

ANARCHIST IDENTITY DURING THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

by

Joseph Anthony Elmo

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

The Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences

with a Concentration in Interdisciplinary History

Wilkes Honors College of

Florida Atlantic University

Jupiter, Florida

May 2018

ANARCHIST IDENTITY DURING THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

by

Joseph Anthony Elmo

This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Christopher Ely, and has been approved by members of his supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of The Honors College and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences.

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Dr. Christopher Ely

Dr. Carmen Cañete Quesada

Dr. Christopher Barry Strain

Dean Ellen Goldey, Wilkes Honors College

Date

I would like to thank my family, friends, staff and professors of the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College, who have played a significant role in this project and my life.

Special regards to my advisor, Dr. Christopher Ely, for mentoring me throughout this whole process. My quest for History is now unbridled.

Sobre todo, gracias a mi amor, Mimi.

ABSTRACT

Author: Joseph Anthony Elmo
Title: Anarchist Identity During the Spanish Civil War
Institution: Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College of Florida Atlantic University
Thesis Advisor: Dr. Christopher Ely
Degree: Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences
Concentration: Interdisciplinary History
Year: 2018

During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), anarchist groups were able to exert a significant influence in revolutionary politics through agricultural and industrial collectivization, communes, militia resistance, and participation in government. Many historians have explained anarchism through the lens of ideology, a doctrine based upon a structure of authority. This thesis, however, explains anarchist power and unity during the Spanish Civil War as a matter of identity, as a meaningful sense of self. Spanish anarchists defined themselves through the process of negation – the act of defining who you are by defining what you are not – by their opposition to authority, to religion, to feudalism, to capitalism and fascism, to communism, and to anarchism. The anarchists also affirmed who they were as individuals and as communities through three values: yearning for absolute freedom, the capacity for absolute fraternity removed from centralized authority, and absolute egalitarianism – the unreserved equality of all individuals.

To those who yearn for History

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter One – The Spanish Civil War and the Anarchist Movement	4
I. The Spanish Civil War and the Anarchist Movement.....	4
Chapter Two – Anarchist Identity	18
I. Anarchism.....	18
II. Identity.....	22
Chapter Three – Negation	30
I. Forming a Spanish Anarchist Identity Through Negation.....	30
II. Rejecting Authority.....	31
III. Rejecting Religion.....	33
IV. Rejecting Feudalism.....	35
V. Rejecting Capitalism and Fascism.....	37
VI. Rejecting Communism.....	41
VII. Rejecting Anarchism.....	42
Chapter Four – Affirmation	45
I. Forming a Spanish Anarchist Identity Through Affirmation.....	45
II. The Significance of Spontaneity.....	45
III. Asserting Spanish Anarchist Liberty.....	49
IV. Asserting Spanish Anarchist Fraternity.....	54
V. Asserting Spanish Anarchist Equality.....	57
Bibliography	63

Introduction

“TO DATE,” writes Peter Marshall, “SPAIN is the only country in the modern era where anarchism can credibly be said to have developed into a major social movement and have seriously threatened the State.”¹ The events that Marshall describes unfolded in Spain on the cusp of the Second World War. As the reader of this thesis will discover, the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) revealed what can happen when civil political debate breaks down and a period of political polarization leads to violence on a massive scale. In Spain in 1936, a military uprising against the Second Republic was challenged by a social revolution – aided by Soviet Russia – causing a civil war, and then a civil war within the civil war, and an eventual defeat, which was aided by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The Fascist victory led to the longest dictatorship in modern European history under Generalísimo Francisco Franco (1939-1975). But perhaps what is most interesting about this unfortunate story is the astonishing accomplishments made by the anarchists in the midst of the chaos unleashed by these events. This thesis will ask: who were the anarchists? What is an anarchist? What gave rise to anarchism in Spain? What exactly did it mean for *Spanish* individuals to call themselves anarchists? What did the anarchists want? And what did they stand for? In order to answer these questions, this thesis will explore the common underlying causes, commonalities, culture, psychology, propaganda, statements, and memory of Spanish anarchists. Many historians have explained anarchism through the lens of ideology, a doctrine based upon a structure of authority.

¹ Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Oakland: PM Press, 2010), 453. Marshall provides a comprehensive approach to the history of anarchism from its early foundations up to the present day.

This thesis, however, explains anarchist power and unity during the Spanish Civil War as a matter of identity, as a meaningful sense of self.

This thesis is arranged into four chapters. The opening chapter provides the background of the Spanish Civil War and discusses the significance of anarchism during the war. The second chapter will seek to define the basic terminology of anarchist identity – and how it differs from anarchist ideology – and explain its significance.

The next two chapters draw from various statements among members of different agricultural and industrial collectivized communities that swept through Spain, from the failed military uprising in 1936 until Franco's victory in 1939. These chapters also draw from various statements of individuals within specific anarchist organizations. For example, the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) – an anarchist confederation of union workers heavily centered in Barcelona and Madrid, the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI) – who were anarchist militants associated with the CNT, and the Iron Column – an anarchist militia formed in Valencia. We will also focus on: Buenaventura Durruti, a Spanish anarchist leader of a militia column named after him called the “Durruti Column”; as well as Federica Montseny, a Spanish anarchist intellectual and a member of one of the governments formed during the conflict.

Drawing on the aforementioned sources, the third chapter confronts the anarchists' situation at the onset of the war, which enabled them to define themselves through the process of negation, the act of defining who you are by defining what you are not. The closing chapter discusses the anarchists' grassroots response to their rapidly changing environment during the war, which encouraged them to reinforce their sense of identity and collective coherence as anarchists. It is the contention of this thesis that a

coherent doctrine of authority was not the driving force behind Spanish anarchism during the Spanish Civil War. Rather, it was a powerful sense of individual self-worth that held anarchist communities together and enabled them to exert a powerful influence over the course of events in that tumultuous era. By focusing on anarchist identity, this thesis offers a different perspective and a clearer and fuller picture of the role anarchism played during the Spanish Civil War.

Chapter One: The Spanish Civil War and the Anarchist Movement

The Spanish Civil War and the Anarchist Movement

The Spanish Civil War was not only a domestic war, but a conflict that transcended Spain's borders to include participants in the international arena.¹ After the military dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera ended in 1930, and the exile of King Alfonso XIII after general elections in 1931, the Second Republic was declared. However, political power, aspirations, and sentiments swayed back and forth up until 1936. As Sebastian Balfour writes: "the coming of the Republic heralded a historic shift in power and wealth from a small minority to the vast majority of society... On the other hand, the Second Republic was greeted with trepidation and angst in more private places,

¹ Useful studies on the lead-up to, the events during, and the outcome of the Spanish Civil War include Robert Alexander, *The Anarchists in the Spanish Civil War*, 2 vols. (London: Janus Publishing Company, 2007); Myrna Margulies Breitbart, *The Theory and Practice of Anarchist Decentralization in Spain, 1936-1939: The Integration of Community and Environment* (University Microfilms International: Ann Arbor, 1978); Raymond Carr, *Spain: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Julián Casanova, *Anarchism, the Republic, and Civil War in Spain: 1931-1939*, trans. Andrew Dowling and Graham Pollok (New York: Routledge, 2004); Sam Dolgoff, *The Anarchist Collectives: Workers' Self-Management in the Spanish Revolution 1936-1939* (Québec: Black Rose Books, 1990); Chris Ealham, *Anarchism and the City: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Barcelona, 1898-1937* (Oakland: AK Press, 2010); George R. Esenwein, *Anarchist Ideology and the Working-Class Movement in Spain, 1868-1898* (Oxford: University of California Press, 1989); Ronald Fraser, *Blood of Spain: An Oral History of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979); Frank Mintz, *Anarchism and Workers' Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain*, trans. Paul Sharkey (Oakland: AK Press, 2013); Stanley G. Payne, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Abel Paz, *Durruti in the Spanish Revolution*, trans. Chuck Morse (Chico: AK Press, 2007); Abel Paz, *The Story of the Iron Column: Militant Anarchism in the Spanish Civil War*, trans. Paul Sharkey (Oakland: AK Press, 2011); Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012); Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (New York: Modern Library, 2012); José Peirats Valls, *The CNT in the Spanish Revolution*, 3 vols. ed. Chris Ealham (Oakland: PM Press, 2011).

such as the officers' mess, the board-rooms, and the churches.”² As a result, reforms from above like separating church and state, granting civil liberties, and state control over education, ran into political obstacles, divisions, and responses from both the right and the left during 1931 to 1936.³

As for the anarchists, George R. Esenwein points out that:

For three decades [1868-1898] Spanish anarchists demonstrated a remarkable resiliency and determination that enabled them to survive in the most unpropitious circumstances. Thus, despite a troubled history marked by bitter factional quarreling and cycles of economic depression and political persecution, they managed to keep the flame of revolution from being completely extinguished.⁴

Esenwein also remarks that the first two decades of the twentieth century “saw anarchism blossom into one of the largest left-wing movements in Europe,” where membership in the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) mushroomed from a mere 15,000 in 1915 to a staggering 700,000 by the end of 1919.⁵ This anarchist confederation of union workers, having originated in the previous century, would later become a major obstacle for Franco during the Spanish Civil War. In fact, Chris Ealham notes that from 1931 to 1936, CNT membership for Catalan and Barcelona rose from 186,152 to 291,240 and 87,860 to 168,428, respectively.⁶

² Carr, *Spain*, 240-43. Raymond Carr was honored by Spain with the prestigious Prince of Asturias Prize and was a member of the Spanish Academy of History. He provides a scholarly overview of the history of Spain.

³ *Ibid.*, 243-49.

⁴ Esenwein, *Anarchist Ideology and Working-Class Movement*, 205. Esenwein worked under the guidance of James Joll (see Chapter Two, in section entitled *Anarchism*).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Ealham, *Anarchism and City*, 168. Ealham teaches at Saint Louis University in Madrid, specializing in Spanish labor history and movements.

After a Popular Front electoral victory in February 1936, General Emilio Mola led a military uprising in northwestern Spain. General Mola asked General Francisco Franco to join the revolt. General Franco would eventually lead the military rebels as a whole during the conflict, initially descending upon Spain from Morocco and aided by German and Italian militaries.⁷ However, the military coup d'état on 17 to 18 July 1936 against the Republican government initially failed, giving rise to a civil war.⁸ The Nationalists on the right were made up of the military rebels – aided by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, Roman Catholics, land-owners, businessmen, the old nobility and other conservative forces. The Republicans, or the left, were made up of the so-called Popular Front – aided by Soviet Russia and the International Brigades, urban workers, agricultural laborers, the middle-class, and most intellectuals.⁹ As for the Western Democracies, they utterly failed to support a fellow democracy, as Britain, France, and the United States adhered to a policy of non-intervention.

⁷ Franco also had the support of his African army from Morocco and aid from Portugal (see Thomas, *Spanish Civil War*, 89, 346).

⁸ Thomas, *Spanish Civil War*, 204-20. Pro-Franco forces were especially unsuccessful in Madrid and Barcelona.

⁹ The International Brigades composed of the largest response by any force or nation to the Second Republic during the Spanish Civil War. In sum, approximately 35,000 civilian soldiers from more than 50 nations voluntarily went to Spain to fight fascism. For more on the International Brigades, see *The Spanish Civil War: Brother Against Brother* (Kulter International Films: Eagle Rock Entertainment), DVD, 50 minutes; and *The Good Fight: The Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War* (Kino International), DVD, 98 minutes. In fact, individuals in the United States fighting in Spain were negatively labelled as “premature anti-fascists” because the United States did not view Germany or Italy as opponents just yet. For more on “premature anti-fascists,” see Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (New York: New Press, 1990), 198-203, 350-53, 479-87. As for other countries in the Americas, “Chile, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Cuba had welcomed many immigrants from Spain.” However, the Mexican government openly supported and sold “a few” arms to the Second Republic (see Thomas, *Spanish Civil War*, 348, 378).

Ronald Fraser draws attention to maps of major areas of political affiliation under the Second Republic from 1931 to February 1936. In 1931, the Catholics and conservatives were mostly in northern Spain and northern Castilla-La Mancha. The socialists (of many types, for example, moderates and communists) were mostly in the community of Madrid and Estremadura. The anarchists were mostly in east Catalonia and the coastal areas of Spain – from south of Valencia, around the straits of Gibraltar, up to the Atlantic-Portuguese coast. In February 1936, the Spain that voted for the Popular Front was a coalition of left-wing forces: the socialists and the anarchists, plus the nationalistic Basque region near Bilbao. When Franco's army finally advanced into Spain, gaining a foothold in Seville, it was thwarted by the republicans, socialists, and anarchists, who resisted the military coup d'état in all areas of Spain other than those held by Catholics and conservatives, except for the northern coast – partly due to Basque resistance. Franco pushed through from the Seville region and connected with the northern conservative territory by August 1936. He then marched east, up to Madrid, where republican forces yet again stopped him. Eventually, Franco would successfully advance north and east around Madrid, through Aragon and into Catalonia by July 1938. By the following year the Republicans had no chance of survival, being surrounded on three out of four sides under a virtual siege, and thus Franco would claim victory in Spain six months before Nazi Germany invaded Poland.¹⁰

On the left within the Popular Front, the anarchists, socialists, and communists viewed the war as a revolutionary struggle, while the moderate socialists and loyalists to

¹⁰ Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 16-19. Fraser's study is a grassroots history of over 300 interviews of those who lived and participated in the Spanish Civil War.

the Republic intended on preserving the Second Republic at all costs. Emma Goldman – an anarchist, political activist, and writer who visited Spain three times during the Spanish Civil War – proclaimed the following in May 1939, two months after the war: “I am afraid that revolution is the only alternative to war. When the people are oppressed and rise up, there is no way of stopping them. And the democracies, by reason of the existence of Fascism, are forced to become more reactionary.”¹¹ Robert Alexander gives some credence to Goldman’s point in his study on the role of the anarchists during the Spanish Civil War, concluding that the anarchists played a major role in the conflict by running much of the economy, making up the largest single element in the armed resistance to Franco, and playing a major role in politics. Alexander emphasizes the anarchists’ achievement of putting down the rebellion in July 1936, recruiting and organizing militias, converting to a more militarized army, their organization of the rural economies, the workers’ assumption of control of factories, the running of public utilities and other segments of the economy, and the role anarchists played in the coup against the Second Republic’s government under Juan Negrín (1937-1939) in 1939.¹²

In regard to collectivization, Spain had been predominately an agricultural country, “in which 67% of the land was owned by 2% of the landowners,” yet during the civil war “about three million men, women, and children were living in collectivized communities.”¹³ In a study on Spanish anarchist decentralization during the Spanish Civil

¹¹ Emma Goldman, *Vision on Fire: Emma Goldman on the Spanish Revolution*, ed. David Porter (Oakland: AK Press, 2006), 245.

¹² Alexander, *Anarchists in Spanish Civil War*, vol. 1, xi-xxix.

¹³ Colin Ward, *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford, 2004), 23. Ward offers a short but scholarly overview of anarchism. Furthermore, he claims these statistics are Peter Kropotkin’s ideals (see Chapter Two, in section entitled *Identity*) in action.

War, Myrna M. Breitbart notes that the total number of anarchist agricultural collectives that sprouted up throughout Spain is estimated around 1,730. As for anarchist industrial collectives, data is focused in limited areas but “estimates suggest that nearly all industries in Catalonia and more than seventy percent in Levante were collectivized in some form by September 1936.”¹⁴ Breitbart interprets this information by writing that the:

Industrial and agricultural collectivization, initiated from below, affected all aspects of the social and economic lives of its participants, requiring extensive transformations in the use of space and in the organization of daily routines. Land seized from feudal estate owners or pooled by small landholders was converted into thousands of collectivized farms. Money was abolished in some villages and associations of workers formed to handle local production and distribution. Participatory self-managed organizations of producers and consumers also initiated sophisticated schemes for interchange between agricultural and industrial collectives in different regions.¹⁵

Breitbart credits the industrial and agricultural collectives to individuals gathering in self-managed groups while taking and redistributing the land for themselves. Some collectives eliminated money. These small organizations of individuals within the collectives then exchanged goods between other established collectives. Breitbart states that the underlying intent behind all of this was transformations in space and daily routines. Space was being occupied and used in radically new ways, creating a grassroots non-traditional environment. As a result of reshaping the environment, a change occurred in the people themselves. People now had an opportunity to express themselves and to create their common community.

¹⁴ Breitbart, *Anarchist Decentralization in Spain*, 175, 317-30. Breitbart notes that statistics vary depending on the time period and source.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

Breitbart claims anarchist decentralism was not “a utopian movement.” Rather, “anarchists sought to respond to immediate material and social needs.”¹⁶ Instead of fulfilling a planned agenda as a means to reach a utopian end, Breitbart understands anarchism during the Spanish Civil War as a process of expressing a necessary reaction to the dire events surrounding them, concluding that:

Spanish anarchism provides an illustration of the process by which people begin to initiate radical social change at a local level. A basic requirement is motivation. Dissatisfaction with a present way of life must produce feelings that are powerful enough to drive people to search for the source of their frustration in daily life experiences – in the workplace and the community.¹⁷

To Breitbart, Civil War anarchism was a reactive, bottom-up movement, founded upon a dissatisfaction with the conditions of life and the urge to find a new way of living, which occurred on a large scale as is reflected by the mass number of collectivized communities.

Sam Dolgoff similarly stresses the importance of the Spanish social revolution spearheaded by the anarchists. He sees their actions as a revolutionary event and model, and as a concrete example of workers’ self-management by the people, even more than the Bolshevik Revolution in its early stages.¹⁸ Dolgoff notes that the number of agricultural collectives grew to between 1,265 to 1,865, while collectivization expropriated approximately 5,962,200 hectares in the first few weeks, and directly or indirectly affected seven to eight million people.¹⁹ The Levante collectives grew from

¹⁶ Ibid., 12.

¹⁷ Ibid., 392.

¹⁸ Dolgoff, *Anarchist Collectives*, ix-xxxix. Dolgoff was alive during and recalls the events of the Spanish Civil War.

¹⁹ Ibid., 71.

340 in 1937 to 900 in 1938, while forty percent of the total population lived in those collectives. In Aragon, 3,500 out of the 4,500 inhabitants identified with anarchism by joining the CNT. And in Mas de las Matas, 550 out of a total of 600 families joined the anarchist collectives.²⁰

The rural collectivization of land was far more widespread due to Spain's urban industrial powerhouse centered in Barcelona and Catalonia. Therefore, industrial collectivization was not as extensive. Yet Dolgoff notes that Catalonia alone saw industrial collectivization in the municipal transpiration, the railroads, the harbor, the textile industry, public utilities, and even hairdressing establishments.²¹ Dolgoff credits the collectives to a type of "collectivization [that] was a spontaneous outgrowth of the revolutionary situation."²² Therefore, Dolgoff understands the anarchist collectives as a built-up, impulsive and immense reaction to the situation the civil war had produced.

Frank Mintz's analysis of the anarchist movement during the Spanish Civil War emphasizes collective organization through laborers who organized the agricultural and industrial collectives as "spontaneous anarchists", who had no idea that they were organising along anarchist lines... In short, this was a revolution that occurred beyond the control of the leadership of the Spanish workers' and left-wing organisations, including those of anarchist tradition; it was a leaderless revolution, characterized by a high level of

²⁰ Ibid., 122, 130, 160.

²¹ Ibid., 85-96, 71. Dolgoff's data also correlates with Breitbart's, focusing on Catalonia and the Levante, where industrial collectivization was at a near one-hundred percent and seventy-percent, respectively. Dolgoff, like Breitbart, admits that the data is difficult to obtain. However, the information can still provide a general idea.

²² Ibid., 77.

direct democracy.”²³ According to Mintz, the collectives suffered a “shaky, zigzagging chronology” due to the lack of order from a central organization with “no over-arching plan” but rather “improvisation” taking place in each village. The self-management that did take place was “spontaneously generated” and “organised from the ground up.”²⁴ To Mintz, individuals were expressing themselves according to anarchist principles without knowing or understanding anarchist principles. At the same time, impulsive improvisation in each village created an anarchist revolution from below.

It is important to note that not every collectivized community was in the hands of organized anarchists or solely acting upon anarchist ideals.²⁵ Some even refused the collectivization decree handed down from the First and Second Economics Councilors of Barcelona, which many anarchists had accepted.²⁶ Despite these facts, Breitbart, Dolgoff, and Mintz describe the collectivized communities as a historical achievement in revamping society at a grassroots level. These three writers also agree on the momentous

²³ Mintz, *Anarchism and Workers’ Self-Management*, 1-7. Mintz is a retired Spanish professor who plays a role in the CNT in France.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 80, 85, 119.

²⁵ Thomas, *Spanish Civil War*, 536-37. Thomas notes the number of agrarian collectives during the Spanish Civil War to be “perhaps some 2,500.” And “By no means all these agrarian innovations were dominated by anarchists; there were some 800 socialist collectives, and about 1,100 more [that] had at least one or two socialists on their committees.” Nevertheless, “between a half to two-thirds of the entire country was taken over [by collectivization] during the first six months of the civil war.”

²⁶ Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 228, 209. As one onlooker put it: “outside Barcelona, I’d say there were a great many industries which, though falling under the [collectivization] decree’s scope, refused to collectivize and remained under workers’ control.” The Barcelona Collectivization Decree on 24 October 1936 read as follows: “The criminal military uprising of 19 July has produced an extraordinary upheaval in the country’s economy... The accumulation of wealth in the hands of a continually smaller group of persons has gone hand in hand with the accumulation of ever greater poverty by the working class; since the former had no hesitation in unleashing a cruel war to protect its privileges, the victory of the people must mean the death of capitalism.” The objection to capitalism will be explained in the third chapter.

change in agricultural and industrial collectives that swept through revolutionary Spain, and claim that the anarchists were either reactive and impulsive, rather than acting on a planned course of events.

In regard to anarchist organizations, José Peirats Valls describes how the CNT and the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI), where he was an active participant, played a significant role in the governments stationed in Barcelona and in Madrid during the conflict.²⁷ The CNT was formed in 1910 as a result of the so-called “Tragic Week” of July 1909, in which a peaceful general strike of Barcelona’s trade unions in opposition to the colonial war in Morocco resulted in over fifty religious buildings burnt down, one-hundred civilian deaths, another one-hundred twenty-five injured, and over 2,500 imprisoned.²⁸ Before the civil war, there were two factions within the CNT. The “moderates” were older activists committed to anarchist practice through workers unions. The “radicals” were more violent in their approach to overthrowing government. The radicals wound-up gravitating towards the FAI, which had been created in 1927 “to preserve libertarian [anarchist] purity inside the CNT” and to coordinate activities scattered across Spain.²⁹ Shortly after the civil war, in November 1936, a government formed under Largo Caballero. Four out of the six members of this government were anarchists belonging to either the CNT or the FAI.³⁰ However, after the events of the “May Days” in Barcelona 1937, which will be discussed further below, another government formed under Juan Negrín which lasted until 1939.

²⁷ Valls, *CNT*.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, i-iv. Seventeen death sentences were passed yet five were carried out.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, xv.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 479.

Abel Paz documents the story of the Iron Column, an anarchist militia comprised of CNT and FAI members formed in Valencia that fought against Nationalist forces. During the conflict, the militia organized itself under traditional military structure on March 21, 1937, becoming the Eighty-third Brigade.³¹ Despite conflicts with militarization, which will be discussed later, the anarchists within the Iron Column continued to fight against Franco's forces.

Two influential anarchists also made significant impacts in the resistance to Franco. One was Buenaventura Durruti, who was born on 14 July 1896 in León, northern Spain. At first a factory worker, Durruti went from father, to bank robber, to political exile, and eventually became leader of a revolutionary anarchist militia column named after him as the "Durruti Column." Durruti's column of voluntary fighters left Barcelona to confront Franco's forces on 24 July 1936, reaching Zaragoza, and ending up in the defense of Madrid. Durruti himself died during the battle for Madrid early in the conflict, on November 20, 1936.³² As we will discover in the following chapters, Durruti was an inspiration for many anarchists. So too was Federica Montseny. Montseny, born on 12 February 1905, was an influential anarchist intellectual from Barcelona who became the Minister of Health in the Second Republic's government under Largo Caballero. Montseny broke two records. She became the first female minister in Spain's history, and under her governmental leadership, abortions were legalized for the first time in Spain.³³ Montseny was a vibrant icon for Spanish anarchists, especially women, who participated

³¹ Paz, *Iron Column*, 1-14. Paz was an anarchist and historian who fought during the Spanish Civil War.

³² Paz, *Durruti*, 4, 600. Paz offers an extensive biography of Durruti.

³³ Thomas, *Spanish Civil War*, 457-58, 520.

in the Spanish Civil War in large numbers.³⁴ Montseny survived the war, and was exiled to France where she died.³⁵

From all of this information thus far, it is quite clear that the anarchists played a significant role during the Spanish Civil War despite their eventual defeat. Spanish anarchists were able to grow into a formidable force from their historical roots of the prior century, and collectivized agriculture and industry while fighting in militia columns against the Nationalists, even while seated in government positions.

According to Hugh Thomas, the chief reason for Nationalist victory lay in the political alliance on the right, under Franco, which acquired unity based on its common fear of the left. Franco's army was also better organized than that of his enemies, not to mention it had the support of both Hitler and Mussolini, who were testing out their modern military capabilities. What might have made the leftist armies more effective, states Thomas, was a collaborative left-wing war effort— such as Bolshevik Russia undertook in 1919. Making matters even worse, Stalin sent older weaponry and ineffective advisors to the Republicans.³⁶ Furthermore, anarchists and communists were fighting one another as early as the spring of 1937, culminating in the “May Days” combat in Barcelona.

About this event, Stanley G. Payne writes, “The formation of [Juan] Negrín’s government was the product of the eight-month struggle to restore central authority [a

³⁴ For detailed female testimonies during and after the Spanish Civil War, see Thomas Cuevas, *Prison of Women*, trans. and ed. Mary E. Giles (Albany: New York Press, 1998).

³⁵ Many Spanish exiles were put into French concentration camps and some were even assigned to re-enforce the Maginot Line before the Second World War. For further information, see *Exile: Holding On, Fighting Back: The Long Road Home to Spain* (Films for the Humanities & Societies), DVD, 58 minutes.

³⁶ Thomas, *Spanish Civil War*, 893-908.

moderate position to preserve the Second Republic at all costs], which reached a high point in April and May 1937, climaxing with the ‘May Days’ in Barcelona from May 3 to 6.”³⁷ The leftist internal dissidence that exploded into violence during the May Days arose from the struggle between four subgroups trying to further their contrasting agendas: the revolutionary extremes, like the CNT and FAI; the Basque and Catalan nationalists; the Comintern and Partido Comunista de España (PCE – the Communist Party of Spain); and opposition to relative moderates, at first leftist republicans but then socialists who opposed Juan Negrín and the communists. Payne claims as many as four-hundred people were killed during the May Days, where the CNT and FAI fought against the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM – the Workers Party of Marxist Unification), whom the Communists denigrated as “Trotskyist.”³⁸ What was once an alliance of anarchists, socialists, and communists during the beginning of the civil war turned into a rivalry mid war – a civil war within a civil war. Afterwards, when Negrín’s government formed, the CNT and FAI compromised but were excluded from the newly established communist leaning government. However, the Spanish anarchists were still “the only anarchist movement in history to join regular governments [considering their role in the government of Largo Caballero], albeit revolutionary ones.”³⁹ All in all, the losses in life from all causes of the Spanish Civil War, as well as those killed after the civil war, have been estimated around half a million.⁴⁰

³⁷ Payne, *Spanish Civil War*, 178. Payne is a historian of modern Spain.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 218-19.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 217-18.

⁴⁰ Thomas, *Spanish Civil War*, 901. These numbers are disputed among leftist and conservative writers, with some claiming that over 800,000 perished. For more information, see Jesús de Andrés and Jesús Cuéllar, *Atlas Ilustrado de la Guerra Civil Española*, pro. Paul Preston (Madrid: Susaeta, 2011), 175.

In hindsight, Spaniards were questioning and redefining their national identity. What was Spain to be as it tried to transcend its history as a once great and thriving nation in the fifteenth century to a relatively backward European country by the twentieth century? In the midst of this national and international identity crisis – between democracy and severe forms of authority – the anarchists were able to exert a significantly major influence through agricultural and industrial collectivization, communes, militia resistance, and participation in government.⁴¹

⁴¹ Unfortunately, we cannot dive as deep into the sum of all events before, during, and after the Spanish Civil War. But if the reader is curiously inclined to learn more, this writer would suggest starting with the bibliography of this thesis, as many of the sources indulge into the totality of this international and often forgotten proxy-war – that which took part in specific techniques carried over and used during the Second World War up to the present day. For example, the first catastrophic aerial-bombing of a civilian city at Guernica, Spain in 1937 by the Condor Legion of Germany's air-force – the *Luftwaffe*. The bombing inspired Pablo Picasso to paint a piece named after the city. The German cities of Hamburg and Dresden would experience the same fate during the Second World War. So too would cities in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Chechen Republic, and Syria years later (just to name a few). Furthermore, the strategy of non-intervention played by Britain, France, and the United States during the Spanish Civil War is still in action today. For example, the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Chapter Two: Anarchist Identity

Anarchism

In common parlance, “anarchy” means a state of disorder, a complete lack of government, total chaos. If this characterization is true, then how can it be considered a mode of governance? Or, to put the question another way, what is anarchism? Let us start by contrasting three different commentaries on anarchism. Anarchist Emma Goldman said only six weeks into her first of three visits to revolutionary Spain that the aim of anarchism during the Spanish Civil War was “not the state but the independence and right of the people themselves.”¹ According to Goldman, control of the Spanish state in order to defeat Franco was not a priority. Instead, the aim of the anarchists was a form of liberty, in this case, the independence from a centralized government and right of the people to manage and govern themselves. To Goldman, anarchism does not involve a state, or a form of centralized authority, but the liberty of each individual.

Defining anarchism from a historical standpoint, a historian of anarchism, James Joll, writes:

The anarchist movement is a product of the nineteenth century. It is, in part at least, the result of the impact of machines and industry on a peasant or artisan society [but] it represents a type of revolt that can be found far earlier. The anarchists themselves are proud of this ancestry...Anarchism is both a religious faith and a rational philosophy; and many of its anomalies are the product of the clash between the two, and of the tensions between the different kinds of temperament which they represent.²

Joll also holds that “the strength of anarchism...will continue to attract people who want a total alternative to the values of contemporary society and politics and whose

¹ Goldman, *Vision on Fire*, 43.

² James Joll, *The Anarchists* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap Universal Library, 1966), 12-13.

temperaments respond to the appeal of ideas carried to their logical conclusion, regardless of the practical difficulties involved.”³ Joll claims anarchism is a product of industrialization during the 19th century, even if a history of anarchist tendencies can be detected prior to that century. The idea that anarchism can be both a religious faith and a rational philosophy, or, a value held both on faith and rationality, may seem contradictory. Still, Joll maintains anarchism has the capacity to entice those who desire an alternative form of society.

Moving away from a direct definition of anarchism, Peter Marshall comments on the strengths and weaknesses of anarchism by contrast to other political ideologies:

ANARCHY IS TERROR...Anarchy is chaos...Anarchy is nihilism...[and]...Although often associated with violence, historically anarchism has been far less violent than other political creeds, and appears as a feeble youth pushed out of the way by the marching hordes of fascists and authoritarian communists.⁴

Marshall raises the specter of anarchy as terror, chaos, and nihilism because “In the popular imagination, in our everyday language, anarchy is associated with destruction and disobedience,” especially when complemented with events like those of the late 19th and early 20th centuries “when there was a spate of spectacular bombings and political assassinations during a period of complete despair.”⁵ However, as Marshall points out,

³ Ibid., 279.

⁴ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, ix. In a way, Marshall is shooting-down his own claim. He claims anarchism is terror and nihilism being pushed aside by the terrors of fascists and communists.

⁵ Ibid. James Joll argues that the assassinations of the Tsar Alexander II in 1881, President Sadi Carnot of France in 1894, the Prime Minister of Spain in 1897, the empress of Austria in 1898, the king of Italy in 1900, President William McKinley of the United States in 1901, and the Archduke Francis Ferdinand in 1914 were all anarchist techniques – what was called “propaganda by the deed” – in action (see Joll, *Anarchists*, 129).

violence as a result of anarchism has been far less common than it has been with other political creeds like Nazism or Bolshevism (although comparing two or more violent concepts against another is still radical). In fact, it was the clash of those latter two political creeds that eventually “shattered the international anarchist movement.”⁶

In attempting to make sense of anarchism, all three writers deviate from one another. Goldman’s anarchism focuses on the freedom of the individual. Joll’s anarchism is an enticing by-product of industrialization that features two dialectical influences. Marshall’s anarchism emerges from the popular imagination of destruction but is less violent than other political creeds such as Nazism or Communism. Yet all three writers hold similar views in several ways. They all believe that there is an inherent human propensity to go against the general will of a given community. All three writers define anarchism as the idea of, and the struggle to achieve, the absence of authority, of law and order maintained by others in positions of power. Therefore, they all imply that anarchism should be considered as a form of absolute independence: the politics of individuals seeking their self-interest to the highest degree without entrenched centralized authority deterring them. These notions are in tune with the ancient Greek word *anarkhia*, meaning, “contrary to authority or without a ruler.”⁷ In the sense that history has been grounded on order and power, anarchism can be understood as the attempt to surmount history’s failings.

⁶ Ibid., xi, 539-65. However, Marshall notes that the values and ideas of anarchism after the Second World War were “dormant, not extinct. The sixties saw a remarkable revival, although in an unprecedented and more diffuse form.” For example, in the United States there arose the new left and the counter-culture and the new right and anarcho-capitalism. Still, anarchism never reached the height it had before the Second World War, even if it has transcended time through various forms into the present era.

⁷ Ward, *Anarchism*, 1.

If anarchism separates itself from traditional societies based upon hierarchy and authority, can it be simply understood as an innate characteristic of human psychology? Perhaps humans would rather be told what to do?⁸ The following pages will offer certain evidence that anarchism is an intrinsic human characteristic. As for the opposite position, that human beings tend to abide by authority, it would be fair to assert that the 1963 Milgram Experiment and the 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment both yield enough evidence to show that we have a tendency to obey perceived forms of legitimate authority, even to the extent of doing harm to others.⁹ Perhaps the answer to whether humanity needs order or despises order is that it gives evidence of both drives.¹⁰ However, the acknowledgement that we have characteristics of both absolute autonomy

⁸ Thomas E. Wartenberg describes Fyodor Dostoyevsky's (1821-1881) *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), and how its story of "The Grand Inquisitor" advocates that humans fear freedom, indicating people want order. Wartenberg writes that "freedom and happiness, are antithetical values, and when faced with a choice between them, it is clear that most human beings prefer happiness...freedom is, at best, something about which we are ambivalent. 'The Grand Inquisitor,' then, is an argument for the contention that freedom is not the most important value that human beings hold." See Thomas E. Wartenberg, *Existentialism: A Beginners' Guide* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2013), 31-36.

⁹ S. A. Haslam and Stephen D. Reicher, "Contesting the 'Nature' of Conformity: What Milgram and Zimbardo's Studies Really Show," *PLoS Biology* 10, no. 11 (2012). The authors conclude that "Much of the power of [Stanley] Milgram and [Philip] Zimbardo's research derives from the fact that it appears to give empirical substance to this claim that evil is banal. It seems to show that tyranny is a natural and unavoidable consequence of humans' inherent motivation to bend to the wishes of those in authority – whoever they may be and whatever it is that they want us to do. Put slightly differently, it operationalizes an apparent tragedy of the human condition: our desire to be good subjects is stronger than our desire to be subjects who do good." These studies originated out of the curiosity of Nazi atrocities during the Second World War.

¹⁰ Economist James M. Buchanan argues that "ordered anarchy" is the operating force in the world. Buchanan writes that people "want freedom from constraints, while at the same time they recognize the necessity for order." See James M. Buchanan, *The Limits of Liberty: Between Anarchy and Leviathan* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000), xiii.

and acquiescence to authority helps explain the significance of anarchist identity, as every individual may have anarchistic tendencies.

Joll writes that “If the anarchists have failed to make their revolution they have all the same provided a continuous criticism of prevailing views and have occasionally made us think again about our political and social presuppositions...Like all puritans, they have succeeded in making us just a little uneasy about the kind of life we lead.”¹¹ In short, it is important to understand those who reject and have been rejected by the orders of society; the anarchists may be radical by conventional standards, but they certainly have the capacity to contribute critical social-analysis to the rest of society. In a way, anarchists are political or social exiles, as they are ostracized by traditional political or social standards. However, society should not spurn anarchists, but rather attempt to understand them, their contributive criticism, and their ability to restructure a society in order to pave the way for a more comprehensive history and future.

Identity

Despite the difficulty of defining anarchism conclusively, we are able to highlight deviations and understand commonalities within anarchism. But now we turn to a term that lies at the heart of this thesis: identity. Anthony D. Smith has pointed out that Sophocles’ story of Oedipus Rex encapsulates the idea of each individuals’ identity quite well. The central theme of Oedipus Rex is the problem of identity: who am I? While Oedipus underwent the stages of his identity crisis, from knowing he was King to learning he was a murderous peasant married to his mother, his identity remained both

¹¹ Joll, *Anarchists*, 278-79. Although comparing Puritans to anarchists may seem contradictory.

individual and collective at once. For example, Oedipus was the King of Thebes and a king of a Greek city-state, thus his identity was composed of individual responsibilities linked to communal standards on many different levels. To elaborate further, even farmers and shopkeepers have their own will and responsibilities at home while also being held to a communal standard in terms of maintaining community values, paying for group functions, and the like. Identity can also change through time. For example, when Oedipus found out he was no longer a king but a peasant who murdered his father and had children with his mother, his individual and communal identity immediately shifted into something drastically different¹² – from king to bereft outcast. Drawing on Smith, if identity can be understood as an individual answering the internal question of “who am I,” one identity can also quickly change into another.

As Smith further points out, we all inherit multiple roles that shape our complex identity. For example, social identities are based on familial, territorial, class, religious, and ethnic foundations. Religious identity consists of values involving traditions, myths, and symbols. And national identity rests on collective, cultural phenomena that involve a historical territory or homeland, common myths and historical memories, a common mass public culture, common legal rights and duties for all members, and a common economy with territorial mobility for members. Smith again uses the example of ancient Greece to point out the multiplicity of identity, as there were both Greek city-states and a united Greek community. He notes that certain types of identity can be pitted against one another, as Oedipus was a Theban and at the same time a Greek.¹³ Being a Theban and a

¹² Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), vii-18. Smith provides a scholarly approach to national identity.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Greek, Oedipus held two different identities, making his own identity complex while providing opportunity for opposition. For example, if Thebes became involved in a violent confrontation with its neighboring city-state Corinth, Oedipus would be poised between defending his Theban identity and going on the offense against his larger Greek identity. Thus, Oedipus would have the potential to fortify and minimize his identity, as he chose.

For those reasons, Benedict Anderson describes identity as fundamentally subjective, most famously in the case of national identity, as an “imagined political community.” The political community of a nation is imagined because one does not know each and every member of the nation, but it is also limited because there is a finite and elastic boundary.¹⁴ For these reasons, identity is both subjective and objective because it is formed through one’s own understanding of self in combination with conforming to a larger or smaller, but tangible, community. Amin Maalouf writes that identity “has been the fundamental question of philosophy from Socrates’s ‘Know thyself!’ through countless other masters down to [Sigmund] Freud.”¹⁵ Maalouf describes his own personal circumstance as poised between two countries, two languages, two religions, and several cultural traditions – being half-French, half-Lebanese, Arabic, and a Christian. But Maalouf writes, “Identity can’t be compartmentalized. You can’t divide it up into halves or thirds or any other separate segments. I haven’t got several identities: I’ve got just one, made up of many components in a mixture that is unique to me, just as other people’s

¹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: New Left Books, 2016), 1-9.

¹⁵ Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Arcade, 2012), 9.

identity is unique to them as individuals.”¹⁶ Furthermore, Maalouf maintains that complex identities, like his and countless others, are marginalized but significant because they “act as bridges, go-betweenes, mediators between the various communities and cultures.”¹⁷ All three writers conceive of, and define, identity as a complex internal answer to the question of “who am I?” as the individual engages with and tries to fit into a larger or smaller community. For example: “I am a Spaniard, because I was born in Madrid, I speak Spanish, I love Real Madrid Club de Fútbol, I go to church with my family and friends, I attend the ‘Running of the Bulls’ each year, and I do not support Catalan independence.” However, this made-up, but potentially real identity could change at any moment for a great number of reasons.

Because anarchism is associated with ideology, we must ask: how does identity differ from ideology? An example of anarchist ideology would be that of Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), whose pamphlet *God and the State* published in 1882 articulated an anarchist doctrine and drew on the anarchist philosophies of others who came before him, like William Godwin and Joseph-Pierre Proudhon. Godwin (1756-1836) made a case against government, law, property, and institutions of the state.¹⁸ According to Peter Marshall, “Godwin started from an individualistic position and argued that all co-operation to a degree is an evil since it interferes with personal autonomy.”¹⁹ Proudhon

¹⁶ Ibid., 1-30.

¹⁷ Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁸ Ward, *Anarchism*, 3. Godwin “was the partner of Mary Wollstonecraft and the father of Mary Shelley, and was an heir of both the English tradition of radical nonconformity and of the French *philosophes*.”

¹⁹ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 625, xiii. This idea may seem similar to contemporary libertarianism. However, Marshall writes: “I define an anarchist as one who rejects all forms of external government and the State and believes that society and individuals would function well without them. A libertarian on the other hand is one who

(1809-1865) embraced Godwin's ideals to build on the political refutation of existing norms, and was the first "to call himself an anarchist."²⁰ Proudhon claimed land-owners and capitalists exploit the masses through state institutions, and peasants or artisans have a natural right to a home, cultivation of land, and the tools to cultivate, but no ownership of anything whatsoever.²¹ In the wake of Godwin and Proudhon, Bakunin called for a revolution to set forth his philosophy of anarchist freedom.²² "In a word," writes Bakunin, "we reject all legislation, all authority, and all privileged, licensed, official, and legal influence."²³ Bakunin concluded that religion, the state, and its institutions weighs individuals down. Bakunin envisioned proper government within small autonomous communities in which individuals tied together by mutually exchanging voluntary authority as the epitome of anarchist freedom.²⁴ Some years later another anarchist theorist, Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921), similarly articulated in *The Conquest of Bread* a plan for the self-organization of a post-revolutionary society through collectivization of agriculture and industry by control via the workers.²⁵

Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin all articulated varied ideals for systems of an anarchist society in elaborate philosophical treatises that laid out explicit

takes liberty to be a supreme value and would like to limit the powers of government to a minimum compatible with security. The line between anarchist and libertarian is thin, and in the past the terms have often been used interchangeably. But while all anarchists are libertarians, not all libertarians are anarchists."

²⁰ Ward, *Anarchism*, 1-4. Proudhon was also a French propagandist.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

²² *Ibid.*, 5. Mikhail Bakunin made his mark while disputing with Karl Marx (1818-1883) in the First International in the 1870s over the revolutionary means to a utopian end.

²³ Mikhail Bakunin, *God and the State* (Whithorn: Anodos Books, 2017), 23.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Bakunin also argues that laws are established only through science, which may never reveal whole-truths or the sum of all truths in the physical world.

²⁵ Ward, *Anarchism*, 5-23.

ideological doctrines. However, in common with one another, all four writers argue that the state and those in positions of authority had to be dissolved. Peter Marshall considers the similarity between all four philosophers as “a model of society in which decisions are made in the local assemblies of the sovereign people.”²⁶ In short, this type of freedom is freedom in a radical form of almost absolute independence for individuals and small collectives.

Although certain common themes could be found among the espousers of anarchism, no distinct or consistent ideology emerged that could be treated as the core of their program, other than a generalized rejection of established authority. Therefore, it is not surprising that anarchism as a practice could develop in a wide variety of forms. Moreover, and as Colin Ward suggests, “Some anarchists would object to the identification of anarchism with its best-known authors. They would point out that everywhere in the world where anarchist ideas have arisen, there is a local activist conspiring” against them.²⁷ It is also important to note that ideologies are not fully articulated or known by a significant portion of the population, meaning there would be no clear theory on how to take specific action for a specific end-goal. By contrast to ideology, identity is found within particular characteristics that are shared by others of the same community. Because identity is dynamic, internalized, and manifests in many forms

²⁶ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 625.

²⁷ Ward, *Anarchism*, 8, 14-21. This includes anarchist resilience and defeat during the Roman Empire, the Peasants’ Revolt in England in 1391, the insurrection of the Taborites in Bohemia in 1493, the Anabaptists a century later, the American and French revolutions, the European revolutions in 1848, and the major revolutions of the 20th century, for example, Russia in 1917 and Spain on 18 July 1936.

and shades, it penetrates into mentalities and communities more easily than an ideological doctrine. Therefore, under many circumstances identity precedes ideology.

To crystalize our understanding, an anarchist ideology would declare that the institutions of the state, religion, and even political associations exist only to hoard power for themselves, and thus the only path to freedom is to unite into anarchist unions to ensure each member has a voice and individuals retain the authority to do as they please. By contrast, an anarchist identity would offer a sense of personal and shared abhorrence of authority developed in common with friends who seek out and fight “bullies” in the local neighborhood. It would also promote an aspiration to establish a free local community because of the dread of living under the authoritarian rule of the larger society. Anarchist individuals could band together in anarchist communities either under a specific doctrine or through a sense of self tied to a collective coherence.

One example of this aforementioned process comes from an anarchist individual within an anarchist community during the Spanish Civil War.

Pepita Carpeña was a member of the *Mujeres Libres* (Free Women – an anarchist women’s organization). Carpeña recollected the *tertulias literarias* (literary gatherings) initiated by her organization during the war. “We all would read the same book,” stated Carpeña, “and then you cannot imagine the change of views that takes place in a general meeting...maybe what you haven’t perceived before, you realize when you say it to someone else, and the other person realized what you have perceived. It was a great education. It taught me a lot; this is all the education I have, I have no more. I left school

at age 11 and that was it.”²⁸ Although Carpeña never received a traditional education, she felt a sense of substantial education in her anarchist reading circle. Carpeña discovered her sense of self during this whole process. While she may have learned a considerable anarchist doctrine, the *tertulias literarias* within the Mujeres Libres also helped Carpeña build and fortify a communal and individual sense of identity.²⁹

As discussed in the previous chapter, the anarchists were able to exert a significantly major influence through agricultural and industrial collectivization, communes, militia resistance, and participation in government. However, anarchism has a practical problem maintaining itself in power because by definition it is averse to leadership, hierarchy, and rigid ideology. Because anarchism cannot organize itself around any of those governing principles, it often coalesces instead around a personal and collective sense of self and communal coherence. Therefore, I maintain in the following pages that a coherent doctrine was not the driving force behind Spanish anarchism during the Spanish Civil War. Rather, anarchists were inspired by a powerful sense of self that held the movement together and enabled it to exert a powerful influence over the course of events in that tumultuous era.

²⁸ Jesse Cohn, *Underground Passages: Anarchist Resistance Culture 1848-2011* (Oakland: AK Press, 2014), 61. Cohn’s study of worldwide anarchist resistance culture from 1848-2011 gives insight into anarchist sentiments and aspirations through first-hand testimonies, songs, poems, and propaganda.

²⁹ During the course of research and writing this thesis, the eightieth anniversary of the formation of the Mujeres Libres (1937) was celebrated in Spain. Interestingly, one Spanish article wrote that the 21,000 women anarchists who organized into 147 local groups formed the first authentic feminist movement in Spain. José Manuel Muñoz Póliz noted that the Spanish anarchist women were separating the values and priorities of women from the working class’ values and priorities (see Beatriz Asuar Gallego, “Mujeres Libres: las anarquistas que revolucionaron la clase obrera,” *Público*, accessed December 24, 2017, <http://www.publico.es/politica/memoria-publica/80-anos-mujeres-libres-xxx-mujeres-libres-anarquistas-revolucionaron-clase-obrera.html>).

Chapter Three: Negation

Forming a Spanish Anarchist Identity Through Negation

Chapter two suggested that anarchist systems of ideas are not consistent, or understood by a significant portion of the population, nor embraced wholeheartedly by anarchists. Thus, a sense of self was more likely to have held anarchist communities together during the Spanish Civil War. However, a sense of anarchist identity underlay the movement as much as an external ideology. This does not necessitate that identity and ideology were in competition with one another, or that this study's aim is to discredit anarchist ideology. It is rather to understand the roots, significance, and influence of anarchist identity.

Spanish anarchism was hamstrung in its attempt to create a positive ideology because of its concern to reject authority. As an attitude that was critical of all external authority, anarchism was necessarily adept of expressing what it was not and what it rejected. As a result, the anarchists helped to cultivate a collective understanding by defining themselves by what they were not. The anarchists built a sense of purpose on the criticism of others. This criticism refined and defined them, especially in their opposition to any form of external power. Anarchist identity emerged in part through the process of negation, the act of defining who you are by defining what you are not. The anarchists defined themselves by their opposition to authority in general, to religion, to feudalism, to capitalism and fascism simultaneously, to communism, and unsurprisingly to anarchism itself.

Rejecting Authority

Many of the interviews used in this thesis were conducted years after the Spanish Civil War, when Franco's government was loosening its grip on the state. Despite the potential for unreliability, and while drawing from various regions in Spain, these first-hand testimonies go a long way toward expressing what it meant to be a Spanish anarchist during the war.¹

We begin by focusing on the rejection of authority. For example, in 1937 Federica Montseny said that "Authority is something from which we are constantly subtracting, of which there remains always a residue, and which we attempt to make smaller and smaller. This is the moral and physical principle which we Anarchists put into practice in Spain."² According to this statement, Montseny wholeheartedly rejected the concept of authority, as did other anarchists who embraced this perspective. In fact, Montseny recognized that authority never entirely disappears. Therefore, it was the mission of Spanish anarchists to lead the way in ensuring that authoritarian forces would become smaller over time.

Andreu Capdevila was a CNT textile worker in the Fabra and Coats Spinning Company's factory in Barcelona, who during the war took up a political post on the Economics Council of Catalonia. Capdevila described his anti-authoritarian values during the Spanish Civil War:

¹ See Fraser, *Blood of Spain*; Mintz, *Anarchism and Workers' Self-Management*; Federica Montseny, *Militant Anarchism and the Reality in Spain* (Glasgow: Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation, 1937), PDF; Paz, *Durruti*; Paz, *Iron Column*; *The Spanish Civil War*, 2 vols. (Granada Television International: MPI Home Video, 1987), VHS, 360 minutes; Valls, *CNT*.

² Montseny, *Reality in Spain*, 5. Remarks from this source were taken from a 1937 CNT-FAI propaganda speech.

I never smoked, I never touched alcohol, I spent my whole life working and studying peacefully with my *compañera*; I had the opportunity of becoming a businessman, a foreman, but I always refused. I lived by my work, I never exploited others. I was an anarchist.³

Capdevila had the chance to be something other than what he was, in this case a businessman or foreman – which many would conceive of as a better opportunity to move up the ladder of social mobility. Capdevila’s refusal shows that he valued living by his work and rejected authority which he understood as exploitive. Most importantly, Capdevila connects all of these characteristics to the statement: “I am an anarchist.” In this case, Capdevila’s sense of what an anarchist was involved living and working soberly, peacefully, and without controlling others. Benigno Castañer – an anarchist carpenter – echoed Capdevila’s story. Castañer stated, “we were against all vices (including drugs such as cigarettes and alcohol).” And yet Castañer recalled distributing cigarettes to others in his collective because he did not want to refuse another’s request.⁴ Castañer was against being an authoritarian agent forbidding items desired by his fellow anarchists. Both Capdevila and Castañer understood themselves as rejecting any position of authority that might control another’s free will.

Roque Santamaría wound up on the War Committee during the conversion of the Iron Column into a Brigade, and said the following to his friends about militarization: “Once the Column is militarized, I’m out of here.” Furthermore, he asserted that “At the time [of this decision to militarize] I held the post of supply delegate within the Column, which would have likely given me the rank of quartermaster captain. But I had already

³ Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 213-15.

⁴ *Spanish Civil War*, VHS.

rejected all that.”⁵ Even though he could have enjoyed better living conditions, Santamaría rejected the idea of leading a collective under traditional military authority and preferred to remain independent of authority.

Raoul Tarrow, another member of the Iron Column, wrote: “I will not speak as an antifascist but as an anarchist...I oppose all authority, especially military authority.”⁶ Although fighting in a military unit, Tarrow rejected the legitimizing of military authority. The rejection of authority was also evident in the way some anarchists dressed. For example, when Buenaventura Durruti had passed through a small town, one onlooker described how he could not have been the leader that so many were hearing about. “But he can’t be the boss! He’s not wearing stripes!” In response, another replied: “an anarchist is never a boss and so wouldn’t wear stripes.”⁷ Durruti projected an image through his clothing, portraying himself as equal as every other working-class Spaniard. Although Durruti was an authority figure who laid out the mission of his specific organization, an anarchist by definition is not an authoritarian figure. Therefore, Durruti solidified his rejection of authority by refusing to display rank or hierarchy in his uniform. As Montseny stated: “I have always believed...that the day they [the CNT leadership] started to militarize the people...we [the anarchists] started to lose the war.”⁸

Rejecting Religion

While anarchists rejected authority in general, they rejected religious authority in particular. Hugh Thomas indicates the violent attitude toward religion, by noting that

⁵ Paz, *Iron Column*, 177.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁷ Paz, *Durruti*, 482.

⁸ *Spanish Civil War*, VHS.

“6,832 are believed to have been religious persons [who were targeted and killed]” by the reaction against religion from the left.⁹ Julián Casanova points out one instance in 1936 where “The churches were burning [while the] red and black flag [the flag of the CNT-FAI] fluttered gloriously over these good things.”¹⁰ Without a doubt, the anarchists absolutely rejected religion, and sometimes in a cruel manner.

Saturnino Carod was the son of a landless day-laborer in the small village of Moneva, near Zaragoza. He was illiterate until his early twenties, getting by with begging in the streets and working in the agricultural fields. Carod joined the CNT soon after the First World War and became a Zaragoza CNT leader, the propaganda secretary of the regional committee for Aragon, Rioja, and Navarre, and an anarchist column leader named after him as the “Carod Column.” When confronting a priest accompanied by police, Carod described his hostility toward religious practices as well as police authority: “We refused to kneel, as was the custom, or to obey police orders.”¹¹

Durruti similarly approved of the anarchists’ rejection of religion. For example, in a small town within the province of Lérida – between Zaragoza and Barcelona – Durruti arrived at the town square, which was empty save some women leaving the church. Durruti asked the locals whether mass was being held in church. “No, no,” the locals replied, “There’s no priest. The priest is working in the field with the other men.”

⁹ Thomas, *Spanish Civil War*, 259.

¹⁰ Casanova, *Civil War in Spain*, 133. For more on visual propaganda during the conflict, such as the flag of the CNT-FAI, see Miriam M. Basilio, *Visual Propaganda, Exhibitions, and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Routledge, 2013). Religious figures were murdered by the military rebels as well (see Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*, 430-31).

¹¹ Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 120-21, 364. Carod’s refusal to obey orders “resulted in a shoot-out and we all scattered.”

Assuming that Durruti wondered why the locals did not kill the priest, the locals stated: “Kill him? Why kill him? He isn’t dangerous. He even talks about going to live with a town girl. Besides, he’s very happy with everything that’s happening.” However, Durruti pointed and replied: “But the church is right there.” The locals then stated: “Why destroy it? The statues were removed and burned in the square. God no longer exists. He’s been expelled from here. And, since God doesn’t exist, the assembly decided to replace the word “adios” [with God] with “Salud” [cheers].” Furthermore, “The Cooperative now occupies the church and, because everything is collectivized, it supplies the town.” The townspeople rejected religion but not the labor or person of the priest nor the shelter and material wealth of the church. Durruti was pleased with the responses he had received.¹² Meanwhile, all religious icons were destroyed to eradicate the appearance of God. Not only does this incident tell us that the anarchists rejected religion, but that they acted rationally with respect to material goods and human life. As Montseny stated: “We need no messiah and no sterile conception of a god menacing us with hell and purgatory. Love as the basis of life will bind us together.”¹³ Montseny’s rejection of religion and substitution of humanism suggests that the anarchists opposed religion as an authority over the common people.

Rejecting Feudalism

Another category of negation involved the rejection of “feudalism” – a medieval form of land ownership and system of rural labor. Different landowning individuals were operating under different economic systems throughout Spain during the Civil War, some

¹² Paz, *Durruti*, 494.

¹³ Montseny, *Reality in Spain*, 11.

of which could be construed as “semi-feudal” – as already indicated by Breitbart in the first chapter. Hugh Thomas writes that Spanish land in the 1930’s was characterized by three main problems: *minifundia*, or tiny farms that could not supply adequate living conditions to the owners; *latifundia*, or large estates with owners and associates in a dominant economic position; and problems “from different sorts of tendencies,” one being an “old inefficient ‘feudal’ system [in the South that] had vanished with modern capitalist farming.”¹⁴

Years after the civil war, Montseny stated the anarchist rejection of feudalism was a product of Spanish history:

Created by the mixture of so many different races, by their history, and by constant oppression. They were oppressed first by feudalism. Then by an all-powerful bourgeoisie. By an army that has always cast its long shadow over Spain. By the pressure of the Church. And all of this has created a constant spirit of rebellion among the Spaniards, it has driven them towards ideas of emancipation, towards revolutionary concepts of society, and of life.¹⁵

To Montseny, Spanish anarchists were a complex group of individuals tied together by the rejection of the authorities of past and present. Montseny felt that these specific oppressions enabled the anarchists, like herself, to embody the revolutionary anarchistic nature of anarchists during the conflict.

In 1938, an individual living in an anarchist collectivized community in Southern Spain observed that “This example [the anarchist collective] affords some insight into the unbearable dictatorship exercised by the [anarchist] committees. The most tribal aspect of life was the subject of their oversight [the anarchist committee overseeing the collective].

¹⁴ Thomas, *Spanish Civil War*, 76-79.

¹⁵ *Spanish Civil War*, VHS.

Many peasants were of the opinion that the new anarchist dictatorship was as unbearable as the old feudal dictatorship.”¹⁶ According to this statement, the committees overseeing the anarchist collectives were synonymous with the system before the civil war: “feudalism.” Not only does this onlooker tell us that the old labor system was perceived and labelled as “feudal,” but peasants within the anarchist collective saw themselves as opposing a “feudal” or rural labor system. Rather, if many of the peasants related with the anarchists, at least at first, it seems their loyalty flagged once oversight committees were put in place.

Rejecting Capitalism and Fascism

Anarchism was particularly vehement in its simultaneous rejection of capitalism and fascism because for many anarchists both rejections were understood as a symbiotic relationship. Anarchist militiaman Emilio Bernuz believed that rebuilding society during the Spanish Civil War required “not capitalism but revolution.”¹⁷ To Bernuz, revolution meant a change in people’s daily routines and the adoption of institutions that Bernuz gravitated towards. As a member of the Iron Column, called Blumenthal, stated: “I am an anarchist and I stand with other anarchists. I refuse to be a soldier and a servant of capitalism.”¹⁸

Other anarchists objected to capitalism through their abhorrence of what they called the bourgeoisie. Before leaving Barcelona, the *Toronto Star* interviewed Durruti. The following is an excerpt: “The bourgeois class,” stated Durruti, “will not like it when

¹⁶ Mintz, *Anarchism and Workers’ Self-Management*, 126.

¹⁷ *Spanish Civil War*, VHS.

¹⁸ Paz, *Iron Column*, 162.

we install the revolution... We syndicalists, we are fighting for the revolution. We know what we want.”¹⁹

Mikhail Koltsov, a Moscow correspondent from the Soviet newspaper, *Pravda*, interviewed Durruti as well. Durruti asked Koltsov “what does the Soviet Union intend to do for the Spanish Revolution?” Koltsov replied that diplomatic concerns prevented the Soviet Union from intervening directly, yet he did not rule out the possibility (and reality) of indirect Russian aid to the Second Republic. Durruti was not pleased with Koltsov’s response, so he responded that:

The battle against fascism isn’t the work of the government, but the Spanish proletariat, which unleashed the revolution in response to the military uprising. The Republican government hasn’t armed the workers or done anything to stop the military assault. Under such circumstance, it makes no sense that money from the Russian workers is sent not to the Spanish workers, but to a government that refuses to arm the revolutionary militias, even though it controls the Spanish treasury. The meaning of our war is clear: it’s not about supporting bourgeois institutions, but about destroying them. If the Russian people aren’t aware of the nature of our efforts, then it’s the duty of Russian journalism to inform them.²⁰

¹⁹ Paz, *Durruti*, 476.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 503-6. According to Paz, this dialogue was not included in Koltsov’s diary. Paz notes this omission is from the fact that Joseph “Stalin did not want the Russian people to know what was really happening in Spain.” By doing this, Koltsov was reinforcing “the [negative] image of anarchists that Stalinists supported.” In fact, Stalin had sent in the secret police (NKVD) and the military intelligence unit (GRU) in order to control or “Sovietize” Spain while trying to destroy the opposition to Stalin’s demands. For more information, see *Spain Betrayed: The Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War*, ed. Ronald Radosh et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). Furthermore, Soviet Russia’s “Operation X” was a logistically challenging military intervention launched by the Soviet armed forces trying to infiltrate Spain and Western Europe. For more information, see Daniel Kowalsky, “Operation X: Soviet Russia and the Spanish Civil War,” *Bulletin of Spanish Studies: Hispanic Studies and Researches on Spain, Portugal, and Latin America*, vol. 91, no. 1-2 (2014): 159-78. After all, this was Soviet Russia’s first opportunity to internationally intervene with their agenda in mind.

Durruti was not pleased hearing that Stalin's Russia – the only nation to aid the Second Republic – would intervene indirectly rather than give money and weapons directly to the hands of those fighting on the ground, like Durruti and his anarchists. Durruti wanted the Russian people to be aware that their Soviet Union was not directly aiding the anti-fascist forces but delivering goods to the Republic, which Durruti already opposed as an illegitimate form of authority.

Manuel Carabaño was fifteen years old during the Spanish Civil War, and an anarchist youth member who fought in the defense of Madrid against Franco. According to him, “We weren't defending the democratic republic, which was essentially a bourgeois republic, we were fighting it. The war for us was a revolutionary war against fascism and the bourgeois republic.”²¹ Carabaño felt he was fighting almost everything around him other than his fellow anarchists: the bourgeois republic and fascism. Carabaño's sense of self was absolutely antithetical to being a bourgeoisie.

A necessary medium of capitalism is money. The anarchists, therefore, objected to currency as a way to signal their rejection of capitalism as a whole. For example, Montseny stated that: “the people of Spain will never consent to work again for capitalist interests. People who freely endanger their lives for a common cause do not take payment in money.”²² When describing a collective's issues with how to run a local economy without capitalism, Ernesto Margeli observed that “We [the collective] thought that by abolishing money we would cure most ills.” Interestingly, Margeli's Mas de las Matas collective did abolish money and substituted in a rationing system where villagers did not

²¹ Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 338.

²² Montseny, *Reality in Spain*, 9-10.

go hungry.²³ This example shows how a collective group of individuals thought that annihilating money would solve most social problems, as if money or capitalism were the root of most social problems.

In the same *Toronto Star* interview used above, Durruti expressed his pride in anarchism as the only means of overcoming fascism. “For us,” stated Durruti, “it is a question of crushing fascism, wiping it out and sweeping it away so that it can never rear its head again in Spain. We are determined to finish fascism once and for all. Yes, and in spite of the government.” When shocked to hear the last part of that response, the reporter asked: “Why do you say in spite of the government?” Durruti replied: “No government in the world fights fascism to the death. When the bourgeoisie sees power slipping away from its grasp, it has recourse to fascism to maintain itself.”²⁴ According to Durruti, the capitalist bourgeoisie had resorted to fascism in order to avoid its own eradication. As Montseny stated: “Very soon we [the anarchists] will give to the world the example of a free land, that stood up without arms opposed, as a single man, to fascism, to the mentality of capitalism.”²⁵ Not only did Montseny believe there was a link between fascism and capitalism, but she also invoked the two rejections as synonymous with the anarchist movement as a whole.

Similarly, one member of the Iron Column stated that “in the villages through which we have passed, we have, after wrestling them from the clutches of the fascist, changed their way of living, annihilating the fierce *caciques* [bosses] who blighted the lives of the peasants, after robbing them, and we handed over their wealth to the only

²³ Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 354.

²⁴ Paz, *Durruti*, 176-77.

²⁵ Montseny, *Reality in Spain*, 11.

ones capable of creating wealth: to the workers.”²⁶ Not only did this anarchist define this community as anti-fascist, but he characterized them as Robin Hoods stealing from wealthy fascists wherever they passed.

Rejecting Communism

Although they resembled communists in some ways, the anarchists also defined themselves by rejecting communism. As stated in the first chapter, the anarchists and communists – along with other political groups such as the socialists and moderates – were aligned within the so-called Popular Front against Franco during the opening shots of the Spanish Civil War. However, this alliance turned into a civil war within the left, and ultimately gave way to interactive combat in the May Days in Barcelona where several hundred anarchists and communists perished. These facts make the rejection of communism quite evident, which demonstrated the importance for the anarchists of defining themselves through negation.

Joan Ferrer was a bookkeeper who became secretary of the CNT commercial employee’s union. Ferrer stated that “It was our idea in the CNT that everything should start from the worker, not – as with the communists – that everything should start with the state. To this end we wanted to set up industrial federations.”²⁷ Ferrer did not accept the idea of a centralized authority presiding over affairs. Instead, she felt that individuals in small associations could manage and govern themselves. Ferrer did not want to function under what she thought as communist ideals, nor did she embrace communism as part of who she was. In the context of the Spanish Civil War, it was the Russian

²⁶ Paz, *Iron Column*, 181.

²⁷ Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 139, 220.

Communist state that initially aided the side of the anarchists. Therefore, in a twist of events, Ferrer felt that she and others did not have a personal or collective understanding with the only nation which claimed to have sympathized with the cause of anarchists like Ferrer. Montseny echoed a similar self-view:

After the Russian Revolution a strong movement of the masses developed in Spain, which is the best reply to fascism. Spain is the first and only nation to face up to fascism squarely and to throw herself into a revolution that is genuinely Spanish, completely original, and having no relation with the Russian Revolution...The socialists have inherited a centralist tendency as a consequence of the authoritarian teachings of [Karl] Marx. But they must adapt themselves to the reality in Spain as we have done with the teachings of [Mikhail] Bakunin.²⁸

Montseny tried to promote the idea of the individual separated away from centralized authority, pointing out that: “After the establishment of [Russia’s] Red dictatorship [initially under the Bolsheviks but at this point under the guise of Stalin], the [Red] Army and Cheka [Soviet Secret Police], created to fight the enemy, were used against the Anarchists, who were pursued with fire and sword.”²⁹

Rejecting Anarchism

Our final category of negation is perhaps not a surprise. Some anarchists expressed the desire to reject the mainstream anarchist ideology of the time – the CNT – which many anarchists initially supported. This characteristic is similar to what Colin Ward described in the previous chapter, as some anarchists rejected the anarchist ideology propagated by others. Therefore, this specific rejection may be the most vital for the argument that anarchists embraced an identity more than an ideology, as it suggests that there was no main coherent anarchist doctrine holding anarchist communities

²⁸ Montseny, *Reality in Spain*, 4,8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

together. To the extent that there was a leading ideology, some anarchists went against it. We might refer to this as the anarchy in the anarchism.³⁰ The rejection of anarchist ideology and authority is also the most radical, yet, in a way, truest to the anarchist spirit. After all, it sprang from a sense of self-worth built on the criticism of others, and because anarchism rejected external power, in certain ways it became difficult to create a coherent program of internal power. Thus, anarchist individuals who gave their own meanings to the movement were leading the way.

In Barcelona, Josep Costa was a specialist foreman at a textile factory who joined the CNT. Costa vehemently (clenching both his fists and raising them in the air) claimed at the onset of the civil war “now is the time to destroy all that has been suppressing us!”³¹ Coming from an urban environment and working in a textile factory under the authority of established owners, Costa claimed:

I'm sure there were thousands of CNT militants like me who saw that the whole thing made no sense; but the pressure came from the base, from the mass of workers who had been imbued for years with the CNT's revolutionary ideas. We militants couldn't now make a joke of the ideology and practice to emancipate the working class we had professed for so long. The revolution was like a dog shaking itself when it comes out of the water – the Spanish people shaking itself free of 400 years' injustice. There was nothing we militants could do but go ahead or shoot ourselves.³²

Costa shed light on the possibility that there may have been thousands of anarchists who felt that the CNT's values were not the values of the individuals within the anarchist organization. Costa felt that he could not even contribute constructive criticism to his

³⁰ In a way, this is a general characteristic of left-wing movements, as they tend to not be as stable as right-wing movements.

³¹ *The Spanish Civil War*, VHS. Costa is also used as a source in Ronald Fraser's study (see Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 228-29).

³² Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 228-29.

own community, as the conflict was a four-hundred-year buildup of negative sentiment exploding like Mount Vesuvius. To Costa, the situation was a dichotomy, either go forward with the movement or kill yourself – obviously choosing the former.

Eduardo Pons Prades, a wood-worker and an Anarchist Youth member who lived next to a military barracks in Barcelona during the war, expressed a similar view: “The [CNT] logic of the times [was] a logic not very close to the ideology which the majority of the CNT members had imbibed.”³³ Pons Prades implied that he and many members of the anarchist organization did not agree with the doctrine of the CNT leadership. The CNT’s authority did not conform to the sense of self many had gained as a result of anarchist practice. Capdevila also expressed that “I had never been in favour of the CNT entering any sort of official organization or government. Either we made our total revolution or remained in opposition.”³⁴ Although Capdevila did join the organization, he was initially not inclined towards it. The rejection of the anarchist ideology clearly demonstrates anarchist values underlying the organized movement. Spanish anarchists were giving their own meaning to their revolutionary activity. As an attitude that was critical of all external authority, the anarchists were necessarily adept to criticism at expressing what they were not and what they rejected, defining themselves by their opposition to many forms of authority, including its own.

³³ Ibid., 64, 222-23. Pons Prades is also used as a source in *The Spanish Civil War*, VHS.

³⁴ Ibid., 214.

Chapter Four: Affirmation

Forming a Spanish Anarchist Identity Through Affirmation

The previous chapter showed how the Spanish anarchists defined themselves through the process of negation, the act of defining who you are by defining what you are not. Therefore, what logically followed was a process of affirmation, the act of defining who you are by affirming who you are. The anarchists declared who they were as individuals and as communities through three positive visions: the hunger for and capacity to tolerate absolute freedom; an absolute will and capacity to join in small collectivized communities or communes removed from centralized authority; and absolute egalitarianism or the unreserved equality of all people – especially the poor. This common foundation typically found in left-wing movements – an extreme version of liberty, fraternity, and equality – offered a positive and powerful sense of individual self-worth that complimented the anarchists' negation. When combined with one another, these two formations of anarchist identity held anarchist communities together and enabled them to exert a powerful influence over the course of events during the Spanish Civil War.

The Significance of Spontaneity

Before covering how the Spanish anarchists affirmed their self-worth, it is important to discuss their grassroots response to the rapidly changing environment that arose from wartime conflict. As we have seen, independent individuals were leading the way rather than a coherent canon of doctrine. This form of leadership resulted in part from the fact that as events changed rapidly, anarchists had to respond improvisationally. Therefore, anarchists were acting in a state of spontaneity. The need for spontaneity

ultimately encouraged anarchists and anarchist communities to reinforce their sense of identity and collective coherence as anarchists instead of acting upon a specific and widely known doctrine.¹

CNT day-laborer Juan Moreno was forty-three years old when the Spanish Civil War began. He was from a small village, Castro del Río, near Cordoba, and an active anarchist union militant from 1918 to 1920 – where he and his companions declared six general strikes. Becoming aware of the political and social situation in 1936, Moreno felt that “In many ways we were worse off under the republic than under the monarchy; the right became even more aggressive and reactionary, and we had to defend ourselves.”² Moreno believed he had no other choice but survival in a bleak situation in order to assert

¹ Gabriel Jackson critiques historians such as Gerald Brenan and Hugh Thomas, who have been skeptical about the practical results and less willing to minimize the coercive aspects of anarchist collectivized communities during the Spanish Civil War. Jackson highlights that recent historians like Julián Casanova have used archives to interpret the collectives more in terms of a response to practice wartime problems and less as ideological communities. However, Jackson concludes that the anarchist collectives were practical, coercive, and more reactive than doctrinal. For more information, see Gabriel Jackson, “Collectivist Experiences in the Spanish Civil War,” *Mediterranean Studies*, vol. 2 (1990): 97-103.

² Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 94-97. In regard to the anarchists efficiently defending themselves, the failure to intervene in Spain by the Geneva-based League of Nations (and the United States), as Germany and Italy were undermining the European pact of non-intervention by aiding Franco, was met with criticism in an anarchist newspaper and supporter of the CNT, *Solidaridad Obrera* (Workers’ Solidarity). On 21 April 1937, the words of León Felipe (a Spanish poet who was strongly against fascism) read to the supposed union of democracies chartered to thwart hostile nations: “We Spaniards are greatly thankful for your charity and the lint and ointments which you send us to repair Don Quijote’s wounds; but we should be much more thankful if you were to outfit him with a new lance and an up-to-date shield.” Felipe was disappointed with the non-interventionist policy of Britain, France, and the United States. After all, Franco had the military advantage via Hitler and Mussolini. On the other hand, the Republicans were aided by Stalin, who ultimately broke the European pact of non-intervention due to Germany and Italy’s violations, albeit Spain traded its gold for low quality, low quantity Russian weaponry (see Valls, *CNT*, vol. 2, 21-25).

his political views. Ernesto Margeli felt a similar sense of urgency: “We were living through a revolutionary moment; it had fallen into our hands. Even if the people weren’t prepared, we had to make the revolution now.”³ Recognition that some may have not been prepared for a revolutionary scenario, although such a situation seemed to have arisen, tells us that there was no original plan of action but a spontaneous reaction to destructive events, as if nobody were prepared for civil war had to assert themselves for the sake of survival.

The anarchists also perceived the agricultural and industrial collectives as a misunderstood miracle. For example, Juan Zafon, a CNT propagandist delegate for the Council of Aragon, claimed that “The people had expressed their will in the 1936 elections and we had to defend that will, while collectivization served both the war effort and our vision of the future.” As a result of the elections anarchists had to act quickly: “We were attempting to put into practice a libertarian communism about which, it’s sad to say, none of us really knew anything.”⁴ Zafon’s reaction suggests responding according to doctrine – in this case libertarian communism, where the abolishment of the state and private property is substituted for common ownership via the workers – was impossible because the doctrine was either unclear or not understood by the anarchists themselves. Nonetheless, the anarchists believed they had to act.

When reflecting back on the conflict and the anarchists’ participation as a whole, Eduardo Pons Prades, amused by the thought, described how people showed “common sense” during the chaotic but successful collectivization process. “Everything was

³ Ibid., 351-52.

⁴ Ibid., 350-51.

improvised,” he said, “you could have called it a miracle,” but not a miracle in the religious sense, rather “a miracle achieved by the ordinary people.”⁵ To Pons Prades, Barcelona’s improvised collectivization during the midst of the chaos of war was something he proudly took part in.

This state of spontaneity, in which the Spanish anarchists were reactive, improvising, and appeared to be momentarily victorious in their goals, encouraged anarchists and anarchist communities to go as far as needed in order to reinforce their movement. One final example of this nature comes from Manuel Montequin, an Asturian anarchist miner. Montequin described just how far some were willing to go to take over their community. When anarchists attempted to take total control of a local Asturian mining village at the beginning of the civil war, Montequin recalled with a straightforward tone that: “We had dynamite...the whole village was ready to go.”⁶ Montequin, and his community of anarchists, acted as one unit and were even willing to blow-up the entire village, including themselves. Montequin and his community’s fervor exemplifies the anarchists’ readiness to destroy the controlling powers or authorities that had been suppressing them for many years in a way that enabled them to assert who they were. In sum, the rapidly changing revolutionary environment and wartime conditions put an emphasis on “who I am” rather than the much more difficult task of figuring out “what I believe.”

⁵ *Spanish Civil War*, VHS.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Asserting Spanish Anarchist Liberty

The anarchists asserted who they were as individuals and as a community through their hunger for and capacity to tolerate absolute freedom wholeheartedly and passionately, especially because their essential self-conception was predicated on rejecting all forms of authority.

One member of the Iron Column explained that:

The bourgeois – and bourgeois come in many varieties and are found in lots of places – tirelessly wove, with threads of calumny, this dark legend which has been tacked on to us, because the bourgeois alone has not lost and stands to lose from our [the anarchists] activities, our rebelliousness and these madly irrepressible yearnings in our hearts to be free as the eagles in the heavens or the lions in the deepest jungles.⁷

As noted in the previous chapter, the bourgeoisie represented capitalism, and this anarchist felt that the bourgeois capitalists could never win the overall struggle for freedom vis á vis the anarchists. Most importantly, “to be free as the eagles in the heavens or the lions in the deepest jungles” is a clear and positive statement about an anarchist sense of individual and collective self-worth, suggesting that an anarchists’ sense of freedom and freedom’s importance to the anarchist communities was so pronounced that the anarchists resembled proud animals by contrast to mankind.

According to Abel Paz, within two months of the Spanish Civil War the Graphic Arts century of the Iron Column – which included seven female anarchists – decided to create a mobile printing press mounted on a truck. “Meanwhile, one of the many stargazing poets,” writes Paz, “began to compose a few verses, thanks to which one can feel even closer to the collective spirit of the Iron Column, and from his emotive words

⁷ Paz, *Iron Column*, 182.

grew the song that would soon be adopted [and propagated] by its members.”⁸ The beginning of the collective’s song is as follows:

Iron Column/from iron forged;/Iron Column/of the proletariat./Rifles that spit scorn/at the reaction;/rifles that roar and sing/of revolution./Rifles that aim towards infinity/with sights trained on the bourgeoisie;/rifles that write in bullets/the war-song of their rebelliousness./Iron Column!/In the revolutionary/blast furnaces;/in the forge of slavery,/was forged the iron of the proletariat,/and it became the iron of our youth./Youth that roars./Youth that advances./Youth that fights for freedom!/Peerless youth!/The only hope for humanity.⁹

The song implies that the militia was formed by oppressed working-class individuals – the proletariat. The bullets fired from the hands of the proletariat are portrayed as something beyond a bullet. Rifles shoot scorn towards the upper-class individuals who own property and businesses that oppress the proletariat. The militia’s essence is thus predicated on the desire for freedom, which fuels the motivation to fight for anarchist liberty against the established bourgeoisie. In fact, since the Iron Column is considered the “only” unrivaled hope for humanity, it suggests a specific anarchist identity set apart from other anarchist individuals or communities. Furthermore, the characteristics of “rebelliousness...aim[ing] towards infinity...that roars” is strikingly similar to a freedom claim to “the eagles in the heavens or the lions in the deepest jungles.” These convictions would explain Paz’s reference to the “collective spirit” expressed by the Iron Column’s song.

Andreu Capdevila felt that this anarchist freedom animated his entire community: “It [his collectivized community] was amazing,” recalled Capdevila, “everyone turned into a parrot, everyone wanted to say what he or she thought and felt. They obviously felt

⁸ Ibid., 55-56.

⁹ Ibid., 56.

themselves in charge now and with the right to speak for themselves.”¹⁰ Statements like this demonstrate that the power to control oneself and one’s community lent anarchism much of its appeal. The group was engaging in a collective awakening to what they could freely become. Capdevila likened the members of his community to proud parrots singing the symphony of freedom, expressing and asserting themselves in a way that set them apart from other anarchist communities.

On 24 July 1936, Buenaventura Durruti led a militia column of anarchist workers outside of Barcelona, as one of the first militias to leave Barcelona in order to engage Franco’s forces.¹¹ Pérez Farràs was the Durruti Column’s first military advisor. Farràs criticized Durruti’s methods of anarchist organization fighting against Franco’s military. Durruti replied: “what can’t be accomplished with reason will not be obtained by force. If we have to sustain our military apparatus with fear, then we won’t have changed anything except the color of the fear. It’s only by freeing itself from fear that society can build itself in freedom.”¹² According to Durruti, the absolute absence of fear could be filled in by absolute anarchist liberty, a goal sought after by so many anarchists like himself. Felix Carrasquier, an anarchist schoolteacher from Aragon, member of the CNT, and appointed member of the FAI, echoed Durruti. Carrasquier reminded the unionized anarchists of his collective that “You have got to leave people free to decide what they want to do.”¹³ Freeing oneself from fear is a utopian goal for most people. However, this zest for

¹⁰ Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 213-15.

¹¹ Paz, *Durruti*, 467.

¹² *Ibid.*, 474.

¹³ Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 138, 366.

individual freedom is in line with the quest for anarchist individuals and collectives to find a higher meaning or purpose: absolute freedom.

After the May Days in Barcelona, a joint-statement by the CNT and FAI expressed the anarchists' quest for absolute freedom as well:

We have no wish to direct our guns against the people, nor against the workers, even should they belong to a different ideology or a different party. Our organisation's history demonstrates that we do not crave political power for ourselves... We call upon all anti-fascist forces... We want peace between workers and peasants... the only thing we want is freedom and well-being for the entire Spanish people, peace for Europe and for everyone... Help us in this heroic struggle against all foes of freedom.¹⁴

The anarchist organizations refer to their opposition to authority and specific rejection to fascism. This statement implied that the current battle was fought for posterity, not only for Spain but for the entire world, and was based on absolute freedom for all peoples. Federica Montseny echoed the same wish for freedom. "The love of liberty," stated Montseny, "and the sense of human dignity are the basic elements of the Anarchist creed."¹⁵ The antithesis of liberty, or authority over another's will, was something that Montseny and the anarchists rejected wholeheartedly.

Some anarchists asserted themselves by showing that they were people who could function outside of traditional societal norms. For example, Montseny wrote that: "In Cataluña the Revolution is already a fact. The land has been collectivised. In the villages, Supply Committees are organising the exchange of products from village to village, from district to district, from region to region. Thus the use of money has become almost

¹⁴ Valls, *CNT*, vol. 2, 129.

¹⁵ Montseny, *Reality in Spain*, 10.

superfluous.”¹⁶ Since the land was collectivized and supplies were successfully exchanged, the need for money was non-essential. In short, the anarchists were asserting their rejection of capitalism which made them free enough to function without a basic device most of the world operates under.

Through rejecting communism, the Iron Column reflected its love for liberty as well. An Iron Column manifesto stated that the PCE (Communist Party of Spain) had fired upon the Iron Column, killing thirty and wounding eighty. However, despite “the treachery of one party [the communists]...against the anarchists,” the members “refused to take reprisals or continue the fight initiated by them [the communists].” Instead, “we [the anarchists] will continue to fight everywhere for the triumph of the revolution and of liberty.”¹⁷ By not answering violence with violence, the anarchists defined themselves against the communists while asserting how much they prized liberty.

Absolute liberty did not just come through assertion but through new names, weddings, and clothing choices. Frank Mintz notes that from the early 1930’s onwards, anarchists intentionally countered the Spanish Catholic culture – a culture not associated with the anarchists, as noted in their rejection of religion. For example, new birth names such as Libertaria (Liberty) and Helios (after the Greek God of the sun) were given instead of Jesús and Iñaka (after Francis Loyola).¹⁸ In fact, some names were blatantly anti-Catholic. For instance, Soledad or Dolores – a reference to the suffering of the Virgin Mary, rather than Amparo – the protection of the Virgin Mary. Literary names

¹⁶ Ibid., 12.

¹⁷ Paz, *Iron Column*, 91-93.

¹⁸ Mintz, *Anarchism and Workers’ Self-Management*, 50.

such as Tolstoy, Zola, and Multatuli were also given.¹⁹ During the civil war, Pons Prades recalled “revolutionary weddings,” where three copies of the marriage certificate existed: one with the husband, one with the wife, and one with the anarchist union. If one wanted a divorce, one party had to bring back both copies to the union.²⁰ Clothing was also used to represent one’s affiliation. Josep Cercos recalled how one of the civil guards approached him during the conflict informing Cercos that “when you see a civil guard without one of these [red neckerchief] round his neck, shoot him. Only those wearing them are on the republic’s [and thus anarchists’] side.”²¹ One law student simply recalled: “There was a simple social distinction: those who wore ties and those who didn’t. It was a symbol, the uniform of the middle class.”²² As noted before, the anarchists opposed the capitalist middle class – the bourgeoisie – and therefore rejected the ties they tended to wear. Giving non-traditional names to the next generation, providing a new style of weddings, and wearing clothing to demarcate one from another, signifies that the anarchists were enthusiastically expressing their freedom as anarchists.

Asserting Spanish Anarchist Fraternity

The anarchists asserted who they were as individuals and as a community through their will to join in small collectivized communities removed from centralized authority. We can draw on the story of the Iron Column to flesh out this idea. The Iron Column was an anarchist militia that organized itself under traditional military structure. The original anarchist militia, formed in Valencia, fought against Franco’s forces throughout the

¹⁹ Ibid., 50-51. For Lev Tolstoy, Émile Zola, and the pen name of Eduard Douwes Dekker, respectively.

²⁰ *Spanish Civil War*, VHS.

²¹ Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 68, 120.

²² Ibid., 97-98.

Spanish Civil War. Those anarchists who gravitated towards the Column were interested in joining a small community of anarchist fighters. Durruti, when learning that some were sewing doubts about attacking Zaragoza, got onto a balcony and spoke to his Column:

Friends, no one forced you to join the Column. You chose your fate freely and the fate of the first CNT-FAI Column is quite thankless indeed. García Oliver [leader of the FAI and Minister of Justice under Largo Caballero's government] said it over the radio in Barcelona: we're going to take Zaragoza or die in the attempt. And I'm saying the same thing today: we'll give our lives before retreating. Zaragoza is in fascist hands and there are hundreds, thousands of workers under the threat of their rifles. Didn't we leave Barcelona to liberate them?!²³

An eyewitness to the speech said that "No one dropped their rifle, although those who had fled cried furiously before their comrades. The lesson had been hard, but the men were reborn that day. Many of them became excellent guerilla fighters and many also died in the course of the thirty-two months of desperate struggle."²⁴ Durruti reinforced the sense of unity and community among his soldiers.

Sevilla Pastor was a libertarian youth member who came from a prosperous family which owned two houses and an abundant amount of land. Pastor struggled with his parents over his attachment to anarchists, but "I was so enthusiastic, so frantic that I took everything in my parents' house – all the grain stocks, the dozen head of sheep, even the silver coins – and handed them into the collective."²⁵ Pastor rebelled against his wealthy inheritance by gambling it on a prosperous anarchist future he believed in wholeheartedly. Similarly, Emilio Bernuz joined his local collective and recalled taking everything he had. In his words, Bernuz brought along his "sheep, money, and

²³ Paz, *Durruti*, 483.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 484.

²⁵ Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 352.

enthusiasm.”²⁶ Bernuz was willing to take the little that he had and also gamble it on the bright future he saw in anarchist communities. Whether rags or riches, anarchists believed they could reach a bright future through communal unity in the anarchist collectives.

In a radio address to Spanish anarchists, Durruti proclaimed that: “Enthusiasm is the revolution’s most powerful weapon. The revolution triumphs when everyone is committed to its victory, when each person makes it his own personal cause...our battle is collective and that its success depends of everyone’s effort. That’s the meaning of our request.”²⁷ To Durruti, this enthusiasm for unity was the one weapon which could provide for an anarchist victory during the conflict, but it was also an expression of the fellowship and fraternity anarchism represented; it was a fundamental feature of the anarchist identity. Montseny similarly stressed small, autonomous communities: “we anarchists who have created the ideal and the conception of the individual from the social cell that is man, are federalists.”²⁸ According to Montseny, Spanish anarchists’ created the best possible path for individuals to join into small communities, while remaining autonomously self-governing.

When taking into consideration the large number of agricultural and industrial collectivized communities, the formation of anarchist militias, and the anarchists participation in the Largo Caballero government, one can certainly grasp how the anarchists made tangible the ability to join into small communities. Their sense of totally committed fraternity was expressed by many. This sense of fraternity was summed up by

²⁶ *Spanish Civil War*, VHS.

²⁷ Paz, *Durruti*, 476.

²⁸ Montseny, *Reality in Spain*, 8.

Saturnino Carod, who recalled that: “Solidarity should come first in all human societies. In a town of 15,000 to 30,000 inhabitants, everybody more or less knows each other, and each respects his neighbor and is willing to lend a hand when the latter needs it.”²⁹ Carod, from humble origins, understood how small villages produce a sense of belonging to a caring family. Furthermore, Carod sheds light on an underlying aspect of small Spanish villages inhabited by anarchists: a sense of solidarity.

Asserting Spanish Anarchist Equality

The anarchists asserted who they were as individuals and as a community through their absolute egalitarianism or unreserved desire for equality of all people, especially the poor. As stated in the first chapter, women were just as active as men during the Spanish Civil War. Minorities were also welcomed to join in the anarchist communities as well. For example, the joint CNT and FAI statement after the May Days in Barcelona read, in part: “we [CNT and FAI] have done everything, not merely to defend the Spanish people’s freedom, but likewise our people’s peace, and, with it, the peace of Europe. We have repudiated any notion of dictatorship. We have awarded an equal share of public offices to minorities.”³⁰

The day after collectivization took place at Josep Costa’s factory, Costa enthusiastically recalled going back to the factory with the workers, in order to keep production alive, while explaining to the owners who controlled the factory for years that: “gentlemen...we have to warn you, labor relations will be very different from now on!”³¹ Costa could not wait to return to the factory after the collectivization process in order to

²⁹ Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 363-65.

³⁰ Valls, *CNT*, vol. 2, 128.

³¹ *Spanish Civil War*, VHS.

create a workplace in which every individual would be equal, a notion that would have been unheard of years prior.

One testimony about the living conditions in the Iron Column clearly revealed the anarchist emphasis on equality:

We in the trenches lived a happy life. True, we saw the comrades with whom we had started this war fall at our sides; and we knew, too, that at a moment, a bullet might leave us prone upon the field...but our lives were happy ones...How come? Because no one was superior to anyone else. We were all friends, all comrades, all guerillas of the Revolution. Our group or century delegate was not imposed on us, but chosen by us, and did not regard himself as a lieutenant or a captain, but as a comrade. And thus, as comrades, imagining that this fight had a point and a purpose, we made war with a ready heart and even embraced death readily.³²

This statement suggests that the egalitarianism of the anarchist movement was its own reward. Every member was equal to another, and if one member represented many others, that member was appointed willingly. In fact, the lack of authority within the dire fight against fascism gave impetus to a positive sense of self. The anarchists believed they were happier than others, even during life in the trenches, because they were more equal than any other community.

According to Montseny, anarchist individuals and communities were:

[A] unique movement for us all because circumstances to-day in Spain have never before existed during any other revolution. Neither the French nor the Russian revolution. To-day, a sense of sacrifice impels us to renounce our aspirations and individual interests for the well-being of all. It is this sense of responsibility which shows us the path of duty and assists us in performing it. In this way, we will avoid the fatal mistake of dictatorship.³³

³² Paz, *Iron Column*, 190.

³³ Montseny, *Reality in Spain*, 11.

To Montseny, the anarchists were performing a duty that surmounted history's failings. They were willing to sacrifice their lives by rejecting authority and embracing equality.

Montseny also believed that Spanish anarchists had reached a higher level of egalitarian self-sacrifice than others:

There are Anarchists in other parts of the world who are unable to comprehend the position of the Spanish Anarchists. I do not pretend to censor these Anarchists... Those Anarchists who have not understood us and those who have criticised us deeply! It is necessary to live in Spain and experience the reality before forming an opinion... In order to fully realise our aspirations, we must create in the masses of the people the sense of sacrifice and responsibility that has been characteristic of the anarchist movement throughout its historical development in Spain.³⁴

Similarly, anarchist journalist Eduardo de Guzman noted that despite insufficient weaponry, "the enthusiasm of the [anarchist] militias makes up for the shortage of equipment."³⁵ As a result of solidarity, the passion for a better tomorrow burned though the cold reality of lacking the tools to win a war today. Interestingly, another journalist noted during the defense of Madrid – in which many anarchists participated – that "As for military forces, there were six demoralised, unenthusiastic columns crushed by a continual fallback. However, nobody hesitated nor trembled. Unanimously they were determined upon: 'Resistance!'"³⁶ In both scenarios, whether without efficient weaponry or suppressed by fascist forces, the anarchists were willfully sacrificing their well-being for the well-being of others in the future.

The sacrifice of one's life for the equality of all is also evident in one of the Iron Column's members, Roque Santamaría. "Initially," stated Santamaría, "the Column had

³⁴ Ibid., 5, 6, 10.

³⁵ Valls, *CNT*, vol. 2, 13. Eduardo de Guzman is also used as a source in *The Spanish Civil War*, VHS.

³⁶ Ibid., 16.

few weapons. The first centuries to deploy were given rifles at the artillery depot. Perhaps some twelve to fourteen centuries were armed this way. The rest has to rely on weapons that the Column had recovered from enemy hands.” Yet despite being insufficiently armed, “Our plan of action was very simple: war and revolution were synonymous...the two were one and the same. This was a good indication of what our line of conduct was and would be, and we abided by it at all times.” In short, there was no point to winning the war and losing the revolution nor winning the revolution and losing the war.³⁷ To Santamaría, the Iron Column and its members’ *only* course of action was to defeat the Nationalists while changing the Spanish people and institutions of Spain with anarchist principles in mind. As Carod asserted: “I will not deny my enemies the pleasure of shooting me. If I am to die, it will be at their hands. As long as I’m alive, I’ll do everything in my power to escape. Our duty is to continue fighting.”³⁸ Santamaría and his community of anarchists found their meaning in action. More importantly, they were willing to sacrifice their own lives by obtaining weapons from the enemy’s hands. In this scenario, each individual has an equal opportunity of putting his life on the line for the equality of all after the war’s end.

In a speech just prior to his death, Durruti summed up his commitment to the anarchist cause:

I’ve been an anarchist my entire life and the fact that I’m responsible for this human collectivity won’t change my convictions. It was as an anarchist that I agreed to carry out the task that the Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias entrusted me. I don’t believe...you can run a workers’ militia according to classical military rules...We have to build on new foundations...solidarity is the best incentive for arousing an individual’s sense of responsibility and a willingness to accept discipline

³⁷ Paz, *Iron Column*, 34-37.

³⁸ Fraser, *Blood of Spain*, 506.

as an act of self-discipline. War has been imposed upon us... This means defeating the enemy, but also a radical change in men... man must learn to live and conduct himself as a free man... One can't behave like an obedient soldier, but rather as a conscious man who understands the importance of what he's doing.³⁹

Durruti acknowledged that a working-class militia could not operate under traditional military structure. Rather, Durruti wanted to structure the militia by non-traditional means while providing a uniting motive among the members through the idea of accepting one's own responsibilities. This desire for an alternative means of creating a unified anarchist militia was required because as an anarchist Durruti believed in personal freedom. What Durruti wanted to put in place was "solidarity... discipline as an act of self-discipline... This means defeating the enemy, but also a radical change... to live and conduct himself as a free man." In other words, freedom and action in anarchist communities are bound by their connection to egalitarianism and fraternity, that all individuals are equal but all are collectively responsible for their actions.

Radical freedom, profound solidarity, and total equality are all features of anarchist doctrine, but in the conditions of war that the anarchists were living through, all of these qualities could not exist as mere statements of faith. These qualities had to exist within the minds and ethical choices of people responding to challenging events. Anarchism had to exist as a deeply personalized sense of identity.

* * *

Anarchism has a practical problem maintaining itself in power because by definition it is averse to leadership, hierarchy, and rigid ideology. Therefore, anarchism cannot organize itself around any of those governing principles, it coalesces instead

³⁹ Paz, *Durruti*, 474.

around a personal and collective sense of self and community. Anarchists asserting their identity could say: “We are anarchists. We reject your leadership, hierarchy, and rigid ideology. We know ourselves through our rejection, and we join together in solidarity because we are anarchists and we have a better, more egalitarian way than any others.” This form of identity-based politics is both legitimate and illegitimate. On one hand, those most drawn to anarchism came from poor backgrounds and had undergone a harsh life under a centuries old monarchy. Thus, their desire to transcend leadership, hierarchy, and ideology was something to be admired. For a brief moment, anarchists actually did transcend in certain ways the authority imposed on them in their collectivized communities and in militia resistance. In the early 20th century revolutions were taking place all over Europe, from Russia in 1917 to Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. But the anarchist movement was based on personal ties, a common sense of purpose, and the excitement of revolutionary experience. It is almost ludicrous to think that external discipline as opposed to Durruti’s utopian faith in self-discipline could be neglected in the effort to reach and sustain the anarchists’ lofty aspirations. After all, it is a paradox to crave and reject power simultaneously. This paradox helps to explain the anarchists’ failure, as most of history has operated under hierarchy and order – for better or for worse. Yet for a brief moment, the anarchists demonstrated the possibility of creating an alternative society, not just destroying one as common parlance would conceive anarchists doing. In the end, it seems that the anarchists can be thought of as noble fools, tragically struggling to achieve a goal that could never be attained.

Bibliography

- Alexander, Robert. *The Anarchists in the Spanish Civil War*. 2 vols. London: Janus Publishing Company, 2007.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: New Left Books, 2016.
- Bakunin, Mikhail. *God and the State*. Whithorn: Anodos Books, 2017.
- Basilio, Miriam M. *Visual Propaganda, Exhibitions, and the Spanish Civil War*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Breitbart, Myrna Margulies. *The Theory and Practice of Anarchist Decentralization in Spain, 1936-1939: The Integration of Community and Environment*. University Microfilms International: Ann Arbor, 1978.
- Buchanan, James M. *The Limits of Liberty: Between Anarchy and Leviathan*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000.
- Carr, Raymond. *Spain: A History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Casanova, Julián. *Anarchism, the Republic, and Civil War in Spain: 1931-1939*. Translated by Andrew Dowling and Graham Pollok. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Cohn, Jesse. *Underground Passages: Anarchist Resistance Culture 1848-2011*. Oakland: AK Press, 2014.
- Cuevas, Thomas. *Prison of Women*. Translated and Edited by Mary E. Giles. Albany: New York Press, 1998.
- De Andrés, Jesús and Jesús Cuéllar. *Atlas Ilustrado de la Guerra Civil Española*. Prologue by Paul Preston. Madrid: Susaeta, 2011.

Dolgoff, Sam. *The Anarchist Collectives: Workers' Self-Management in the Spanish Revolution 1936-1939*. Québec: Black Rose Books, 1990.

Ealham, Chris. *Anarchism and the City: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Barcelona, 1898-1937*. Oakland: AK Press, 2010.

Esenwein, George R. *Anarchist Ideology and the Working-Class Movement in Spain, 1868-1898*. Oxford: University of California Press, 1989.

Exile: Holding On, Fighting Back: The Long Road Home to Spain. Films for the Humanities & Societies. DVD, 58 minutes.

Fraser, Ronald. *Blood of Spain: An Oral History of the Spanish Civil War*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1979.

Gallego, Beatriz Asuar. "Mujeres Libres: las anarquistas que revolucionaron la clase obrera." *Público*. Accessed December 24, 2017.

<http://www.publico.es/politica/memoria-publica/80-anos-mujeres-libres-xxx-mujeres-libres-anarquistas-revolucionaron-clase-obrera.html>.

Goldman, Emma. *Vision on Fire: Emma Goldman on the Spanish Revolution*. 2nd ed. Edited by David Porter. Oakland: AK Press, 2006.

The Good Fight: The Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War. Kino International. DVD, 98 minutes.

Haslam, S. A. and Stephen D. Reicher. "Contesting the 'Nature' of Conformity: What Milgram and Zimbardo's Studies Really Show." *PLoS Biology* 10, No. 11 (2012).

Jackson, Gabriel. "Collectivist Experiences in the Spanish Civil War." *Mediterranean Studies*. Vol. 2 (1990): 97-103.

Joll, James. *The Anarchists*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap Universal Library, 1966.

- Kowalsky, Daniel. "Operation X: Soviet Russia and the Spanish Civil War." *Bulletin of Spanish Studies: Hispanic Studies and Researches on Spain, Portugal, and Latin America*. Vol. 91, No. 1-2 (2014): 159-78.
- Maalouf, Amin. *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*. Translated by Barbara Bray. New York: Arcade, 2012.
- Marshall, Peter. *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*. Oakland: PM Press, 2010.
- Mintz, Frank. *Anarchism and Workers' Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain*. Translated by Paul Sharkey. Oakland: AK Press, 2013.
- Montseny, Federica. *Militant Anarchism and the Reality in Spain*. Glasgow: Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation, 1937. PDF.
- Payne, Stanley G. *The Spanish Civil War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Paz, Abel. *Durruti in the Spanish Revolution*. Translated by Chuck Morse. Chico: AK Press, 2007.
- Paz, Abel. *The Story of the Iron Column: Militant Anarchism in the Spanish Civil War*. Translated by Paul Sharkey. Oakland: AK Press, 2011.
- Preston, Paul. *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain*. New York: HarperCollins, 2012.
- Smith, Anthony D. *National Identity*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991.
- Spain Betrayed: The Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War*. Edited by Ronald Radosh, Mary R. Habeck and Grigory Sevostianov. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

- The Spanish Civil War*. 2 vols. Granada Television International: MPI Home Video, 1987. VHS, 360 minutes.
- The Spanish Civil War: Brother Against Brother*. Kulter International Films: Eagle Rock Entertainment. DVD, 50 minutes.
- Terkel, Studs. *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II*. New York: The New Press, 1990.
- Thomas, Hugh. *The Spanish Civil War*. New York: Modern Library, 2012.
- Valls, José Peirats. *The CNT in the Spanish Revolution*. 3 vols. Edited by Chris Ealham. Oakland: PM Press, 2011.
- Ward, Colin. *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford, 2004.
- Wartenberg, Thomas E. *Existentialism: A Beginners' Guide*. London: Oneworld Publications, 2013.