always avoided working in the banking industry, so insofar as workers did control banks, they were members of the Socialist UGT rather than the Anarchist CNT. To obtain credit, Anarchists either had to get a loan from the Socialist-controlled banks, or else receive a bail-out from the central government. Bolloten explains the dilemma of the workers' collectives:

"Another obstacle to the integration of industry into a libertarian economy lay in the fact that a large number of firms controlled by the CNT were in a state of insolvency or semi-insolvency and were compelled to seek government intervention to secure financial aid... Both in Catalonia and in the rest of Republican Spain, this situation created grave economic problems for the CNT collectives. So desperately did some of them require funds that Juan Peiro, the Anarchosyndicalist minister of industry, openly recommended intervention by the central government, having received in his department eleven thousand requests for funds in January 1937 alone." [48]

Fraser and Thomas corroborate Bolloten's analysis. "[T]here were the committees," explains Fraser, "which... simply continued to present

their weekly wage list to the Generalitat, which went on paying them, instead of seeking to get their businesses going." [49] In the footnote, Fraser adds, "This later became institutionalized as the 'pawn bank,' through which the workers of the deficitary enterprises received their wages in return for 'pawning' their company's capital equipment and inventory to the Generalitat - a measure which resulted in giving the latter virtual control of the enterprise." [50] Along similar lines, Thomas writes that, "In all large industries, and in industries important for the war, a state representative sat on the committee. He would be responsible for controlling credit, and sometimes raw materials. His role became more and more important, so that, in some enterprises (particularly the munitions factories), something close to nationalization would soon be achieved." [51] "Outside of Catalonia, the central government... sought to bring all major factories under state supervision, whether nationalized or privately managed. To ensure this, credit was made difficult for anarchist factories, and many other difficulties were put in their way by the government... This occurred even though an anarchist, Peiro, was nominally at the ministry of industry." [52]

Peiro initially tried to push through a decree collectivizing all industry, but Prime Minister Caballero squelched the idea since it would alienate foreign capitalists and their governments. Next, Bolloten explains, "Peiro then redrafted his decree... From the cabinet the decree went to a ministerial commission that, according to Peirats, converted it into a skeleton. 'But the calvary is not over. To put the decree into effect money is necessary, that is, credit must be granted by the minister of finance [Juan Negrin]. He haggles like a usurer and finally grants an insignificant sum... Finally, the Industrial Bank intervenes, which reduces the amount still further.'" [53]

The simplest way that the collectives could have avoided dependence on the government would have been to issue debt; in short, to borrow from the general public rather than the government. But undoubtedly the fear of revealing surplus wealth to lend would make such a scheme impossible. Even if their physical safety were not their concern, investors could hardly expect to ever get their money back. The insecurity of property rights thus made it very difficult to borrow

from the public, so the collectives mortgaged themselves piece by piece to the government until finally the government rather than the workers owned the means of production.

Fraser argues that, "These difficulties might have been palliated if the industrial and commercial fund foreseen by the decree had been rapidly set up, for one of its purposes was to channel funds from the wealthier to the poorer collectives. It was to be financed by a levy of 50 per cent of a collective's profits." [54] Even if enforced, though, almost all sources indicate that profits were almost non-existence; possibly, as I have indicated, because workers were smart enough to realize that raising their wages and improving working conditions was an easy route to avoid any profits tax. Even if this could have prevented the collectives from becoming dependent on the central government, the end result would have been to make them dependent on a union so powerful that it would be a state in everything but name.

Fraser quotes Albert Perez-Baro, a civil servant and a former CNT member: "This truly revolutionary measure [the 50 per cent profits tax] - though rarely, if ever, applied - wasn't well received by large numbers of workers, proving, unfortunately, that their understanding of the scope of collectivization was very limited. Only a minority understood that collectivization meant the return to society of what, historically, had been appropriated by the capitalists..." [55] In other words, most workers assumed that worker control meant that the workers would actually become the true owners of their workplaces, with all the rights and privileges thereof. Only the elite realized that worker control was merely a euphemism for "social control" which in turn can only mean control by the state (or an Anarchist "council," "committee," or "union," satisfying the standard Weberian definition of the state).

D. Militarization

In the early stages of the war, the militant members of various left-wing parties and unions often did battle with members of the rebel Nationalist army. There is no doubt that the CNT's militants stifled military coups in several regions, and were initially the vanguard of the anti-Franco forces. "[T]here was no central military body that

could review the situation on all the battlefronts, formulate a common plan of action, and decide on the allocation of available supplies of men, munitions, arms, and motor vehicles in such a way as to produce the best results on the most promising front," explains Bolloten. "Nor could such central control be expected in the early days of spontaneous activity and individual initiative. 'We all remember,' writes a Republican sympathizer, 'how we began to wage the war. A few friends got together, jumped into a truck or car that they owned or confiscated, one with a rifle, another with a revolver and a few cartridges and took to the highway to look for fascists. When we reached a point where we encountered resistance, we fought, and, when the munitions were exhausted, we generally retreated not to a defensive position... but to our point of departure.'"[56] Bolloten adds the observation that, "To make matters worse, each party and labor union had its own military headquarters that, in most cases, attended to the requirements of its own militia without any knowledge of or regard to the needs or military plans of other units on the same or neighboring sector, least of all distant fronts..."[57]



While all of the militias resisted military discipline to some degree, Bolloten affirms that at first the Anarchist militias resisted it vigorously because they took their ideals seriously: "The CNT-FAI militia reflected the ideals of equality, individual liberty, and freedom from obligatory discipline integral to the Anarchist doctrine. There was no officers' hierarchy, no saluting, no regimentation."[58]

Unfortunately for the Anarchists, this lack of discipline made their militia rather ineffective in spite of their frequent numerical superiority. It did not take long for the Anarchist leadership to decide that military success was more important than the voluntaristic notions of the rank-and-file. *Solidaridad Obrera* soon wrote in favor of the strictest discipline: "'To accept discipline means that the decisions made by comrades assigned to any particular task, whether administrative or military, should be executed without any obstruction in the name of liberty, a liberty that in many cases degenerates into wantonness.'"[59] While many of the rank-and-file resisted, military discipline swiftly became common in the Anarchist militias.

It soon became clear that the Republican government intended to form its own national army. The Anarchist ministers objected; Bolloten notes that in addition to ideological scruples, the Anarchists wanted to keep military dominance in their own hands, and out of the hands of the Communists. To counter this move towards a national army, explains Bolloten, "The CNT-FAI leaders had proposed in September 1936 that a 'war militia' be created on the basis of compulsory service and under the joint control of the CNT and the UGT..."[60] It thus took scarcely two months for the Anarchists to openly advocate conscription - enslaving young men to kill or be killed - so long as the conscripts were forced to risk their lives for the cause of the CNT. (Since the UGT held the loyalty of a far smaller proportion of the working class at this stage, the joint control of the CNT and UGT clearly would have amounted to a junior role for the UGT at best.)

In spite of their presence in the national government, explains Bolloten, "the libertarian movement was unable to use its participation in the government to increase its say in the military field or even curb the progress of the Communists, but rather was obliged in the end to circumscribe its efforts to maintaining control of its own militia units and securing arms from the war ministry."[61] The war ministry had many levers to secure compliance from the Anarchist militias. Not only could they give or deny weapons, supplies, and so on. The government also put the Anarchist militias on the government payroll, and could then threaten to withhold money from any unit that resisted

the government's decisions.

The most important decision the government made was to "militarize" the militias: in short, to absorb them into the government's army and subject them to standard military rule. Most of the militia columns swiftly fell into line, although it is unclear to what extent this was because they were following the orders of the Anarchist leadership, or enticed by the central government's money and weapons. One notable exception was the so-called Iron Column. "No column," explains Bolloten, "was more thoroughly representative of the spirit of Anarchism, no column dissented more vehemently from the libertarian movement's inconsistencies of theory and practice and exhibited a more glowing enmity for the state than the Iron Column..." [62] Bolloten quotes one of the members of the Iron Column, in whose words there is clearly a strong undertone of criticism of the Anarchists working with the government: "'We accept nothing that runs counter to our Anarchist ideas, ideas that must become a reality, because you cannot preach one thing and practice another.'" [63]

Lest one praise their idealism too highly, it should be noted that the Iron Column apparently saw no contradiction between Anarchism and terrorism and robbery. "In the early months of the war," states Bolloten, "it had been able to rely upon its own recruiting campaigns and upon confiscations carried out with the aid of Anarchist-controlled committees in villages and towns behind the lines. '[During] our stay in Valencia,' ran a manifesto issued by the column, 'we noticed that, whereas our negotiations for the purchase of arms had failed, because of the lack of hard cash, in many shops there was a large quantity of gold and other precious metals, and it was this consideration that induced us to seize the gold, silver, and platinum in several jewelers' shops.' 'Around October [1936],' recounts one historian [Rafael Abella -B.C.], 'the column abandoned the front... and went on an expedition in Valencia [which was under Republican control -B.C.] spreading panic in its path. Its goal was to "cleanse the rear of all parasitic elements that endangered the interests of the revolution." In Valencia, it stormed hotels and restaurants, terrifying the city. In a raid on jewelry stores, it seized all the gold and silver it could find.'" [64]

As the central government re-affirmed its authority, such raids on Republican towns became too dangerous; but because the Iron Column continued to lambast Anarchist collaboration with the Popular Front government, the Iron Column found itself unable to obtain resources legally either. The Iron Column continued to refuse militarization, but the central government intensified its pressure on dissenting militias.

"[T]he war ministry had not only decided to withhold arms from all militia units declining to reorganized themselves along the prescribed lines, but had decreed, although in carefully selected language, that the pay of all combatants - which in the case of the militia had previously been handed to each column in a lump sum without supervision and irrespective of structure - would henceforth be distributed through regular paymasters stationed only in battalions. As the decree made no mention of paymasters in units that had not adopted a military framework, it was clear that if the Iron Column were to hold fast to its militia structure the time would soon arrive when all pay would be suspended."[65]

In the end, some members of the Iron Column deserted rather than face militarization (ninety-seven men were denounced as deserters by their fellow Anarchists), while the others caved in and joined the regular army.

To be more precise, most of the Iron Column joined units which, while nominally part of the army of the central government, were actually part of the private fiefdom of the CNT. While the Communists did their best to establish ideologically "mixed" units (hopefully with Communist officers), the Anarchists tried very hard to keep Anarchist soldiers together. So eager was the Anarchist leadership to build up armed forces under its de facto control, that the CNT national congress freely gave its approval to conscription - on one condition:

"Although a CNT national congress decided to agree to the mobilization of the two classes announced by the government, it did so on the understanding that all men with Anarchosyndicalist membership cards should be drafted by the CNT for service in its own militia units. In Catalonia, the

regional committee of the CNT stated with reference to this decision: 'As it would be very childish to hand over our forces to the absolute control of the government... the national congress has decided that all persons in the [two mobilized] classes who belong to our trade-union organization should present themselves immediately to the CNT barracks or, in the absence thereof, to the trade-union or [CNT] defense committees [of their locality], which will take note of their affiliation, their age, their employment, the class to which they belong, their address, and all the necessary facts... This committee will issue militia cards that will be sent to the inscribed comrades, who, of course, will henceforth be at the disposal of the Regional Committee, which will assign them to the column or front selected.'"[66]

In this manner, the Spanish Anarchist abandoned even the pretense of voluntary service in the armed forces. Rather than defend the right of the individual to choose whether or not he wished to join the army at all, the CNT merely did its best to get its fair share of the hapless conscripts.



As the remarks about the Iron Column make clear, the CNT made no attempt to subsist merely on voluntary donations of time and resources. It readily accepted government hand-outs. More importantly, the Spanish Anarchists missed no opportunity to seize

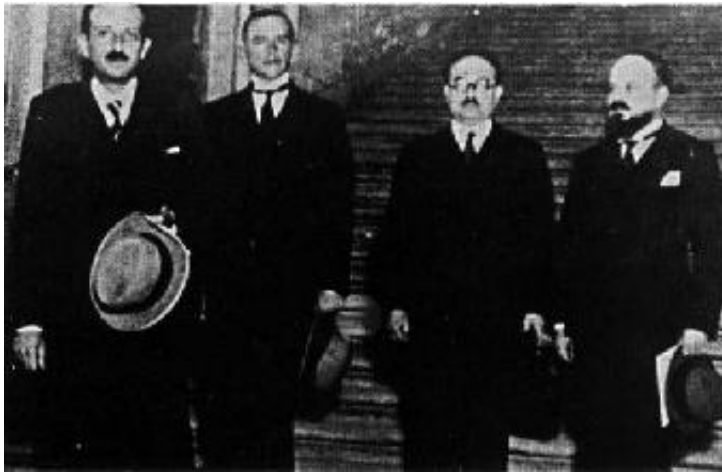
needed resources. In most cases, the Anarchists did so in areas where they were the dominant power; the chaotic looting of the Iron Column was dwarfed by the official looting of the various Anarchist committees and councils. Eventually, though, there is little precious metal and hard currency left to steal, at least in plain sight; the real source of wealth is human beings. As the next section reveals, when the Anarchists realized that food and valuable agricultural commodities could be extorted from forced collectives of terrorized peasants, they saw an opportunity that was simply too good to refuse.

E. The Rural Collectives

In August of 1937, Prime Minister Juan Negrin secretly ordered government forces under the direction of the Communists to dissolve the Council of Aragon, the Anarchist body which exercised de facto rule over Republican-controlled Aragon. One of the primary actions of this Communist-led operation was to break up the Anarchist-controlled rural collectives. To justify their action, the Communists accused the Anarchists of imposing forced collectivization on a hostile peasantry. Considering Stalin's forced collectivization and terror-famine in the Soviet Union only a few years before, this was a curious accusation to make.[67] But make it they did, while the beaten Anarchist movement denounced the Communists for their brutality in the service of counterrevolution. As Bolloten writes:

"'The population of Aragon, especially the peasants,' recounts the official Communist history of the Civil War, 'acclaimed the dissolution of the council with indescribable enthusiasm,' but Ricardo Sanz, the Anarchosyndicalist commander of the Twenty-sixth Division, paints a less radiant picture. The Eleventh Division, he claims, took by assault the official centers in Caspe and arrested the majority of the office workers, dissolving the Council of Aragon by force. 'It took harsh measures against all the villages, attacking the peasant collectives. It despoiled them of everything - work animals, foods, agricultural implements, and buildings - and initiated a fierce repression and persecution of the members of the collective.'"[68]

One would have to be a fool to take Communists at their word. Still, the fact that an accusation originated with the Communists is no reason to bar objective research from verifying the truth of their claims. The Communists were often the originators of reports of German atrocities during World War II; does this mean that any historical study of Nazi concentration camps is suspect? Of course not. It merely means that one must take extra care to find independent sources untainted by the Communists' propaganda machine. (Thus, since Thomas' evidence for the involuntary nature of the collectives comes almost entirely from Communist sources, I omit it.)



The only power to establish diplomatic relations with the Republic during the war was the Soviet Union, whose Ambassador, Marcel Rosenberg (first left) is seen here after presenting his credentials to President Azaña.

With this in mind, I now review the history of the Anarchists and rural collectivization. As before, Burnett Bolloten's *The Spanish Civil War*, widely acclaimed for its objectivity and comprehensiveness, is my most frequent reference. On this particular issue, Bolloten's words carry if possible even greater weight, for it was Bolloten, more than any other historian, who documented the deceptive propaganda and drive for total power of the Spanish Communist movement.

After the attempted military coup in July 1936, there was a revolution in many rural areas somewhat similar to that in urban areas. It should be noted, however, that the power of the CNT was centered in the cities rather than the countryside, so it would be extremely surprising if the rural revolution were as "spontaneous" as the urban revolution. "Very rapidly collectives, in which not only the means of production but also of consumption were socialized, began to spring up," explains Fraser. "It did not happen on instructions from the CNT leadership - no more than had the collectives in Barcelona. Here, as there, the initiative came from CNT militants; here, as there, the 'climate' for

social revolution in the rearguard was created by CNT armed strength: the anarcho-syndicalists' domination of the streets of Barcelona was re-enacted in Aragon as the CNT militia columns, manned mainly by Catalan anarcho-syndicalist workers, poured in. Where a nucleus of anarcho-syndicalists existed in a village, it seized the moment to carry out the long-awaited revolution and collectivized spontaneously. Where there was none, villagers could find themselves under considerable pressure from the militias to collectivize..."[69] Note well Fraser's point that the anarchists in rural Aragon relied heavily on urban Catalanian anarchists to get off the ground. However overstated the Anarchists' claim to represent "the people," was in Barcelona, in rural Aragon such a claim was absurd.

Bolloten gives more details about the initial stages of the rural revolution. "Although no hard and fast rules were observed in establishing libertarian communism, the procedure was more or less the same everywhere. A CNT-FAI committee was set up in each locality where the new regime was instituted. This committee not only exercised legislative and executive powers, but also administered justice. One of its first acts was to abolish private trade and to collectivize the soil of the rich, and often that of the poor, as well as farm buildings, machinery, livestock, and transport. Except in rare cases, barbers, bakers, carpenters, sandalmakers, doctors, dentists, teachers, blacksmiths, and tailors also came under the collective system. Stocks of food and clothing and other necessities were concentrated in a communal depot under the control of the local committee, and the church, if not rendered useless by fire, was converted into a storehouse, dining hall, cafe, workshop, school, garage, or barracks. In many communities money for internal use was abolished..."[70]

It barely took a month for Anarchists to set themselves up as the government of those parts of Aragon under their control, euphemistically dubbing themselves the "Regional Defense Council of Aragon." As Thomas explains, "The collectives established in Aragon - the CNT later claimed that there were 450 of them - held a conference in late September... They set up a regional 'Council of Defense,' composed of CNT members, and presided over by Joaquin Ascaso, a

cousin of the famous anarchist killed in July. This had its seat at Fraga, and thence exercised supreme power over the whole of revolutionary Aragon."[71] The Anarchists angered the other Republican factions by excluding them from the Council of Aragon, but there was little they could do. Thus, while the behavior of the government of Catalonia was a compromise between the Anarchists and other parties, the actions of the government of Aragon reveal the proclivities of undivided Anarchist rule.



Many people fled for fear of their lives. Their land was seized almost immediately. After all, who but a "fascist" would flee? The expropriation of land from anyone too terrified of the new regime to even wait to see what their new life would be like provided the nucleus for the collectives. Bolloten quotes one authority, who explains that, "[A]pproximately one-third of all lands and (since collectivization occurred mainly on arable land) between half and two-thirds of all cultivated land in Republican Spain were seized. By a cruel irony, the victims were predominantly small and medium holders, since most of the latifundio districts had fallen to the Nationalists..."[72] While the Anarchists occasionally spoke of overthrowing feudalism, they did no such thing; feudalism had been largely abolished in Spain by the late 19th-century, as Fraser points out. "In the course of a century, the bourgeoisie continued to extend its holdings until, by the 1930's, approximately 90 per cent of Spain's farm land was in its hands, the rest being owned by the upper nobility."[73]

Farmers who fled for their lives were obviously not voluntary participants in the Anarchists' collectivization experiment. What about the remainder? One of the persistent claims of defenders of the Anarchists' collectives was that the farmers were usually "free to choose": they could either join the collective, or continue to farm individually so long as they hired no wage labor.

The overwhelming majority of the evidence reveals that the collectives' defenders are simply wrong. Bollothen tells us that:

"Although CNT-FAI publications cited numerous cases of peasant proprietors and tenant farmers who had adhered voluntarily to the collective system, there can be no doubt that an incomparably larger number doggedly opposed it or accepted it only under extreme duress."[74]

Bollothen goes on to explain that it was the presence of the Anarchist militia which made collectivization possible. The Anarchist militants, convinced of their superior wisdom, arrived carrying a plan for a new way of life for the farmers:

"'We militiamen must awaken in these persons the spirit that has been numbed by political tyranny,' said an article in a CNT newspaper, referring to the villagers of Farlete. 'We must direct them along the path of the true life, and for that it is not sufficient to make an appearance in the village; we must proceed with the ideological conversion of these simple folk.'"[75] The arrogance and paternalism of these remarks is clear; is there no possibility that the farmers might be right and the Anarchists might be wrong?

Bollothen gives further details; due to the presence of the Anarchist armed forces, "[T]he fate of the peasant owner and tenant farmer in the communities occupied by the CNT-FAI militia was determined from the outset; for although a meeting of the population was generally held to decide on the establishment of the collective system, the vote was always taken by acclamation, and the presence of armed militiamen never failed to impose respect and fear on all opponents." [76]

In answer to the Anarchists' claims that they respected the right not to

join the collective, Bolloten answers that, "The fact is that many small holders and tenant farmers were forced to join the collective farms before they had an opportunity to decide freely. Although the libertarian movement tended to minimize the factor of coercion in the development of collectivized agriculture or even to deny it altogether, it was, on occasions, frankly admitted. 'During the first few weeks of the Revolution,' wrote Higinio Noja Ruiz, a prominent member of the CNT, 'the partisans of collectivization acted according to their own revolutionary opinions. They respected neither property nor persons. In some villages collectivization was only possible by imposing it on the minority.'" [77]

Fraser amply confirms Bolloten's allegations. "There was no need to dragoon them at pistol point: the coercive climate, in which 'fascists' were being shot, was sufficient. 'Spontaneous' and 'forced' collectives existed, as did willing and unwilling collectivists within them." [78] Fraser goes on to explain that rural collectivization was very different from urban collectivization; while the latter was indeed typically carried out by the workers, the former was not. "The collectivization, carried out under the general cover, if not necessarily the direct agency, of CNT militia columns, represented a revolutionary minority's attempt to control not only production but consumption for egalitarian purposes and the needs of the war. In this, agrarian collectives differed radically from the industrial collectives which regulated production only." [79]

Bolloten makes a few statements about the voluntary character of the Anarchist collectives which can be taken out of context to make it appear that Bolloten accepts the apologists' view that rural collectivization was "voluntary." "While rural collectivization in Aragon embraced more than 70 percent of the population in the area under left-wing control, and many of the 450 collectives of the region were largely voluntary, it must be emphasized that this singular development was in some measure due to the presence of militiamen from the neighboring region of Catalonia, the immense majority of whom were members of the CNT and FAI." [80] It is important to realize that Bolloten rightly regards the "voluntary" collectives to have been nearly as coercive as the "forced" collectives:

"However, although neither the UGT nor the CNT permitted the small Republican farmer to hold more land than he could cultivate without the aid of hired labor, and in many instances he was unable to dispose freely of his surplus crops because he was compelled to deliver them to the local committee on the latter's terms, he was often driven under various forms of pressure, as will be shown latter in this chapter, to attach himself to the collective system. This was true particularly in villages where the Anarchosyndicalists were in the ascendant." [81] While the illegality of hiring wage labor seemed perfectly fair to the Anarchist militants, this fact plainly demonstrates that the mere existence of collectives cannot ensure that no one will voluntarily contract to work for a wage-paying capitalist.

Fraser provides evidence that the prohibition against hiring wage labor was often even stricter than it seems. As he summarizes the testimony of one farmer, "But it was the republicans and socialists who did not join the collective whom he pitied most. As long as they worked their land on their own they had no problems, but if they as much as got their brother or a neighbor to lend them a hand, then the trouble started. The 'individualists' were supposed to have only as much land as they could work on their own, and any infringement by calling on outside labour was leapt on." [82] Plainly it is possible to preserve a nominal right to be an "individualist," while in practice imposing so many unreasonable restrictions on them that the independent farmers break down and join the collective.

What were the "various forms of pressure" to which Bolloten alludes?

"Even if the peasant proprietor and tenant farmer were not compelled to adhere to the collective system, life was made difficult for recalcitrants; not only were they prevented from employing hired labor and disposing freely of their crops, as has already been seen, but they were often denied all benefits enjoyed by members. In practice, this meant that in the villages where libertarian communism had been established they were not allowed to receive the services of the collectivized barber shops, to use the ovens of the communal bakery and the means of transport and agricultural equipment of the collective farms, or to obtain supplies of

food from the communal warehouse and collectivized stores. Moreover, the tenant farmer, who had believed himself freed from the payment of rent by the execution or flight of the landowner or of his steward, was often compelled to continue such payment to the village committee. All these factors combined to exert pressure almost as powerful as the butt of the rifle and eventually forced the small owners and tenant farmers in many villages to relinquish their land and other possessions to the collective farms."[83]

It is especially strange that anarcho-socialists, who frequently claim that superficially voluntary interaction (such as the capitalist-worker relationship) is really coercive, so credulously accept the voluntarist credentials of the Anarchist-run rural collectives. At least the worker can try to find another employer; but how "voluntary" was the decision of a farmer to join the collective when he had to sell his crops to a legally protected Anarchist monopsony anyway? If the middlemen and speculators had not been banned by the Anarchists, an independent farmer could always have sold to them if the Anarchists' price was too low.

Even Graham Kelsey, an historian with unbridled sympathy for the Anarchist movement, reluctantly reveals an important prod used to push the hapless peasantry into the collectives. "The military insurrection had come at a critical moment in the agricultural calendar. Throughout lower Aragon there were fields of grain ready for harvesting... At the assembly in Albalate de Cinca the opening clause of the agreed programme had required everyone in the district, independent farmers and collectivists alike, to contribute equally to the war effort, thereby emphasizing one of the most important considerations in the period immediately following the rebellion."[84] The independent farmer, in short, had no option to remain aloof from the Anarchists' cause and do his own thing; even if he could keep his land, a large part of his product belonged to the CNT. The fact that only a small percentage of the Anarchist collectives were called "total," cannot alter the fact that aside from the intense monopolistic pressure wielded by the CNT through its stranglehold over the economy and agricultural markets, an independent farmer still had to "contribute

equally to the war effort."

Fraser relays the testimony of Fernando Aragon and his wife Francisca, "both staunch CNT supporters," which concretizes the overwhelming monopolistic power of the Anarchists over the economy. "Three or four of the peasants with larger holdings tried to leave the collective, but the committee controlled all the sources of seed and fertilizer and there was nowhere, now that money had been abolished, where they could buy what they needed. They had to remain in... But soon he saw that it was not only the reluctant peasants who had no desire to work: it was the twenty-odd committee members - 'where three or four would have been enough,' - of the village committee. The younger men went round with pistols stuck in their waistbands, looking - 'but not working' - like revolutionaries... The collective produced considerable quantities, all the village's needs were met, except when the committee refused to distribute stocks." [85] Francisca Aragon tells Fraser that when one of their twin infants fell sick, the committee refused her transport to see a doctor. "'There was great discontent. The women talked about it. We went out to work in the fields - and it was right that we should. But why didn't the wives of the committee members have to go? If things went on like this, we would have to get rid of the committee. I wanted to leave, but I couldn't. We had no money, no means. Moreover, the committee had guards posted on the roads. It was terror, dictatorship...'" [86] In a footnote, Fraser insightfully explains that once the CNT engineered the abolition of money (no one even tries to explain how the abolition of money could be voluntary), the peasants were helpless. A poor person with a little money has options; the Aragonese peasantry did not. "The problem of the collectivists' freedom to leave villages - permanently or on trips - exercised the imagination of observers from the start. With the abolition of money, the collective held the upper hand since anyone wishing to travel had to get 'republican' money from the committee. This meant justifying the trip." [87]

Needless to say, there was little or no freedom of religion in the Anarchist collectives. While many accounts praise the Anarchists' lavish educational spending, they rarely point out that a major goal was to brainwash the next generation. As Thomas describes, "Church

schools were shut: "The revolutionary will of the people has suppressed schools of confessional tendency. Now is the turn of the new school, based on rationalist principles of work and human fraternity." [88] The despotism of the Anarchists sometimes even extended to the pettiness of prohibiting not only alcohol but coffee and tobacco. "In the libertarian village of Magdalena de Pulpis, for example, the abolition of alcohol and tobacco was hailed as a triumph. In the village of Azuara, the collectivists closed the cafe because they regarded it as a 'frivolous institution.'" [89] Bolloten quotes Franz Borkenau, an eyewitness. "I tried in vain to get a drink, either of coffee or wine or lemonade. The village bar had been closed as nefarious commerce. I had a look at the stores. They were so low as to foretell approaching starvation. But the inhabitants seemed to be proud of this state of things. They were pleased, they told us, that coffee drinking had come to an end; they seemed to regard this abolition of useless things as a moral improvement." [90] As one peasant put it, "[T]here is no money for vice." [91] Thus, the freedom of the Aragonese peasantry was the Orwellian freedom to live precisely as the Anarchist militia deemed right.

The typical objective of forced agricultural collectivization, in both Communist and Third World countries, has been to fund centrally planned industrialization. The ugly secret of the Anarchists is that the underlying objective of forced collectivization was to fund their military and cement the power of their councils and committees. Part of the seized agricultural product was used to feed the troops; the rest was sold on international markets for gold and hard currency, which in turn could buy armaments. For once in the literal sense, the peasants were "exploited," deliberately cut off from competing purchasers, left with no choice but to sell to the CNT for a pittance, which could in turn either use the product itself or re-sell at normal world prices.

Graham Kelsey, a fervent admirer of the Spanish Anarchists, tries his best to portray this naked exploitation favorably. "To organize the provisioning of the front-line volunteers as rapidly and as equitably as possibly was to be more than merely an aim in itself. One of the most common corollaries of war in a capitalist system is the development of

such social and economic evils as black-marketeering, profiteering, and, as a consequence, arbitrarily imposed shortages and serious inflation. The villages from which large numbers of volunteers had joined the columns had immediately organized the despatch of supplies to the front. These villages, however, were but a handful, chiefly those with strong anarchosyndicalist traditions. Evidently the situation had to be regularized, particularly as the initial insurrection had begun to assume all the characteristics of a prolonged military confrontation. Agricultural collectivisation, therefore, became both a way of ensuring the equal contribution of all villages to the burden posed by the conflict and also a way of making it impossible for those who possessed the means or the inclination to profit from the exigencies placed upon the regional economy by the presence of civil war. It was not just a libertarian theory; it was also the only way to ensure the maximum agricultural production with the minimum economic corruption."[92]

Kelsey is virtually the only academic historian who attempts to affirm the voluntary character of the Anarchist collectives. Among his many puzzling statements, one that stands out is his attempt to prove that the collectives must have been voluntary because everyone supported them, regardless of party. "Another sign of the acceptance of agricultural collectivisation was the adherence of the members of other trade-union and political groups all of which, nationally, maintained a hostile stance towards collectivisation."[93] Normal people see an unnatural degree of unanimity and infer that such agreement could only be the result of extreme coercion. Kelsey sees an unnatural degree of unanimity and infers that such agreement could only be the result of the extraordinary goodness of the collectives. (Similarly, a band of well- armed conquistadors could attribute the sudden conversion of pagans to the inescapable truth of the Catholic faith, and deny that their firearms had anything to do with the pagans' decision.)

Fraser, relying on the testimony of CNT leader Macario Royo, confirms this seldom-mentioned motive. "[Royo] believed that collectives were the most appropriate organization for controlling production and consumption, and ensuring that a surplus was made available for the

front. 'Everything was disorganized. The columns depended on the villages, they had no other source of supply. If there had been no collectives, if each peasant had kept what he produced and disposed of it as he wished, it would have made the matter of supplies much more difficult...' [94] Indeed it would have; if there had been a free market, the farmers would be paid the value of their labor. There is much irony in Royo's tacit admission that the "problem" with the free market is that it *prevents* exploitation, ensuring that everyone gets paid for the product of their labor. "By abolishing a free market and in effect rationing consumer goods, mainly food, the collectives controlled the local economy. Feeding the columns without payment became a source of pride or resentment, depending on the villager's ideological commitment. But for Royo, as for most Aragonese libertarians, the matter did not end there. The fundamental purpose of founding the collectives was social equality. 'That each should produce according to his ability, each consume according to his need. Equality in production, equality in consumption. To supply everyone equally in the collective as well as the columns at the front - this was the principle and usefulness of the collectives.'" [95] Presumably the poor workers of the villages did not realize that "equality" would also guarantee an equal share for Anarchist soldiers who never set a foot in the village.

The necessities went to feed the troops; the agricultural luxuries were taken to be sold on international markets. "A more genuine grievance against the CNT by its opponents was its control of the main ports and the Franco-Spanish border, a control that enabled it to ship abroad through its own export entities valuable agricultural products that yielded large quantities of foreign exchange. Whereas the Anarchosyndicalists regarded this control as an inalienable conquest of the Revolution, the central government viewed it as an impingement on the indefeasible power of the state... Julian Zugazagoitia, the moderate Socialist, who became interior minister under Negrin in May 1937, claims that the premier and finance minister 'preferred not to have Anarchists in the government' because he wished 'to dismantle all the export organizations created by the CNT,' and 'to end once and for all' the loss of foreign exchange resulting from the shipment abroad of almonds, oranges, and



35 Militias requisition tractors in Aragon to tow their artillery, August 1936.

In July of 1937, the Aragonese Anarchists were desperately trying to avoid the fate of their Catalanian comrades. The Communists had replaced the Anarchists as the dominant force in Catalonia. Was Aragon next? Jose Peirats, the Anarchist historian, provides the setting. "In his commemorative speech on July 19, 1937, the President of the Council of Aragon was extremely pessimistic... 'it would be regrettable if anyone tried to make trouble for [the Council of Aragon], for that would force [the Council] to unsheathe its claws of iron and teeth of steel.'"[97] In December of 1936, the Council agreed to share some of its power with members of other Republican parties, but the dominant position of the Anarchists remained. "Subsequently the President reported on the accomplishments made over the first year: speculation and usury had been suppressed; roads and highways had been constructed with the disinterested help of the militia...; and the Aragonese collectives, in spite of their deficiencies, were the wonder the revolution."[98] Clearly in a conciliatory mood, the President emphasized that the right to farm individually would be protected (thus implicitly admitting widespread violation of this right). Moreover, the President could point to an agreement signed by all of the Republican factions of Aragon, which read in part: "'The Council of Aragon, which will collaborate enthusiastically with the legitimate government of the Republic, will increase production in the rearguard, mobilize all the region's resources for the war effort, arouse the

antifascist spirit of the masses... and undertake an intense purge in the liberated zones; it will impose unrelenting order and hunt down hidden fascists, defeatists and speculators." [99] The totalitarian tone of these words is hard to overlook.

The Council's protestations of its loyalty and ecumenical spirit did not save it from an invasion of Communist-led forces under the orders of the central government. The Communists broke up many collectives, even voluntary ones (although as noted the "voluntarism" of the collectives was universally questionable). Bolloten summarizes a report of the Aragon CNT: "the land, farm implements, horses, and cattle confiscated from right-wing supporters were returned to their former owners or to their families; new buildings erected by the collectives, such as stables and hen coops, were destroyed, and in some villages the farms were deprived even of seed for sowing, while six hundred members of the CNT were arrested." [100] After their initial onslaught, the Communists backed off somewhat; so long as the Anarchists were out of power, the Communists were generally willing to accept a milder form of collectivization.

Apologists for the Anarchists frequently point to the fact that many collectives persisted even after the Communist-led forces destroyed the Council of Aragon. For example, Peirats tells us that "The Penalba collective which, at the beginning of the revolution, was composed of the entire village of 1500 people was reduced to 500 members. It is very possible that in this second phase the collectivization better reflects the sincere convictions of the members. They had undergone a severe test and those who had withstood it were proven collectivists. Yet it would be facile to label as anticollectivists those who abandoned the collectives in this second phase. Fear, official coercion and insecurity weighed heavily in the decisions of much of the Aragonese peasantry." [101] Peirats' double-standard is worth contemplating. While he is extraordinarily sensitive to hidden coercion undermining the voluntariness of the de-collectivizations, the enormous economic bludgeon used to form the collectives in the first place barely bothers him. Even after the destruction of the Council of Aragon, might not some farmers have remained within the collectives out of fear of later persecution if the CNT regained power? The interview of Juan

Martinez (a "medium-holding peasant... who had thought the collectives were not a bad idea") with Fraser confirms that such was indeed the case. "Most of the people left, and were happy to do so. Those who remained - about a quarter of the original number - were under no pressure to do so; nobody bothered them, nobody tried to break up their collective. In fact, one or two of the peasants with bigger holdings left their land in because they were frightened the situation might change again..."[102]

Bolloten aptly sums up the ironclad case against the Anarchist rural collectives, a case which need not rely on Communist-tainted testimony or sources:

"If, theoretically, during the Spanish Revolution, the CNT and FAI were opposed to the state dictatorship established by the Marxists, they nevertheless established a form of parochial dictatorship in many localities, with the aid of vigilance groups and revolutionary tribunals. While these fell far short of the 'scientific concept' of totalitarian dictatorship defined by Lenin, the CNT and FAI exercised their power in a naked form not only against priests and landowners, moneylenders and merchants, but in many cases against small tradesmen and farmers."[103] This dictatorship would undoubtedly have become even more egregious if the Anarchists had ever become the dominant power in Spain; Bolloten cites numerous Anarchist publications explaining that the concessions to voluntarism and individualism were merely temporary expedients which would be withdrawn as soon as the Anarchists were too powerful to be challenged.



3. Economics and the Spanish Anarchists

A. Background for the Civil War: The Great Depression and the Labor Market

It is impossible to understand the economics of the Spanish Civil War without realizing that in 1936, Spain remained in the midst of the international Great Depression. If Spanish industrial production in 1929 is set equal to 100, then in 1935 it remained at a stagnant 86.9 in spite of six years' worth of population growth. In Catalonia, if one indexes industrial production in January 1936 at 100, one finds that by July of 1936 output was lower still at 82. In short, production at the start of the revolution was an additional 18% below the depression-level output of January 1936. Unemployment by all accounts was correspondingly high.[104]

What was the reason for the pre-war depression anyway? A large consensus of economic historians argues, persuasively in my view, that the essential cause of the Great Depression was the international monetary contraction of the late 20's and early 30's. Milton Friedman and Anna Schwartz's *A Monetary History of the United States* [105] was the seminal academic work which established the magnitude and importance of the monetary contraction in the United States. Barry Eichengreen's *Golden Fetters* [106] largely extends Friedman and Schwartz's argument to the international economy, showing how the gold standard re-established after World War I was very shaky and wound up yielding an international monetary contraction. Spain was not itself on the gold standard, but bank notes had to be backed by a fractional reserve of gold so many of the same forces would be at work.[107]

Monetary contraction is thus the first symptom to look for; but by any measure, it did *not* occur. Spain devalued the peseta (a move which makes it much easier to avoid deflation) to 79.5% of parity in 1930, and continued to devalue it until by 1935 the gold content of the peseta was a mere 55.3% of par. Looking at combined savings bank deposits (a standard component in most measures of money supply provided by Thomas), it can be seen that the peseta quantity of deposits constantly increased over the period for which data is available: from 1847 million pesetas in 1928, to 4116 million pesetas in 1934. Similarly, the number of pesetas it took to buy one British pound (N.B. The Bank of London was noted for its swift devaluation.) increased from 25.22 in January of 1930 to 36.00 in January of 1936. In short, there was a large

decline in the international value of the peseta, reflecting large money supply increases uncharacteristic of other countries during this era. A final clue which confirms the fact of high money supply growth in Spain is that Madrid in 1936 was estimated to have one of the largest gold reserves in the world - precisely what one would expect in a nation which had repeatedly cut the gold content of the peseta in order to remove any institutional constraints on rapid money supply growth.[108]

If the standard monetary explanation fails to explain the Spanish depression, what other factors might be involved? The preponderance of the evidence indicates that the Spanish labor unions, of which the CNT was foremost, through their intransigent militancy and activism, succeeded in raising real wages approximately 20% from 1929 to 1936. [109] Tortella and Palafox's calculations reveal a 20.5% real wage increase in mining, a 17.6% increase in metallurgy, a 19.9% increase in textiles (22.3% for women), and a 23.7% increase in agriculture (35% increase for women) over the 1929-1936 period. In their ignorance of and emotional hostility to classical economic theory, the trade-unionists probably did not realize that the necessary consequence of pushing real wages so far above the market level would be massive unemployment; but massive unemployment was indeed the result. The mounting hostility to employers, sabotage, and so on undoubtedly decreased the expected marginal productivity of labor, leaving the prevailing union wage scale even farther above the market-clearing level.

The unions enjoyed ample assistance from the government. Paul Preston sums up Caballero's labor decrees, many of which greatly improved the labor unions' bargaining position. "The so-called 'decree of municipal boundaries' prevented the hiring of outside labor while local workers in a given municipality remained unemployed. It struck at the landowners' most potent weapon, the power to break strikes and keep down wages by the import of cheap blackleg labor." [110] Thus even the trade unions realized on some level, however rudimentary, that raising the price of labor would reduce the quantity demanded. Moreover, on some level the unionists realized that unions benefit their members at the expense of other (preferably non-union)

workers priced out of a job. Preston continues, "Largo Caballero did something that Primo de Rivera had not been able to do: he introduced arbitration committees for rural wages and working conditions, which had previously been subject only to the whim of the owners. One of the rights now to be protected was the newly introduced eight-hour day. Given that, previously, the braceros had been expected to work from sunup to sundown, this meant that owners would either have to pay overtime or else employ more men to do the same work. [Or produce less output, which was probably the most important response. -B.C.] Finally, in order to prevent the owners from sabotaging these measures by lock-outs, a decree of obligatory cultivation prevented them from taking their land out of operation." [111]

Thus, while it avoided the monetary contraction which plagued other nations in the early 30's, Spain enjoyed a depression courtesy of its militant labor unions, assisted by the labor laws of the Republican government. Disturbed by the plight of the workers, the unions and the government simple-mindedly tried to make matters better by pushing up wages and improving working conditions. The necessary and empirically observed result was massive unemployment; many workers were simply not worth the higher price, and so no one chose to hire them. Rather than blame the unions and the "pro-labor" government, many unemployed workers turned to ever greater militancy and hatred of the capitalist system. [112]

Perhaps the most plausible criticism of capitalist economies is that they sometimes allow useful labor and capital to go to waste. Under the circumstances, one might expect that the workers' revolutionary takeover of their employers' property in 1936 would have to make matters better. With all these idle workers seizing the empty factories, wouldn't production have to increase? It did not; after the establishment of worker control, unemployment became even more severe despite the wartime economy's massive monetary growth and conscription. The next section investigates this puzzle in detail.

B. The Economics of the Civil War: Collectivization, Inflation, and the Black Market

The puzzle of urban collectivization begins at the outset. With massive

unemployment still prevailing, the CNT began *closing* plants and concentrating workers in the most "modern" firms. The obvious measure would have been to open the doors of every collective to the mass of unemployed workers and invite them to select their new workplace. But the unions insisted that in some sense the older plants were not "efficient." No effort was made to analyze the coherence of this view; in particular, the unions showed no understanding of the difference between average and marginal productivity. (The superiority of the average productivity of the modern plants in no way shows that marginal productivity was greater, and it is marginal productivity that matters for "efficiency" decisions.) Bollo ten describes this massive shut down decision at length: "'Those small employers of labor who are a little enlightened,' declared *Solidaridad Obrera*, the principal Anarchosindicalist organ in Spain, 'will easily understand that the system of producing goods in small plants is not efficient. Divided effort holds back production. Operating a tiny workshop with handicraft methods is not the same as operating a large plant that utilizes all the advances of technology. If our aim is to do away with the contingencies and insecurities of the capitalist regime, then we must direct production in a way that ensures the well-being of society.'"[113] Apparently the well-being of unemployed workers was of no concern; in spite of its high levels, the issue never even arises. Bollo ten gives the details of the wave of business closings. "In accordance with this outlook, the CNT workers, sweeping along with them those of the UGT, closed down more than seventy foundries in the region of Catalonia and concentrated their equipment and personnel in twenty-four... In Barcelona, the CNT and UGT woodworkers' unions - which had already set up control committees in every shop and factory and used the former employers as technical managers at the standard wage for workers - reorganized the entire industry by closing down hundreds of small workshops and concentrating production in the largest plants. In the same city the CNT carried out equally radical changes in the tanning trade, reducing 71 plants to 40, while in the glass industry, 100 plants and warehouses were cut down to 30." [114] Similar measures were applied to the barber shops and beauty parlors; in the dressmaking, tailoring, metal, carpentry, and leather goods trades; in candy, shoemaking, metal and textiles, lumber, bricklaying, tanning, baking, cabinetmaking, and on

and on.

While this program did nothing to alleviate massive unemployment, it did have other advantages from the point of view of the employed trade unionists. It helped to curtail production, protect themselves against competition, and thus keep prices high. Moreover, it helped centralize each industry, making it somewhat easier to run them top-down, to secure compliance with the orders of the Anarchist leadership. Bolloten quotes the sympathetic observer Leval. "'The machinery was gathered together in several workshops, sometimes in a single workshop. In this way, the regulation of production was simplified and coordination of effort was more effective.'"[115]

By all accounts, the workers swiftly raised their own wages, cut their own hours, and improved working conditions. One obvious motive, as mentioned earlier, was to eliminate accounting profits by simply increasing wages until no taxable profits remained. As Fraser writes, "[The collectives] generated little or no apparent surplus, and even less so if they were paying 'unproductive' wages. This in turn meant that the money due to go to the credit fund to finance, and eliminate disparities between, collectives was impaired."[116] Fraser sums up the experience of the collective of CNT secretary Joan Ferrer. "Profits were not a problem - there were none, at least up to mid-1937 when Ferrer joined the army. Any surplus there might have been was ploughed back into the stores; wages were raised, working conditions improved and other improvements made."[117] Decrees in Catalonia established the forty-hour week and raised wages 15 percent, and mandated the rehiring of workers discharged on political grounds.

The essential problem of the labor market before the Civil War simply became worse. Real wages were too high; in consequence, there was a labor surplus, or "unemployment." When the workers seized control, they simply compounded the problem by raising their own wages even further, improving working conditions (i.e., selecting more comfort and lower productivity), abolishing piece rates (i.e., selecting more leisure and lower productivity), and so on. The experience of CNT member and textile foreman Josep Costa was perhaps more extreme than most. "Piece-work was abolished, the working week reduced to forty hours (and soon to much less because of raw

materials shortages), the 'first social security system in Spain' created: full retirement pay, free medical care, free medicines, sick pay, maternity pay (two days' pay off work for the husband when his wife was giving birth), a clinic for specialist services and childbirth - the scheme being financed by a levy per worker in each collective that had the funds. An unemployment fund was created, and a proportion of those out of work were found jobs outside the textile industry."[118] No one seemed to realize that the higher pay and improved working conditions were the primary reason there was an unemployment problem in the first place.

There did exist a simple expedient whereby the unionized workers could have retained their privileged positions while creating opportunities for the innumerable jobless workers. They could have created an openly two-tier regime: old workers present before the collectivization get paid the high wage and get to share in the profits; new workers get a meager, market-clearing wage and don't share in the profits. Of course, to have done so would have required the trade unionists to indirectly admit that their militancy had created the problems which they had always blamed on the capitalist system. Moreover, it would have forced them to abandon their egalitarian ethic. Better to let a person rot in idleness than permit inequality.

The situation was essentially similar to that of a modern law firm. If every novice lawyer and secretary became a full partner as soon as they were hired, there would be many unemployed novices and secretaries. The current partners would want to avoid diluting the value of their shares, and would therefore keep hiring to a minimum. Modern law firms solve this problem by accepting inequality as a fact of life; a share of the profits is reserved for the elite lawyers, and the other employees simply receive a comparatively small salary. Crippled by their egalitarian ethos, the worker-controlled firms of Anarchist Spain could not bring themselves to do this. In consequence, in spite of massive money supply growth and conscription, Catalan unemployment (complete and partial, Fraser notes) increased from an index of 100 in January- June 1936 to 135.7 in December 1936, and fell slightly to 123.6 in June 1937, and 120.1 in November 1937.[119]

Urban workers overall often suffered from urban collectivization. But

at least some urban workers clearly seemed to greatly improve their standard of living during the early stages of the war. These were the lucky workers who already had good jobs in good factories; they enhanced their fortunate condition by seizing control of the factories and channeling their former employer's profits to themselves (with a combination of wage increases, more job benefits, better working conditions, and more leisure). Workers who had jobs in marginal plants found their condition was basically the same as before, only now they had to worry about bankruptcy instead of their boss. Unemployed workers who were previously priced out of the labor market by Catalonia's powerful unions probably found life even harder. Whether capitalists or the workers ran the factories, the redistribution from unemployed and non-union workers to employed and union workers remained constant.

The rural agricultural workers' plight was very different. The redistribution was not normally from one rural worker to another; rather, the mass of rural workers were exploited by the Anarchist military elite in their struggle to win the war. Thus, people frequently linked collectivization with the so-called "war effort"; the collectives would toil, receive their rations, and see the rest taken from them. Fraser summarizes the observation of Juan Zafon, propaganda delegate of the Council of Aragon. "The free, independent municipality, the collective which abolished the exploitation of man by man, the federal structure which linked each village at district and regional level and, after supplying the needs of the villages and fronts, channeled what surplus was produced to the council, which in turn could sell or exchange it with other regions or abroad; 'all this had been talked and written about, but it had been no more than a slogan until then.'" [120] Strip aside the propaganda delegate's misleading remarks about the "freedom" and "independence" of the municipality, and the harsh truth reveals itself: the Anarchists took the surplus of the farmers, gave them little or nothing in return, and used it to fight the war. Fraser's interview with CNT militant Ernesto Margeli further supports my contention that the Anarchists collectivized in order to better exploit the peasantry. "[A]s militia forces continued to arrive, as the problem of supplying them became more acute, and as the disorganization of the initial period did not give way to anything