

year. The republicans won in both, but by a lower margin in the municipal elections. The drop in participation in the republican vote was continued in the municipal elections of 12 November 1905; both factors can be ascribed to disillusion with the performance of the Republicans especially after the demagogic promises made by Lerroix during the electoral campaigns.

The events of 1905-7 led to the formation of the electoral coalition of Solidaritat Catalana. The sacking of the offices of the Catalan satirical magazine Cu-cut and the newspaper of the Lliga, La Veu de Catalunya by some three hundred army officers on 25 November 1905 in response to the publication of an alleged anti-military cartoon in Cu-cut, was followed by an immediate suspension of the constitutional guarantees in Catalonia. The Liberal government under a new prime minister, Moret, then proceeded to use the military as a weapon against the demands of the Catalanists, passing the Ley de Jurisdicciones by which any insult to the army or the nation would fall under military jurisdiction, thereby placing Catalonia under a virtually complete suspension of guarantees (the constitutional guarantees had by this time been restored).<sup>(20)</sup>

The Solidaritat Catalana was formed in response to this law; it was a typical interclassist and nationalist movement, ranging in its composition from the Carlists to the Republicans, but directed by the Lliga.<sup>(21)</sup> Its aims were the derogation of the Ley de Jurisdicciones and the defence of Catalan interests in the Cortes and it came to develop some regenerationist pretensions within the Spanish political field, prefiguring later pretensions of the Lliga. Certain groups remained outside the Solidaritat, the most important being the group of republicans around Lerroix, who was linked to the Liberals and whose politics were based on the exploitation of feelings of animosity towards

the type of Catalanism represented by the Lliga. In the elections to Cortes of 21 April 1907 the Solidaritat gained a resounding victory. Through the skilful campaign mounted by the Solidaritat, which had held a number of meetings throughout Catalonia, and the organization of the famous Festa de l'Homenatge with its impressive march of 200,000 persons along the Saló de Sant Joan in Barcelona, the aims and objectives of the Solidaritat had been amply diffused. Against the background of the mysterious and long lived bomb campaign in the city, coupled with the atentat de Hostafrancs where Cambó of the Lliga was gravely wounded by Lerrouxists, the Solidaritat was presented as a coalition of order, contrasted with the Lerrouxist anarchy. The Lerrouxists, in protesting their innocence contributed to the rising public interest in the elections. There was a 59% participation, which would not be equalled again until the Second Republic.

However the victory of the Solidaritat was shortlived because of its interclassist nature. The different elements it contained, while they were originally in agreement over certain issues, were soon divided once those issues had become less immediate and new problems had arisen. The new Prime Minister, the Conservative, Maura, was careful to take measures to remove the military from politics to a considerable degree, though he did not repeal the Ley de Jurisdicciones. Hoping to quell regionalist feeling by the granting of a limited degree of local self government Maura proposed a local administration law which provoked dissensions within the Solidaritat coalition between the Republicans and the Lliga. The law proposed greater autonomy for municipal authorities including the right to form Mancomunitats (co-operative ventures between authorities), without however granting any extra financial resources. Moreover it proposed a system of election by indirect suffrage of a third of the Town Councils, and by corporative suffrage (through the town councillors), all the Diputados Provinciales.

The Lliga and the Carlists, believing that they would benefit under this system, were in favour; the Republicans claimed that with clean elections there was no advantage to be gained from it and that it was undemocratic. The slow discussion of the law in the Cortes caused the suspension of the municipal elections scheduled for November 1907, removing from the Solidaritat the opportunity of taking over the Town Hall.

At this time the anti-Solidaritat Republicans were regrouping after their electoral defeat and, under the guidance of Iglesias and Giner de los Rios (Lerroux was in South America, having fled from a court case over a newspaper article) they founded the Partido Republicano Radical in early 1908. In the by-election to Cortes of December 1908 they would gain an important victory, due to the overconfidence of the Solidaritat. This election was caused by the death of the Solidaritat deputy Salmeron, and by the vacancy created by another Solidaritat deputy, Macià, giving up his seat. The two vacancies so created would result, with the application of the majority and minority rule in the election of a Solidaritat candidate and an anti-Solidaritat candidate. Under the pressure of Cambó, the Solidaritat decided to create two more vacancies, which would allow them to present a candidature of four names and attempt the copo, thereby excluding the anti-Solidaritat candidate from getting the minority place. However the Solidaritat candidates were beaten by the three Radical candidates, even though the total Solidaritat vote was much higher. Thus the three Radicals were elected and the Solidaritat only achieved the minority place. By not conceding one place to the Radicals they had lost three.

Discontent among the Republican groups in the Solidaritat at this defeat, coupled with the fear that the Radicals would take their clientele and the feeling that the Solidaritat was being used as an electoral platform

by the Lliga, led them to form a new Republican group under the name of Esquerra Catalana. As a first test the Esquerra wished to present itself at the adjourned municipal elections of 1907, scheduled to take place in May, 1909. They argued that the Solidaritat was an electoral coalition for the purposes of elections to Cortes only and had no reason to participate in municipal elections which had no importance outside Catalonia. The Lliga was forced into accepting the argument. At these elections there were therefore three candidatures, the Lliga, the Radicals and the Esquerra Catalana, as well as some individual candidates of the Liberals and Defensa Social. Tension was caused by the attempt of the Lliga, in alliance with the Carlists, to go for the copo in District III, instead of offering a minority place to the Esquerra.

58% of the electorate voted in these elections, evidence of the continuing high degree of politicization of the electorate. (22)

The result was an important victory for the Radicals with 16 regidors, followed by the Esquerra with 8 and the Lliga with 4. An electoral alliance of the latter would not therefore have defeated the Radicals, though the sum total of their votes amply exceeded the Radicals'. The Esquerra won the majority places in District III (see Tables 3.7 and 3.8).

These results were a blow to the Solidaritat, exposing the split between right and left. The Lliga, faced by the strength of the Radicals and unable to enter into alliance with the Esquerra would henceforth seek allies to its right. The Setmana Tràgica, in which both sides took up different positions, followed by the repression carried out by the army under the direction of the Maura government with the open support of the Lliga were to finish off the Solidaritat Catalana.

ELECTIONS AFTER THE SETMANA TRÀGICA: THE END OF THE SOLIDARITAT  
 CATALANA AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE UNIÓ FEDERAL NACIONALISTA REPUBLICANA

The first election to be held in the city after the Setmana Tràgica was for Diputados Provinciales in District I on 23 October 1909. These elections did not normally attract much interest though this particular one, with a turnout of 47% was an exception.

At the beginning of the campaign the Lliga's Comissió d'Acció Política had published a three point programme demanding 'Solidaritat Catalana' and 'Solidaritat Social'.<sup>(23)</sup> The former demand showed that it had not given up hope of maintaining the Solidaritat, the second demanded the condemnation of the Setmana Tràgica and approval of the repression, as well as support for the Maura local administration law.

The Lliga campaign, carried out through the La Veu de Catalunya benefited from a lack of equal competition since the two most important papers supporting the Esquerra Catalana - El Poble de Catalunya and El Progreso - were still closed.<sup>(24)</sup> Thus the Lliga was free to present the campaign as one of law and order, classifying the parties as for and against, and even finally equating the Esquerrans with the incendiaries of the Setmana Tràgica. However four events took place before polling which profoundly affected the opinions of the voters.

The first was the execution by firing squad in the Castle of Montjuich of Francesc Ferrer i Guardia on 13 October, which provoked the definitive rupture between the Esquerra and the Lliga and the effective end of the Solidaritat. The second was the decision of the Radicals not to stand, leaving the Esquerra as sole representative of the left, its campaign stimulated by the huge wave of protest throughout Europe against the execution and the repression.<sup>(25)</sup> The fierce campaign against Maura led to his resignation on 20 October and Moret formed a new Liberal government

on the 22nd only a day before the elections. Thus one of the main planks in the Lliga programme - the local Administration law - was lost. Finally the Lliga had tried to come to an agreement with the rightists of the Defensa Social so as not to have any competition from its right, but the proposed coalition broke up at the last moment in a disagreement over the candidature. A divided right therefore lost the election to the Esquerra, though its combined votes were higher. The turnout was 47%, high for such an election.

The victory of the candidates of the Esquerra in the provincial elections led the party to expect important results in the full municipal elections to be held on 12 December 1909. The other candidatures were those of the Radicals, and a coalition of the Lliga, Tradicionalistes, and Defensa Social. The coalition did not present itself however in Districts I, VII and X, traditional centres of radical support. There were also four liberal candidates who presented themselves for minority places in Districts II, VI, VII and X.

The results (see Tables 3.9 and 3.10) were a considerable win for the Radicals, with 14 regidors from 16 candidates, followed by the Esquerra with 6 regidors from 17 candidates and the Regionalists with 5 regidors from 13 candidates. This result, when combined with the Radical gains in March 1909, gave the Radicals control of the Town Hall, and their actions there would cause this to be one of the stormiest periods of Barcelona's municipal history.

The Radicals won in all districts except III and IV, won by the Lliga Regionalista coalition, and District VIII, won by the Esquerra. With a 46% abstention rate the vote had remained relatively high, only four per cent down on the municipal elections of May 1909, despite the intervening events of the Setmana Tràgica and the ensuing widespread repression. However the picture is different at district level.

Abstention was greater in the working class districts (I, V, VII and X) where it was between 53% - 54% than in the others where it was between 41% - 46%. District IX however had only 40.4% abstention, due perhaps to the fact that Coromines, one of the most attractive talents within the Esquerra, was standing.<sup>(26)</sup> In District VIII, where the Esquerra won, abstention was only 31.1% and this was the only district with less abstention than in the May 1909 elections. Of the others, Districts I and X, where participation had dropped by about 10%, were by far the worst. The relative shares of the vote showed a 3.4% decrease in the Radical total, and a slightly higher drop in the combined Lliga-Defensa Social total of 4.2% while the Esquerra retained precisely the same share - 18.4%.

The success of the Esquerra shown by these results encouraged its leaders to attempt the formation of a single party from the three groups that made up the coalition. The process reached a conclusion on 1 April 1910, when the Unió Federal Nacionalista Republicana (U.F.N.R.) was founded.<sup>(27)</sup> However the new party was never to fuse together properly, and tensions within it over the policies to be followed were always high.

The new party, whose principal members were Pere Coromines, Josep M. Valles i Ribot, Jaume Carner, Francesc Layret and Antoni Róvira i Virgili, basically stood for a revised version of the federal programme of 1894.<sup>(28)</sup> It was therefore republican and federalist, but not separatist; further, it was against the death penalty and wanted to restrict military trials to crimes committed by one member of the military against another. Its social policy included a reform of the law so as to guarantee the stability of the sindicatos, the implementation of an insurance scheme to provide benefits in old age, and illnesses, accidents and unemployment. Despite these latter provisions the U.F.N.R. was never to gain a stronghold in the working class districts of Barcelona, as was soon shown in the elections to Cortes of May 1910.

## ELECTIONS 1910: HIGH PARTICIPATION AND RADICAL DOMINATION

Four candidatures were put forward at these elections: the U.F.N.R., the Radicals, the Regionalists, and the rightists whom the Lliga had failed to persuade into a coalition, and stood under the name of the Dretes. Participation was high and the overall abstention figure for the city was 43.6%, only a little higher than that of the last general election, the highly politicized 1907 election won by Solidaritat Catalana. District V had the highest abstention rate of 52.7%, and was followed by the other working class districts with indices of between 45% - 49%. The more privileged districts registered very high turnouts: District II (41.7%), III (34.3%), IV (38.0%), VI (43.4%) and VIII (42.4%).

By districts the voting was in favour of the Radicals in Districts I, II, V, VII, IX and X. The U.F.N.R. had the majority in Districts IV, VI and VIII, although its share of the vote was about the same in every district, at 30%. The Lliga, in the low period it was in, only dominated in one district, III. The Dretes showed considerable strength in Districts III and IV (see Tables 3.11 and 3.12).

Comparing the proportions of the vote achieved by each group, the Radicals had lost practically none of their support (0.1%) from the December 1909 municipal elections, and the U.F.N.R. vote was only 1.4% less than that of the Esquerra in December 1909. The Lliga, however, was down 4.3% and it did not even gain a minority place; the five majority places went to the Radicals and the U.F.N.R. took the minorities.

Both the U.F.N.R. and the Lliga were interested in attacking the Radicals in order to lessen the latter's electoral chances and the opportunity was given them in the latter part of 1910 by the growing



evidence that Radical rule in the Town Hall was producing corruption. No doubt the party interests involved caused the detractors to exaggerate the extent of the corruption involved, both in the financial sphere (inflating the sums of money involved) and in its extension (accusing the whole party of the sins of a few of its members). Nonetheless it seems that serious anomalies had occurred, especially in the concession of municipal monopolies to private companies and in the administration of the markets. To remove the charge of corruption from the whole party the Radical leaders should have taken the step of expelling the guilty few, but since they did not the suspicion of collusion was bound to be launched by their enemies and capitalized upon. (29)

From 15 to 20 of December the issue was debated in the Cortes, the attack on the Radicals being delivered by Ventosa i Calvell of the Lliga and Jaume Carner (who had been elected for the U.F.N.R. in the by-election in El Vendrell on 4 September). They were seconded by the leaders of the Conjunción Republicano-Socialista (Gumersindo de Azcarate, Pablo Iglesias and Melquíades Alvarez). (30) These attacks, especially those of Gumersindo de Azcarate had a special significance since the Radicals were formally allied to the Conjunción of which Azcarate was the President of the Executive Council (and which had two Radical members - Lerroux and Emiliano Iglesias). Obviously the Radicals could not stay in the Coalición and they left before the end of the year. Their place was immediately taken by the U.F.N.R. The stage seemed set for a confrontation in Catalonia, and more importantly in Barcelona, between the two groups.

#### ELECTIONS, 1911: LLIGA RECOVERY BUT RADICAL AND U.F.N.R. DECLINE

Elections for Diputados Provinciales were held in provincial districts II and III of Barcelona on 12 March 1911. The Lliga only presented a

candidature in District II where it had victory assured. The candidature was an electoral alliance called Candidatura Barcelonina and included two Regionalists and a Jaumin, in line with the Lliga's need to make electoral pacts with groups to its right. The Radicals and the U.F.N.R. presented their candidatures in both districts, with the Radicals mounting a very vigorous campaign in an attempt to get the Town Hall scandal behind them.

The results were of a convincing victory for the Candidatura Barcelonina in District II which was followed by the Radicals and then the U.F.N.R., and a narrow Radical win in District III. There the highest vote of the Radicals was only 200 more than that of the highest of the U.F.N.R. and only 350 more than the lowest U.F.N.R. vote.

Comparing these results with the previous election in these districts in March, 1907, in District II the Radicals had maintained their vote while the sum of the votes of the two parties was seven thousand higher than the vote for the Solidaritat in 1907. In District III, however, the Radicals had increased their vote slightly (by about 700) while the U.F.N.R. was down a thousand on the Solidaritat vote. It is possible that the loss represented the refusal of rightist voters to choose between two groups which they regarded as left. (31)

When the Diputaci6n was opened in May the Lliga deputies presented a proposition for the creation of an organism which would embody Catalan aspirations of self government, the Mancomunitat de Catalunya. The Lliga, which had been the hegemonic group in Solidaritat Catalana now wanted to establish a unitary organ of government such as a Mancomunitat in which they would be the principal force, able to marginalise the left and impose their policies.

Central to this policy was the defeat of the Radicals. Accordingly the Lliga maintained the policy of creating electoral alliances in the municipal elections of 12 November 1911. Once again it launched the Candidatura Barcelonina in company with the Jaumins and reinforced this time by Defensa Social and a Conservative supporter of Maura. Attempts were made to attract the U.F.N.R. into the Candidatura, but it refused because the coalition was too right-wing and because its leaders believed that it was undemocratic to attack the Radicals in this way.<sup>(32)</sup> The U.F.N.R. therefore presented its own list, and included two members of the P.S.O.E. (Toribio Reoyo in District IX and Lluís Estrada in District X) in acknowledgment of the party's entry into the Conjunció Republican-Socialista.

The results confirmed the success of the strategy of the Lliga (see Tables 3.13 and 3.14). The Candidatura Barcelonina increased the vote it had obtained in December 1909 by 11,532 votes, and 7 Regionalists, 2 Jaumins, a Catholic from Defensa Social and the Conservative supporter of Maura were elected. There were 11 regidors in total for the Candidatura compared with the 11 Radical regidors, though the Radical vote had gone down by 12,380 votes in comparison with December 1909. It is interesting to speculate on the reasons for this decline in the Radical vote, especially as the voting was relatively high. Abstention for the city as a whole was 45.1%, up less than 2% on the figure for December 1909. The working class districts, however, had a much higher abstention, though they divided into two groups, Districts I, V, VII whose average was 55.2% and Districts IX and X whose average was 46.7% (which compared very favourably with the 48.1% observed in District III). The increase of abstentionism over December 1909 was 2.2% in the working class districts and 1.75% in the bourgeois ones. However in Districts VIII and IX this was much higher - 15.7% and 7.1% respectively, because both these districts had had exceptionally low abstention rates in 1909.

Both Molas and Albertí observe that abstention took votes from the Radicals and both attribute it to the increasing strength of anarco-syndicalism in Barcelona. (33) This possibility can be checked by reference to Table 3.15 where the losses and gains of the three candidatures are plotted. It can be seen that the greatest Radical losses took place in the working class districts, while their only gain was the stronghold of the Lliga, District III. Secondly there were no areas, except District II, where the U.F.N.R. seems to have benefited from a transfer of votes from the Radicals and it is difficult to believe that many Lliga votes were gained from the Radicals. It would seem justified then to claim that calls for abstention were meeting a response in working class areas and this was translating itself into a refusal to vote for the dominant party in these areas, the Radicals.

Finally the U.F.N.R., as seen from Table 3.15 also lost votes, - 3,444, but retained the same number of regidors - seven. Neither of the allied socialists had obtained a success (Reoyo was bottom of the poll in District IX and Estrada fourth out of six in District X).

Worse, as Molas observes, was that the U.F.N.R. had achieved no local base; it had come second in all districts, except District II (where the Lliga had won and the Radicals occupied second place). A local base might have enabled it to wait for a change of electoral opinion or better results from a well organized campaign. (34)

The Lliga leaders had meanwhile decided to press the demand for the Mancomunitat. (35) On 8 December the Catalan deputies and Senators took the Bases elaborated by the Diputació de Barcelona and accepted by the other Diputacions of Catalonia, to the Prime Minister, Canalejas, who accepted them and promised to put them before the Cortes in March 1912. However the Bill was not read until 25 May 1912 and the debate

did not begin until 28 June 1912. Thanks to careful handling by Canalejas the approval of the project in its totality was obtained against stubborn opposition. However when the Cortes broke up for the summer recess on 15 July, the details of the project were still only at the discussion stage. When the Cortes took up its work again in October the project was finally passed on the 17th, needing only approval by the Senate for it to become law. But Canalejas, the protector and patron of the project, was assassinated on 12 November and his successor, Romanones, despite promising to ensure the continuity of the bill, had still not pushed it through the Senate by the end of the year. The formation in April 1912 of the Partido Republicano Reformista (P.R.R.) of Melquíades Alvarez in Madrid caused the U.F.N.R. to lose several of its members. A political moderate, Melquíades Alvarez counted with a good deal of support in Madrid and some of the provinces.<sup>(36)</sup> His aim was to create a great Republican party and to this end he needed the participation of the Catalan republicans. Among the Radicals there was little support for the project, but the U.F.N.R., loosely composed from three groups which had hardly begun to fuse together, and lacking an authoritative leader in the style of Lerroux, was vulnerable to such an approach. Melquíades Alvarez was able to gain the support of two of the party's deputies (Josep Zulueta and Laurea Miro) who campaigned enthusiastically for the new party in Catalonia, winning the support of the most right-leaning group within the U.F.N.R., the Unió Republicana. The party newspaper, La Publicidad, converted to Reformism, serving as a useful means of propaganda. On 3 October 1912 the Catalan Reformists published a Reglamento de la Asamblea Municipal de Constitucion del Partido Radical Reformista in La Publicidad, containing the Catalan group's basic principles. Among these was clearly expressed the wish for Catalan autonomy within the Spanish Republic. The new group therefore constituted itself as a branch within Catalonia of the Partido Republicano Reformista, and not as an infiltration of a Madrid

party within the Catalan political scene. In the months up to the end of the year several deputies and Senators of the U.F.N.R. passed to the Reformists, completely destroying the parliamentary representation of the party. (37)

The Radicals were totally opposed to the P.R.R. since it represented a further threat to them, which at worst would defeat Radical candidates in elections and at best would take votes off them. They employed a continual invective against the new party in El Progreso, and even employed the party's youth movement, the Jovenes Bárbaros, to break up the first Asamblea Reformista held by the new party in Barcelona on 5 and 6 October.

Faced with a strong challenge from the Lliga in the coming municipal elections and the prospect of the opposition being divided among three main candidatures, the Radicals approached the U.F.N.R., hoping that in its new situation the party would enter into an alliance with them. The proposal, made on 9 February 1913 to the Junta Municipal of the party, presided by Layret, was answered on the 13th. The line of Layret, whose opposition to the Radicals stemmed from his experiences of their administrative corruption, was decisive in the debate within the party which led to the rejection of the alliance. The opposition of Layret to any understanding with the Radicals was to surface again in 1914 over the Pacte de Sant Gervasi, and would lead to his leaving the party.

#### ELECTIONS, 1913: FURTHER DECLINE OF THE U.F.N.R.

On 9 March 1913 Provincial elections were again held in District I. Unlike those of 1909 in which the Radicals had taken no part and which had resulted in a win for the Esquerra, these were contested by three main lists, the Radicals, the U.F.N.R. and the Lliga, as well as a conservative and a rightist candidate both aspiring to the minority places.

The Lliga therefore had nothing to fear from its right while the left presented itself divided. The Reformists abstained from taking part, advising their supporters to vote for the Republican group which most merited their support. The results reflected the divisions on the left, with the lowest placed candidate of the Lliga 1,000 votes over the highest placed candidates of the U.F.N.R. and the Radicals. These were roughly equal in terms of votes and it would therefore seem that, compared with 1909, the U.F.N.R. had lost votes to the Radicals, while the Lliga had increased its vote in a poll which was only a few hundred votes lower.

The Regionalist success led to the intensification of the campaign for the Mancomunitat, beginning with the famous meeting at the Tivoli on 6 April.<sup>(38)</sup> At a meeting of Lliga deputies and senators on 17 April it was decided to hold a series of diades regionalistes which would demonstrate the continued demands in Catalonia for the Mancomunitat. On 3 June the Senate began discussion of the law, which continued during the diades of Falset (6 July), Cornudella (28 September) and Santa Coloma (19 October). The campaign was well carried out and gave the Lliga the appearance of a political party with a concrete and practical programme, with well defined objectives, in contrast to the divisions in the U.F.N.R.

The Lliga therefore entered the municipal elections of 9 November 1913 in high morale. The other candidatures were those of the Radicals, the U.F.N.R., the Dretes, the Partido Liberal, the Unió Gremial and for the first time, the P.R.R.

The results (Tables 3.16 and 3.17) showed an overall increase in abstention of ten voters in every hundred on the register (up from 45.1% in 1911 to 55.1% in 1913). There was a wide variation by districts however, with District I showing the highest abstention of any district

in any election for which there is data in the period under study (76.4%). There is no ready explanation for this figure. Since only one regidor had to be elected for the district in these elections there was no minority place, and this factor alone took a lot of interest from the voting. Furthermore the Lliga did not stand in this district and in consequence the regionalist voter had only the alternative of voting for the U.F.N.R. candidate. This patently did not happen since the U.F.N.R. vote went down by 4.5% of all the possible votes compared with the 1911 results. The Radical vote also dropped by over half, from 26.1% of the total possible votes in 1911 to only 12.3% in 1913.

Districts VII and X had an average abstention of 61.8% and were followed by V and VIII with 54.7% and the bourgeois districts II, III, IV and VI which were only marginally lower at 54.5%. District IX provided a surprise with an abstention rate of only 46%. In this district two regidores had to be elected from five candidates. The Lliga candidate was a popular local doctor, Josep Cararach, who had already been regidor in 1905 and 1909 and was fully expected to win again. There was fierce competition among the other candidates for the minority place, and it was won by the U.F.N.R. The Lliga candidate won, reflecting the trend in the city as a whole, where the Lliga took 28.6% of the votes cast. This represented an apparent decrease of 19,050 votes, compared to 1911, though the 13,090 votes of the Coalició de Dretes and the 1,718 votes of the Unió Gremial offset this loss to a large extent. The Radicals took 27% of the vote, which represented a real decrease for them of 13,094 votes compared to 1911. The U.F.N.R. remained far behind the leaders with 18.8% of the vote, a disastrous decrease of 21,203 votes compared with 1911, which can be only partly offset by the 6,450 votes of the P.R.R. The P.R.R. showed that it had virtually no support and it was to suffer the loss of La Publicidad, which would return to being an independent Republican newspaper, and of the main figures it had



attracted, apart from some like Josep Zulueta, who counted more on a strong personal following in his constituency (Vilafranca) than on his politics to get re-elected.

Of the minority groups the Coalició de Dretes took 12.1% of the votes while the Liberals with 4.7%, the Unió Gremial with 1.6% and the independent ex-Radical candidate for Districte X, Tomas Burrull (who took 1.2% of the total vote, only 134 votes less than the Lerrouxist candidate) brought up the rear.

Both the Lliga and the Radicals continued to dominate in the areas they had won in 1911. The Lliga controlled Districts II, III, IV, VI and IX but lost District VIII to the Radicals who continued dominant in Districts I, V, VII and X. The U.F.N.R., as in 1911, won no district and did not even come second in any except I, where there was no Lliga candidate, and IX.

Translating the votes into Regidors, the Lliga gained eleven, the Radicals ten and the U.F.N.R. only one, while the Conservatives and the Dretes each had one regidor.

The U.F.N.R. was shown to have failed to find an electoral space for itself. Moreover its poor showing in every district in the 1913 municipal elections implied that it would most probably not get any deputies in the forthcoming general elections. This would obviously be the end, and the only alternative was to find an electoral alliance and hope to survive within it, waiting for better times. For alliances it could choose to go in with the Catalanism with the Lliga and accept its rightist social policies and lack of republican enthusiasm, or it could go in with the Radicals and accept their anticatalanism (which by now was fairly muted). It seemed likely that the identity of the party would be less diluted in an alliance with the Radicals, and negotiations

were entered into, concluding with the Pacte de Sant Gervasi (so called because it was agreed in the house of Hermenegildo Giner de los Rios of the Radicals, which was situated in Sant Gervasi). (39)

Within the U.F.N.R. there were great difficulties in obtaining assent to the Pacte. Layret and the Junta Municipal felt that it should apply outside Barcelona, since the Radicals were most unacceptable in the city. However they were also less successful outside Barcelona, and so the deputies who negotiated the Pacte ignored Layret's views, and agreed to an electoral alliance without restriction of limits. The coalition, under the name of Junta de Defensa Republicana published a manifesto on 6 February 1914 to announce the coalition and given the nearness of the general elections Layret and the Junta Municipal chose to make no public criticism. However many of the members, especially those of the Centre Nacionalista Republicà group, immediately abandoned the party. The most damaging blow was the resignation en masse of almost all the editors of El Poble Català from the party, after publishing bitter condemnations of the alliance. (40)

Although the sum of the combined Radical-U.F.N.R. votes for regidors in the 1913 elections was higher than the vote for the Lliga, it was not much higher than the combined votes of the Lliga and the Dretes. Moreover it was possible that not all the former U.F.N.R. votes were going to go to the Coalició, so it was an even chance that the Regionalists would win, especially if they were not in competition with a list of Dretes. The Dretes, who for their part were willing to oppose the Lliga in certain districts in municipal elections in the hope of winning a minority place, could not hope to do the same at city level. Therefore they were more likely to stay out of general elections, leaving the right undivided.

ELECTIONS, 1914: FRACAS OF THE COALICIO REPUBLICANA AND HEGEMONY OF  
THE LLIGA IN CATALONIA

The Lliga therefore fought the elections to Cortes of 8 March 1914 as the sole representative of the right, basing its campaign on the struggle for the Mancomunitat and identifying itself, through careful propaganda, as the party responsible for the whole campaign. The Regionalist candidature was opposed by that of the Coalició Republicana, made up of Lerroux, Giner and Iglesias of the Radicals and Coromines and Estapé of the U.F.N.R., and by a curious candidature, that of the Candidatura de Renovación, which was centred around a republican, Doctor Jaume Queraltó and included an ex-Radical, Zurdo Olivares (whom it was noted in Chapter 2 had played an unedifying role in the Setmana Tràgica) and an ex-U.F.N.R. member, Gabriel Alomar.<sup>(41)</sup> Pablo Iglesias and Antoni Fabra i Ribas presented themselves for the P.S.O.E.

The results (Tables 3.18 and 3.19) showed that abstention, at 63.5% of the electorate was up by almost 20% on 1910 (43.6%). The increase in abstention was greater in the working class districts than the others, allowing for the fact that Districts III and IV, which showed a sharp decline in votes cast, had shown very low abstention figures in 1910. The average abstention in Districts I, V, VII, IX and X was 67.7% in 1914, compared to 48.1% in 1910. For Districts II, III, IV and VI the abstention figures for 1914 and 1910 were 58.3% and 39.3% respectively. District VIII occupied the same mid way position as before, with 62.1% in 1914 against 42.4% in 1910.

The Lliga won the five majority places and the Coalició the two minority places. The Candidatura de Renovación only received a small share of the vote, though Dr. Queraltó scored a personal triumph in obtaining almost 10,000 votes. The socialist share of the vote was minimum.

Within the districts the fracas of the Coalició Republicana was evident, especially in comparison with the voting figures of 1910. Those districts where there had been a Radical majority in 1910 (I, V, VII, IX, X), voted in 1914 for the Coalició. Only one district, II, was lost, but this had been a considerable Radical gain in 1910 and the posterior voting pattern of the area had made it clear that there would be no Republican majority in these elections. The three areas where there had been a majority of U.F.N.R. votes in 1910 (IV, VI and VIII), passed to the Lliga in District IX, where the U.F.N.R. had achieved a high share of the vote in 1910, 1911 and 1913, the Lliga obtaining almost the same vote as the Coalició in 1914. The result in these four districts suggests that a sizeable proportion of U.F.N.R. supporters did not agree with the alliance with the Radicals and transferred their votes to the Lliga; this would account for the fact that in no district did the Coalició Republicana votes come near the combined totals of the Radicals and the U.F.N.R. in 1910, whereas the Radical areas remained relatively firm. In fact in only one district, I, was the Coalició vote higher than the combined Radical-U.F.N.R.-Reformista votes in the 1913 municipal elections. Summing the Coalició and Candidatura votes, in only two Radical districts were these higher than the 1913 votes for the Radicals, U.F.N.R. and the Reformistas. It is possible, therefore, that some U.F.N.R. votes went to the Candidatura de Renovación.

The Lliga victory in these elections sealed the process it had engaged in since 1901 of gaining hegemony in the Catalan provinces, in order to carry out its project described in the Introduction. For the next ten years it would be the majority party in the four provinces, though its position would continue to be contested. It would not win the city of Barcelona until 14 November 1915.

To bring the campaign for the Mancomunitat to a quick and successful conclusion, further Diades Regionals were organized at Vic (15 March) and Terrassa (5 April).<sup>(42)</sup> The day after the latter the Mancomunitat was constituted, the project having been finally granted full Parliamentary approval. By unanimous agreement Prat de la Riba was installed as President. Until his death in 1917 Prat undertook a series of administrative and technical reforms and innovations, in line with the Lliga project, creating a Barcelona which was the 'Cap i Casal' of Catalonia, carefully linked to its hinterland by road, rail and telephone communications. Elite schools to train the future industrialists, managers and technicians for industry were created. The city was steadily built up and linked up to serve the needs of its expanding industries during the First World War which broke out only five months after the constitution of the Mancomunitat.<sup>(43)</sup>

If all was expansion for the Lliga the situation was the opposite for the U.F.N.R. Few members of the party, and especially those opposed to the policy of coalition with the Radicals, turned up at the General Assembly of the party on 31 May 1914. In the discussion on the future of the Pacte de Sant Gervasi the pro-coalition group got a majority in favour of continuing the alliance with the Radicals. The opposition, led by Layret, therefore withdrew from the party, the third such loss to the Party since the beginning of 1914, (the others, it will be remembered, were the Centre Nacional Republicà and the editors of El Poble Catala) and such losses sentenced the U.F.N.R. to death, although its leading figures were to continue presenting themselves within the Coalició until the Provincial Elections of 1917.

#### ELECTIONS, 1915: THE LLIGA GAINS HEGEMONY IN BARCELONA

Full Provincial elections took place on 14 March 1915 in Districts II

and III and there was a by-election in District I to fill a vacancy. The Republicans contested the elections with a political campaign whereas the Lliga propaganda emphasized the need to elect good administrators with a capacity for work to the Mancomunitat. The Republicans put forward full candidatures in all three districts and the Lliga, while presenting itself normally in Districts I and II, only put forward a candidate for the minority place in District III. There were also two rightist candidatures, the Maurists in District II and the Liberals Autonomistes in District III.

The result followed the trend of the recent municipal and general elections with a big decline in the number of votes in comparison with the provincial elections of 1913 and 1911, principally affecting the Republicans, whilst the Lliga held steady and the rightist parties increased their vote. The Lliga won in District I and II and achieved the minority place in District III where the Republicans continued in the majority.

During the Autumn of 1915 the Lliga was offered the chance of an electoral alliance in all Spain with the Maurists. Maura, in exchange for Lliga support offered ministerial posts to Catalans in the case of a victory. The offer was rejected by the Lliga which did not share the rightist views of Maura to quite the same extent, and did not want to be involved in Maura's particular type of monarchism, or affected by the King's known aversion to Maura. During the same period the Lliga organized a massive demonstration on 10 October 1915 as part of the campaign in favour of the economic laws which the Regionalist deputies were pressing for in the Cortes. These laws had been held up by a piece of duplicity on the part of the Prime Minister, Dato, who had offered to get the laws passed if the Lliga would not oppose the Budget. However, when the Lliga had fulfilled its part of the bargain Dato had

proceeded to close the Cortes.<sup>(44)</sup> The refusal of an alliance with the Maurists and the campaign for the economic laws taken together show that the Lliga still saw its politics as 'pressió a Espanya ... i gestió a Catalunya' and did not yet consider the situation ripe for taking a leading role in national affairs.<sup>(45)</sup> Equally the fact that all the political groups in Catalonia supported the demonstration of the 10 October showed the extent to which the Lliga exercised hegemony in Catalonia. There remained an objective however for the Lliga which now seemed to be within reach - winning the majority in the Barcelona Town Hall in the municipal elections to take place on 14 November 1915, the final step towards allowing the party full control over the project it had been elaborating since 1901.

Republicans of one sign or another had been in the majority in the Ajuntament since the biennium of 1904-5 but their recent electoral record had shown their low state. Furthermore the Radicals had undergone a series of internal dissensions, including personal tensions between Emili Iglesias and Lerroux, and the departure of some members to the newly formed Bloc Republicà Autonomista. Layret, after leaving the U.F.N.R. after the May General Assembly had passed several months outside politics before making contacts and putting together a new party. It first addressed itself to the public through a manifesto published in El Poble Català on 6 May 1915 under the title of 'El Bloc Republicà Autonomista als ciutadans', signed by Marcel·lí Domingo, Gabriel Alomar, Conrad Roure, Angel Samblancat and Layret himself among others.<sup>(46)</sup> The policy of the new party according to the manifesto was to '... donar una unitat d'acció i d'organització als republicans de Catalunya' and, although it denied that it was a class party, it claimed that as a left party it would be based in the working class. The Bloc did not present itself at the municipal elections for fear of splitting the Republican vote and causing the loss of the Republican majority in the Town Hall.

The Coalició therefore represented the Republicans in these elections and the Lliga, trying to assure itself the minimum of competition from its right, allied with the Jaumins and even pacted with some Liberals. The monarchists however preferred to present a candidature and there were also several independent candidates. Of these the only one of importance was Tomas Borrull, an ex-Radical of District X who was expected to take many votes off the Coalició in that district.

To maintain their majority in the town hall the Republicans had to get 14 regidors out of the 25 to be elected. The participation of the voters reflected the awareness of the Republicans and their opponents of the need to get their vote out (see Tables 3.20 and 3.21). Abstention in the city as a whole went down by 2.1% of all possible votes compared with the Parliamentary elections of March 1914 and was up by 6.2% over the municipal elections of 1913. By districts an interesting picture emerges; abstentions were lowest in three working class districts (I, IX and X with an average rate of 54.5% abstentions), followed by District III at 59.2% and District VII at 59.5%. Districts II, IV and VIII followed with an average abstention rate of 62.5% and Districts VI and V had the highest abstention with 69% and 69.3% respectively. Districts I and X were Radical strongholds and IX was a former Republican district where the right had gained a stronghold; these elections were being contested by Monarchists and Lliga rather than the left. However only in District I was the vote in favour of the Radicals, and then only because the Lliga, as in 1913, did not stand and the only opposition was the Monarchist candidature. In District IX the Monarchists and the Lliga won over 54% of the votes cast and gained the majority and minority places respectively. The Republican vote dropped from 30.4% of all possible votes in 1913 to 10.2% in 1915. However the Lliga share of the vote also dropped, from 19% to 11.4% while the Monarchist vote increased from the 4.6% won by the Dretes in



1913 to 13.9% in 1915. It would seem then that the latter were responsible for the low abstention rate in this district, coupled with the energetic presence of the independent candidates who, with 10.7% of the total possible vote, obtained more votes than the Coalició Republicana (10.2%). In District X the independent candidate also mounted a strong campaign and was probably responsible for the interest shown by the electorate. Borrull won the majority vote, beating the Radical member of the Coalició into the minority place by over 400 votes. The other working class districts presented two different results. In District VII there was a Republican success, though only a relative one. The Republican vote increased over the vote they had obtained in the general elections of 1914 and was only 1.1% lower than the vote of the Radicals-U.F.N.R.-Reformists in 1913. However the Lliga only presented a candidate for the minority place in these elections, resulting in a drop in the Lliga share of the vote from 6.7% to 4.9% while the Monarchists held their vote steady compared with the sum of Dretes and Liberal votes in 1913. In District V, where there was considerable abstention, there was a small increase in the Lliga vote and a small decrease in the tiny vote for the Monarchists. The decline in Republican votes was therefore responsible for the increase in abstention in this district.

By districts the results showed that the Republicans held Districts I, V and VII and won IV from the Lliga. The Lliga held Districts II, III and VI and won District VIII from the Republicans, probably with the aid of former U.F.N.R. votes. The Monarchists won District IX from the Lliga and the Radicals lost District X to the independent candidate.

Translated into regidors this result gave twelve to the Lliga (ten Lliga, one Jaumin and one Monarchist), twelve to the Republicans, and the Independent, Borrull.

Combining this result with the 1913 result the new council would have twenty-six Regionalist/Rightist regidors and twenty-four of the different Republican tendencies. The Lliga had therefore become the masters in the city of Barcelona as well as in the Mancomunitat, and this domination was to arouse enmity in government circles in Madrid.

#### ELECTIONS, 1916: FINAL DECLINE OF THE U.F.N.R.

At the end of 1915 Dato resigned, stung by the continuing criticism of his refusal to pass any economic legislation and his government was replaced by a liberal administration under Romanones with Santiago Alba in the Ministro de Gobernación. Alba, apart from wanting to increase the Liberal majority, wished to increase his own personal following. He was also a declared anticatalanist.<sup>(47)</sup> Furthermore the Lliga, in the manifesto 'Per Catalunya i l'Espanya Gran', written by Prat de la Riba and signed by the Regionalist deputies in March 1916, had finally shown itself ready to intervene in Spanish politics at state level.<sup>(48)</sup> The manifesto proposed an autonomist federal organization of Spain, which would be carried out by the new bourgeoisie and not by the old oligarchic interests. Alba was therefore disposed to manage the elections in all Spain to break this policy of the Lliga, and in Catalonia to employ caciquism where this still had strength. In Barcelona city however, where caciquism had been defeated in 1901, he had to encourage the enemies of the Lliga, even though they might be Republicans. He therefore entered into a pact with the Coalició (known as the Pacte de la Castellana in Catalonia, since it was agreed in Romanones' house in the Madrid street of that name), by which he encouraged the Republicans to fight the forthcoming elections to Cortes in an attempt to beat the Lliga into the minority.<sup>(49)</sup>

The plan was spoilt in Barcelona however by the presentation of a candidature in Barcelona of Layret's Bloc Republicà Autonomista.

The Bloc, as a party naturally wanted to take part in elections, the fact of staying out led nowhere as had been shown in the municipal elections of 1915. Furthermore the Bloc felt that the U.F.N.R. was dying and wanted to take its place. It counted moreover on getting working class votes because of its social policies. (50)

Thus in the elections to Cortes of 9 April 1916 there were two Republican candidatures versus the Lliga as sole representative of the centre-right. The result was obviously a victory for the Lliga (see Tables 3.22 and 3.23).

Overall participation at 63.5% of the total possible vote was exactly the same as in the previous elections to Cortes in 1914 and by districts there was a clear division between two groups. The first, made up of Districts I, V, VII, VIII, IX and X had an average abstention rate of 66.9% and the second, which included Districts II, III, IV and VI had an average of 59.5%. Both groups therefore hardly showed any difference from 1914, though District VIII which had been midway between the two groups in 1914 had increased in abstentions and was now firmly in the first group.

The results gave the majority places to the Lliga and the minority places to Lerroux and Giner de los Rios of the Coalició. Although the Bloc with just over half the votes of the Republicans and less than half the votes of the Lliga gained no deputies it is interesting to analyse its voting pattern to see if it had any support from the working class vote.

It is evident that the Bloc took votes from the two other candidatures. The Lliga lost 12,724 votes and the Republicans 16,671 votes. Since the overall participation did not change it is tempting to assume that all these votes went to the Bloc, and by adding to the total of these

the votes obtained by the Candidatura de Renovación in 1914 (Queraltó, Alomar and Samblancat of that candidature were included in the Bloc candidature of 1916) it seems that the Bloc, in its own right, only gained some 6,000 votes. But this assumption needs to be checked by districts and Table 3.24 which shows the differences between the combined Republican votes in 1914 and 1916, the Bloc and Candidatura de Renovación votes and the Lliga votes as well as the abstention rate helps to clarify the situation. In districts where the increase in the combined Republican votes in 1916 exceeded the decrease in Lliga votes such as Districts III, V, VII, VIII and IX, abstention was reduced in comparison with 1914. Support for the Bloc did not come however from the most working class districts of Barcelona, though in District IX it did have a striking success and, in much lesser degree, it did gain some support in Districts VII and V. But it had more appeal in Districts like District VIII, III and VI and would seem to have benefited not from working class votes but from votes transferred from the Lliga, by voters who were prepared to support a Catalan Republican party, but not one allied with the Radicals.

For both Republican parties the result was poor. The Coalició was shown to have failed and ceased to exist in early 1917. Coromines resigned in August 1916, leaving the U.F.N.R. and politics, to take up a law career.<sup>(51)</sup> The U.F.N.R., run by its remaining regidors in the Ajuntament of Barcelona continued on into 1917, before being wound up. The Bloc had taken a considerable number of votes but had failed to get any deputies; after presenting itself at the provincial elections in 1917 with equal lack of success it would be quietly dissolved and its members passed over to the Partit Republicà Català under Layret.

The Lliga had come out of the elections as the great winner. Despite gaining a majority in the country as a whole the Liberals had failed in

their strategy in Catalonia; characteristically the Lliga celebrated its victory with a Festa de la Unitat Catalana in the Parc Güell, at which an open air dinner for 5,000 was served. (52)

This new confirmation of Lliga supremacy in Catalonia seemed to confirm the intervention of the Lliga in national politics as proposed in "Per Catalunya i l'Espanya Gran". Alba had transferred from Gobernación to Hacienda and it was obvious that a confrontation between him and the Lliga over economic issues was inevitable. A new period of activity began with regionalist tours of Galicia and the Basque country, in an attempt to awaken these areas to the need to form regionalist parties. Later a Basque-Catalan grouping was formed in the Cortes and contacts with the Basques were strengthened during 1917. (53)

ELECTIONS, 1917: FURTHER ADVANCES OF THE LLIGA FOLLOWING ITS ENTRY INTO THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AFTER THE ASAMBLEA DE PARLAMENTARIOS

The Provincial elections in District I on 11 March 1917 resulted in yet another win for the Lliga, with well over twice the votes obtained by the Radicals (the Coalició Republicana had by now ceased to exist), and well over three times as many votes as the Bloc.

The failure of the Bloc brought about its dissolution. With the disappearance of the U.F.N.R., Catalan republicanism was left without any organizing body and to remedy this situation the Joventut Republicana de Lleida mounted a campaign for the celebration of an Assembly to discuss the formation of a new Republican party. The Assembly was held in the local of the Ateneu Gracienc which had belonged to the U.F.N.R. and where many of the U.F.N.R. meetings had been held. The new party, the Partit Republicà Català (P.R.C.), inherited the policies and a good part of the personnel of the former Bloc and U.F.N.R., as well as including the members of the Joventut

Republicana de Lleida, and a number of former U.F.N.R. members who had passed through Melquíades Álvarez' Reformist party, the most notable of whom was Lluís Companys. A directorate, presided over by Marcel·lí Domingo ran the party and Ramon Noguera i Comet was appointed Secretary-General shortly after its foundation.<sup>(54)</sup> The newspaper La Lucha, founded at the end of 1916 by Layret and Domingo, became the journal of the party, with Companys as editor, although it continued to publish the greater part of its articles in Castilian in order to make them accessible to the immigrant workers of the city.

During the summer of 1917 there took place the events described below in Chapter 5 connected with the decomposition of the monarchic regime, the Juntas de Defensa, the Asamblea de Parlamentarios and the revolutionary general strike of August. These events had a profound impact in Barcelona since it was the most important centre of activity of all these movements.

It is not surprising then that the municipal elections of 11 November 1917 should have been highly politicized for several reasons. Firstly the actions of the Lliga in the Asamblea de Parlamentarios and the posterior acceptance of a ministry in the centre government were on trial.<sup>(55)</sup> Secondly the Republicans saw the need to unite against the Lliga since it was obvious that a divided Republican candidature could only give victory to the Lliga. Such unity was by now possible, since the Radicals had put behind them the scandals in the municipal administration and the persons involved had left public life. Moreover they had evolved an autonomist line and had behaved relatively honourably in the August strike. Thus Layret who had left the U.F.N.R. three years earlier over the Pacte de Sant Gervasi, now had no objection to entering the Coalició Republicana. Both groups also felt an emotional base for unity through the experience of the August strike in

which it was felt that the Lliga had betrayed the left, more so through its entry into the Government and its aid and approval of the repression carried out after the strike.

The elections were therefore fought by two main lists, the Lliga with Jaumin allies, and the Coalició Republicana, as well as various candidates from different groups ranging from Monarchists to independent republicans.

The turnout, at only 34.3% overall, was down by 4.4% on the previous municipal elections of 1915 (see Tables 3.25 and 3.26). By districts the abstention rate was very variable, ranging from a highest figure of 77.1% in District VII to a lowest figure of 57.9% in District IX. The second highest abstention rate was in District X, with 69.9%, and it was followed by the three bourgeois districts - VI, IV and III in that order. District V showed the same rate as District III and it was followed by the other bourgeois district, II. The very working class district I and the more mixed VIII had the third and second lowest abstention rates of these elections. Thus some of the working class districts showed a lower abstention rate than the bourgeois districts. The explanations of this phenomenon which went against the trend of recent elections, lay partly in the electoral system itself, and in changes in the electoral register, partly in the number of independent candidates that presented themselves and partly in fluctuations in support for the main candidatures.

To take the electoral register first, there is a very obvious way in which the bourgeois districts could seem to have a higher abstention figure than that which they actually had. As explained earlier, the calculations of the abstention rate are based on dividing the number of votes cast by the maximum number of possible votes, i.e. the electoral census multiplied by the number of votes which each voter could deposit.

The baseline for this calculation is therefore the electoral census, and that in use in 1917 had been drawn up in 1916. This was based on the original census of 1907, which had been annually revised. At the end of 1917 a completely new census was carried out and the number of electors registered in the bourgeois districts dropped considerably, proportionately more than in the working class districts. This would seem to suggest that the census of 1916 had become false with time and that it exaggerated the number of possible voters in the November 1917 elections which in turn would make any calculation of abstentions in the manner described above, exaggerated.

Another example of the electoral system influencing the result is to be found in District I. This district showed a big drop in votes (7.3%) compared to 1915 which can be attributed to the fact that in 1915 two regidors had to be elected, whereas only one had to be chosen in 1917. In 1915 there was therefore competition for a majority and a minority place and these were fought between two lists of two Republican candidates and two Monarchists. It was obvious that one of the Republican candidates would be first placed but there was the possibility of a Monarchist getting second place and thereby preventing the Republican copo. The Monarchists managed to achieve this by pulling out their voters (increasing their vote by 4.7% over the 1913 elections). But in the 1917 elections the winner would be by straight majority, and since the Lliga was also presenting a candidate there was no possibility that the Republican candidate could be defeated. There was therefore a drop in the non-Republican vote (the Monarchists had got 20.1% in 1915, but the combined total of Monarchist and Lliga votes in 1917 was 18.1%). The Republicans also lost votes, and this is less easy to account for, though it may have been due to a feeling that victory was assured and there was not so much need to turn out. In any case it was in line with the general Republican descent in the city as a whole.



The effect of the presentation or not of candidatures other than those of the two main parties can be seen in the two opposed cases of Districts IX and VII which showed the lowest and the highest abstention rates.

In District IX the high turnout was hardly reflected in the results of the Lliga and the Republicans, which gained 0.2% and 0.8% respectively. It was caused by the presence of four independent candidatures in 1917 as against two in 1915. The share of the votes taken by these independents increased by 7.8% (from 10.7% of all possible votes in 1915 to 19.5% of all possible votes in 1917).

In District VII the vote dropped by 11.8% compared to 1915. In 1915 a Monarchist candidature had taken 6.5% of the possible votes and a Traditionalist candidate had taken a further 5.0%. In 1917 the Monarchist candidature did not stand and the Traditionalist received only one third of the votes he had taken in 1915. There was however a dissident Republican candidature, and the total of their votes was 2.9% of possible votes. The proportion of the vote won by candidatures other than those of the Republicans and the Lliga in 1917 dropped therefore to 6.1% of all possible votes from a total of 11.5% in 1915. The Lliga vote remained virtually the same at 5.2% (4.9% in 1915). Therefore the vote for the Republicans must also have registered a drop compared to 1915 and this was effectively the case - their share of the vote dropped from 18.3% in 1915 to 11.6% in 1917, a drop of 6.7%. In District VII, then, the decrease in the vote, summing the Republicans and the Dissident votes was 3.8%. The drop in votes for the independent candidatures was therefore largely responsible for the drop in votes in District VII, just as the increase in votes for Independents was responsible for the lower abstention of District IX.

Within the other working class districts there was hardly any change in the vote for the Republicans. It can be assumed then that there was little discontent within these districts at the way in which the Republicans had behaved during 1917.

The bourgeois districts all registered losses for the Coalició and gains for the Lliga, except for District III where the Coalició had not stood in 1915 and where it gained 4.5% of the votes. The Lliga lost votes here, the only district in the whole city where this happened. In the mixed district VIII both main candidatures increased their share of the votes.

From these elections then it would seem that within traditional Republican districts there was no discontent with the Republicans, although there was a small increase in the Lliga vote. In the bourgeois districts the Republican vote did drop, presumably because of the association of the Republicans with the revolutionary strike of August, and the increase in the Lliga vote only occurred in the Eixampla districts (IV and VI) whereas in District II it was relatively small and in District III there was a decrease, suggesting that opinions over the Lliga's actions were divided. (56)

In terms of regidors these elections were a victory for the Lliga, which obtained thirteen regidors, and their Jaumin ally who obtained one. The Republicans with twelve regidors therefore remained in the minority in the Ajuntament.

During the winter of 1917-18 both parties continued to promote the political awareness of their voters. The Lliga organized a Setmana Gallega in Barcelona in December, with the attendance of various Galician politicians and intellectuals. (57) For propaganda purposes it was decided to divide the country into three zones and in each of these

activities were organized by emissaries of the Lliga under the supervision of a senior member of the party. Through this policy new Regionalist groups were founded in some thirty-nine provinces of Spain, though none of them lasted very long. Finally the presence of two Lliga ministers in the Government was exploited for its newsworthiness.

The left, preoccupied with the severe sentences imposed on the strike committee responsible for the August strike, organized meetings in their favour. On 8 December there was a well attended homage in Barcelona to Marcel. li Domingo at which the speakers made many references to the strike committee. Equally the Russian revolution which, as was seen in the introduction, had made such an impact on the Barcelona working class, continued to provide a ready focus of interest. Domingo himself at the homage compared the situation in Spain with the decomposition of the Russian Tsarist regime.

#### ELECTIONS, 1918: THE LLIGA LEAVES THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND BEGINS AN AUTONOMY CAMPAIGN

In these circumstances the general elections called for 24 February 1918 aroused a great deal of interest, especially on the left, where it was felt that these elections would be less corrupt nationally than earlier ones because of the independence of the Ministro de Gobernación (the Vizconde de Matamala, who was an independent and who occupied this ministry as a guarantee of free elections), and the presence of the two Lliga ministers in the Government. The left also expected that these would be elections to a Constituent Cortes and even some of the Centre parties shared this view, or at least expected substantial modifications to the 1876 Constitution.

The Republican candidatures in the main cities of Spain in these elections were slightly different from earlier ones in that they also contained Socialists from the imprisoned strike committee of the August 1917 strike. These joint candidatures, mounted through the Conjunción Republicana Socialista in the Cortes, had as objective the election of the committee so that they would enjoy parliamentary immunity and could be freed from their imprisonment. In Barcelona then the Republican list for these elections was made up of Marcel. li Domingo, Giner de los Rios, Lerroux, J. Pich i Pon for the Republicans, and Largo Caballero, socialist and member of the strike committee. The Lliga list contained, for the first time in a parliamentary election, a Jaumin candidate. Regionalist candidates stood in other areas of Spain.

In Barcelona the results were a win for the Lliga of all the majority places. The minorities went to Largo Caballero and to Marcel. li Domingo (see Table 3.27).

Voting was 10.1% up on the previous elections to Cortes of 1916, when there was a 63.5% abstention rate. The vote for the Coalició dropped by 0.5% whereas the Lliga increased by 10.6% to gain 20.6% of the total possible votes. By districts there was hardly any variation in the Coalició vote; it increased slightly in Districts V, VIII, IX and II and decreased in all others slightly. The Lliga vote on the other hand increased in every district, in proportion to the increase in the number of votes in each district, except in Districts II and III, where it was slightly lower. Naturally in the working class districts the increase in the vote and the increase in the Lliga vote were lower than in the bourgeois districts (see Table 3.28).

Outside Barcelona the elections were disappointing for the Republicans and Lliga alike, since they changed nothing, even though they were less

directed than previous ones. Few regionalist candidates were elected outside Catalonia. (58)

In February the two Lliga Ministers resigned from the Government on the grounds that their fellow Ministers did not wish to carry out the programme of the Asamblea de Parlamentarios. Shortly afterwards a parliamentary crisis broke out over the government's handling of the military and the government resigned, to be replaced by a coalition government under Maura, which included the head of every dynastic party except that of the recently resigned government in an attempt to provide stability and representativeness. Cambó accepted the Ministro de Fomento, in which he felt he could represent the entrepreneurial interests of the Catalan bourgeoisie. (59) So, although his party was formally opposed to the regime of the 1876 constitution, one of its best politicians joined a government whose only aim was the preservation of that system, thereby attracting the criticism that the Lliga, when pushed into it, would choose the course that best defended its class interests and not the interests of Catalonia.

Cambó's projects incurred the opposition of Alba, Ministro de Instrucción Publica. The latter finally resigned, causing a crisis which was only resolved by the formation of a new coalition government formed solely of liberals on 10 November. This government included Alba and excluded Cambó and thus brought to an end the first experience of Lliga participation in the central government.

Following their failure to gain political power at the national level the Lliga now began a campaign for the autonomy of Catalonia. On 11 November the armistice had been signed, bringing the First World War to an end and the general expectation in intellectual and political circles in Catalonia was that the principles evolved by President Wilson of the

United States, for an end to the conflict, would be put into practice, including those that promised to protect the oppressed nations of Europe.<sup>(60)</sup> There was a great deal of hope that Catalonia would benefit from this and there were many initiatives at local level, calling for autonomy, which were seconded by the politicians and the parties.<sup>(61)</sup> On 15 November the Catalan Republicans had already called for the autonomy of Catalonia in the Congreso. The Escola de Funcionaris d'Administració Local which was one of the elite schools set up by the Mancomunitat, had sent a circular on the need for autonomy asking all the town councils of Catalonia to declare their opinions on the autonomy of Catalonia, and the results were handed to the President of the Mancomunitat on 16 November. They indicated that over 98% of the municipalities were in favour. The autonomy campaign met with considerable resistance in Madrid, causing the Catalan deputies and Senators to leave the Cortes on 12 December and giving rise to Cambó's famous 'Monarquia? Republica? Catalunya!' speech on 16 December.<sup>(62)</sup>

The Government under Romanones formed an extraparliamentary commission to discuss the problem but the refusal of the Catalan Republicans to take part was seconded by the Lliga which did not want to break Catalan unity by quarrelling with the left over such a question.<sup>(63)</sup> The Catalan deputies therefore founded a Commissió which like the Parliamentary Commission, was to prepare a project for the autonomy of Catalonia. The Catalan project was approved by the Mancomunitat on 26 January 1919 and ratified shortly afterwards by an assembly of representatives of the municipalities of Catalonia.

In the meantime the government took steps to head off the movement. It hoped to break the strength of the Lliga by encouraging the newly-founded Unión Monarquica Nacional (U.M.N.), a dynastic coalition under the monarchist cacique of Terrassa, Alfons Sala. Despite its name this coalition did not include the whole of Catalan monarchism; its chief

opponent was the F.M.A., the Federació Monarquica Autonomista de Catalunya. Since the monarchists were divided it was a desperate card to play electorally, though perhaps that was not so much the Government's intention; possibly what it wanted was to cause disorder in Barcelona in order to suspend the constitutional guarantees. In this the U.M.N. seems to have excelled and the guarantees were suspended on 16 January 1919.

As a product of the suspension of guarantees the working class centres were closed and the leaders of the sindicatos arrested. Since the working class movement had remained distinctly aloof from the Lliga campaign and the street battles between Lliga and U.M.N. members the accusation has been made that this was a government provocation, in an attempt to provoke a working class protest which would divert attention away from the autonomy campaign. (64)

Whether the accusation is true or not, events as they turned out confirmed it. On 21 February 1919 the strike of La Canadencia began and it will be shown in Chapter 8 just how much of a radicalizing effect this had on all the groups involved, the Barcelona working class movement, the Catalan bourgeoisie, and the military, and how it resulted in the Lliga's withdrawal from its openly autonomist positions into a state of collaboration and dependence on the military authorities of Barcelona.

#### ELECTIONS, 1919: DISARRAY OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTIES

On 1 June 1919, following the appointment of the Maura government, elections to Cortes were held to give the Maurists a majority. These elections were held while the constitutional guarantees were still suspended and the freedom of expression and the right to hold meetings were therefore severely limited. The Lliga, the Coalició, and the

U.M.N. all presented full candidatures and there were two socialist candidates. The socialists - Fabra i Ribas and Serra i Moret presented themselves both as a test of strength to offer an alternative to the Catalan working class.

The results gave a victory to the Lliga, whose five candidates achieved a total of 152,198 votes compared to the 115,749 votes of the Republicans (see Table 3.29). The Monarchists won 54,894 votes and the Socialists only 6,487. Abstentions at 56.5% were up 3.1% over the elections to Cortes of 1918, but were still lower than the 63.5% of 1916 and 1914 (see table 3.30). Both the Lliga and the Candidatura Republicana lost votes, 4.7% and 6.5% respectively. By districts the pattern is considerably less uniform. The Lliga lost votes in every district, though it lost far more in its traditional strongholds (Districts II, III, IV and VI). It also lost many votes in the rather less certain District VIII. In all these districts except VIII there was a decline in the total number of votes cast. There was a fairly high vote for the Monarchists in these areas and the conclusion must be that previous support for the Lliga in these districts had included the Monarchists and that once a new Monarchist element appeared they voted for that instead. In the working class districts (I, VII and X, but not IX or V) the Lliga vote remained much the same and presumably here represented a real rump which remained constant. In District V the Lliga decline may be attributable to a transfer of votes to the Monarchists but this is not the case in District IX where there was only a small vote for the U.M.N. The Republicans lost votes in all districts except IX and VII. Their losses were nowhere near those of the Lliga though they were higher in Lliga dominated areas than in traditional areas. Unlike the Lliga who lost votes to the U.M.N. the Republicans hardly lost any to the Socialists, whose share of the vote did not arrive at 1% of possible votes except in the Lliga areas IV and VI and



in District VIII. In District I the Socialist vote was only 0.4%, the lowest in the whole city, and in District X it was only 0.8%.

The Monarchists, though they had taken some votes from the Lliga, had failed to make an important showing. The P.S.O.E., though its vote has to be considered as artificially low when expressed as a percentage of the total possible vote, since their candidates only went for minority places, had suffered an electoral disaster. The election of Largo Caballero the previous year, far from showing that possibilities existed among the Catalan working class for Socialism, was shown to have been a humanitarian vote, and even then, as was seen earlier in this analysis, there was no extra working class vote for Largo Caballero.

Elections for provincial deputies were held on 6 July in Districts II and III. In the month since the general elections the Maura government had resigned, due to the bad results it had obtained in those elections and the 1876 structure really did seem to be very creaky if, from in power, it was impossible to secure a majority in elections. This governmental instability was to persist until the coup d'etat of Primo de Rivera.

Because of a dispute between the Partit Republicà Català and the Radicals in the Cortes over the leadership of the Republican minority in the Congreso (the P.R.C. proposed that the leader should not be a party leader), and because the Radicals were proposing to present individual Radical candidates in the provincial elections the P.R.C. recommended its voters in Barcelona, where the candidates all belonged to the Radicals, to abstain.

The provincial elections resulted in an advance for the Lliga in its own district, II, and the narrow defeat of the Radicals in their district, III, by the Lliga and allied candidates.

These results showed the increasing disarray of the Radicals. Their leaders, in view of the social situation, had stopped making the verbal excesses of earlier years, giving the impression of an increasing tendency to conservatism, and this sometimes caused tension between the leadership and an increasingly radicalized base.

The P.R.C. also suffered internal problems over a proposal by Layret on 19 November that the party should adhere to the III International. The open opposition of some members, especially Noguera i Comet, failed to persuade the Assembly of the party not to approve the proposal. The opposing members therefore left the party, and some of the supporting associations withdrew.

In such circumstances of low internal cohesion the Republican parties went into the municipal elections of 1920.

#### ELECTIONS, 1920: REPUBLICAN FAILURE

These municipal elections should have been held in November 1919, but were postponed until February, 1920, because of the governmental crisis which led to the resignation of the Sanchez de Toca government. It was replaced by a conservative administration under Allendesalazar which took power on 12 December 1919.

In Barcelona the Lliga and the Radicals contested every district, while the U.M.N. and the P.R.C. stood in only seven and eight respectively. There were also in some districts a few independent and Jaumin candidates.

Modern historians have taken a view of these elections as awakening little attention and as being irrelevant in the context of the social struggle that was going on. Furthermore the electorate was tired of the continual calls to vote. (65)

There is a foundation to this interpretation as will be seen, but firstly it is necessary to look at factors which would seem to contradict it. Voting at 44% overall was up on the previous municipal elections of 1917 by 9.7% and compared to the elections to Cortes of 1919 it was down by only 0.9%, and by 3.5% compared with the elections to Cortes of 1918. The voting rate stood comparison with the previous municipal elections of 1915 and 1913 (see Tables 3.30 and 3.31).

Within the districts there was an increase in votes in every one except District VIII where there was a 4.8% decrease. In the working class districts the increase was small, apart from District I, IX and X which registered increases of 6.8%, 7.4% and 12.7% respectively. The bourgeois districts registered very high increases, as much as 16.3% in District IV.

The increase in voting in these elections would seem to have been due mainly to the increased number of candidatures compared to earlier elections. The pre-existing candidatures did not increase their votes by very much. The Republican parties considered jointly (i.e. the total votes for both the Radicals and the P.R.C.) increased their vote over 1917 by 1.2%, though they were down 2.9% on the Cortes elections of 1919. The Lliga increased its vote by 6.0% over 1917 and by 1.7% over 1919. The U.M.N. lost 4.3% votes compared to 1919. The P.R.C. had a very low vote, with a best result of 5.2% in District IV.

There are however other factors which change the picture. Firstly the vote increase was relatively large in the working class districts I, IX and X but in the other two (V and VII) there was only a very small increase. In District I two regidores had to be voted in these elections, so there was a maximum and a minimum place and this doubtless made the campaign more intense than in 1917 when only one regidor was elected. In District IX a local independent topped the list through

mobilizing a lot of local support. In District X only one regidor had to be voted, yet the vote was very high, with a significant increase in the Radical vote. This increase occurred only here and in District IV.

It would seem then that there was no enthusiasm in the greater part of the working class districts for the Radical alternative, and still less in all districts for the P.R.C. alternative. The greater animation in these elections would seem to have been due to the increase in the number of candidatures, which offered, particularly on the right, a wider choice and this is why there was a formidable increase in the vote in the bourgeois districts.

The view mentioned earlier is seen, then, to be true only in part. These elections did attract little attention from the working class, though even this assertion overstates the case, as was seen in the examples of Districts I and more clearly, X. They attracted considerable attention in the bourgeois districts where the Lliga hegemony was further emphasized by the rejection of the U.M.N. alternative. It is difficult to consider these elections, then, as a crisis of participation, though they indicated a crisis for the Radicals and the Republicans in that they had experienced disastrous results while the Lliga had increased its share of the vote.

In terms of regidores the results gave five to the Radicals, fourteen to the Lliga, three to the allies of the Lliga and two to the U.M.N.

In April, 1920, Dato was appointed Prime Minister. One of his conditions was that he should be allowed to hold general elections shortly, but once in office he took a long time to call them, preferring to deal with the Parliament as little as possible; the Cortes therefore found itself powerless to intervene in events, a situation which effectively took away from it any appearance of relevance or usefulness.

In Barcelona, Dato's policy was to attempt a pacification of the situation. He forced the resignation of the Civil Governor, the Conde de Salvatierra de Alava, whose repressive policies against the sindicatos had aroused intense working class protest, and who had provoked the Lliga through his action against the Catalanists on the occasion of the visit of Marechal Joffre to Barcelona as President of the Jocs Florals. His successor, Carles Bas, was a Catalan and politically a moderate, who would not follow the repressive policies of Salvatierra.

Bas was under pressure by the Catalan Federació Patronal throughout the summer and finally resigned on 6 November 1920, being replaced two days later by the Military Governor, Martínez Anido.

Martínez Anido's first acts were the closure of the Confederación Regional de Trabajo, and the immediate deportation to the Castell de la Mola in Mallorca of the principal union leaders, as well as the Republican, Companys, who acted as lawyer to the sindicatos.

The wife of Companys went at once to Layret to ask him to take some action to avoid the deportation of her husband and Layret immediately left the house to go to the Gobierno Civil. In the street he was gunned down and died a few hours later in hospital. (66)

In this way there began the most severe repression against the working class movement in Barcelona. Under Martínez Anido assassinations of workers and trade union leaders by bands of anonymous assassins paid for by the Patronal, or through the use of the Ley de Fugas against those detained, became commonplace. Martínez Anido directly encouraged the recently formed Sindicatos Libres and urged them to take radical action against the C.N.T. and its Sindicats Unics. The Sindicalistes were obliged to defend themselves, using the same methods or even move

to the attack to avoid future aggressions.

The result of the arrests and murders was to remove the influence of established leaders from the sindicatos, disorienting the working class base and allowing radical elements to present the policies of direct action as the only solution, making orthodox politics seem an irrelevancy. (67)

On 19 December 1920 Dato finally held the general elections which he had demanded as the price for taking power, in order to obtain a parliament which would suit him. The Lliga presented a full candidature, as did the U.M.N., but the Radicals only presented two candidates, knowing that they were condemned to second place against the Lliga in any election and fearing that if they presented a full candidature they might not get enough votes to win the minority places, especially if the Monarchists managed to take a large number of Lliga votes.

After the count the five majority places went to the Lliga and the two minorities to the Radicals (see Tables 3.33 and 3.34 for the results and analysis of the votes). There was a decrease in the vote by 19.5% compared to the elections to Cortes of 1919 and the abstention rate, at 76% was practically double that of the rest of Spain. Naturally the Radical vote, expressed as a percentage of the total vote was well down, since each voter could only cast two votes for the Radicals instead of the five of a full candidature. If however their result is multiplied by 2.5 to give some idea of what a candidature of five would have achieved then their result would still have been only about half that of 1919. The Lliga vote also dropped compared with 1919, by 4.7% and the U.M.N. by 2.3%.

By districts the drop in voting, as one might expect, was more marked

in the Radical districts I and X which registered votations of only 15% of all possible votes. In some districts participation was about 23% and in other districts around 30%. The Radical vote dropped considerably in the working class districts and in more mixed districts like IX and VIII and rather less in the bourgeois strongholds. The Lliga dropped everywhere but the loss was greater in its own districts. The U.M.N. vote declined in all districts though only by a low amount. The loss in Radical, and to a much lesser degree in Lliga votes, was therefore the real reason for the decline of the vote in different areas in these elections.

#### ELECTIONS, 1921 - 1923: DISORIENTATION WITHIN THE LLIGA

The electoral register for the years 1921-23 has not been conserved and it is therefore impossible to continue in the same way as above the analysis of the elections held in those years.<sup>(68)</sup> This section, then, is more in the nature of a descriptive epilogue giving details of the two provincial elections of 1921 and 1923, the municipal elections of 1922 and the general elections of 1923, to round off this analysis of elections in the city of Barcelona in the period 1910-1923.

On 12 June 1921 provincial elections were held in District I; the Lliga presented a full candidature, and was opposed only by one Radical and one Jaumin candidate, aspiring for the minority place. The victory of the Lliga was a foregone conclusion against this lack of opposition. The Radical won the minority. According to Molas the Lliga vote dropped slightly because of the competition of the Jaumin candidate and the left Catalanist voters abstained.<sup>(69)</sup>

Within Barcelona then the Lliga seemed to be increasingly dominant; it had a real control over all local institutions and a wide and disciplined voting base. However there was discontent within the party

at the slowness with which concessions were being extracted from Madrid, despite the collaboration of Lliga leaders with the central government. The efficacy of the interventionist policies of Cambó was being brought increasingly into question and especially within the youth movement, the Joventuts de la Lliga, there were moves to demand a more intransigent policy.

On 5 February 1922 municipal elections were held. The results (see Table 3.35) gave victory to the Lliga, which won fifteen regidors, despite suffering a decrease of almost 10% in its vote, compared to the municipal elections of 1920. The Radicals, with an increase of 10% took second place with eight regidors. The U.M.N. still obtained only a small vote (6.9%), compared with the 6.8% it had achieved in the municipal elections of 1920. It had hoped to increase its vote considerably in view of its result in the 1920 elections to Cortes, and it practically folded up from that moment on, although it was not officially dissolved until 1923.

In April the Joventuts of the Lliga called for a Conferència Nacional Catalana on the Catalan problem to be held in June. In May the programme was published and the Comissió d'Acció Política of the Lliga issued a document warning those taking part that if the Conferència did not restrict itself to theoretical problems and instead passed motions calling for political actions then any Lliga member who voted such motions would be expelled from the party. (70)

Despite this warning the Conference was held and the decision taken to form a new group, Acció Catalana; the Joventuts decided to split from the Lliga in order to join the new party. Despite the brave face put on by the official history of the Lliga, there is no doubt that this was a very severe blow both in the scale of the breakaway and the public repudiation of the policy of the Lliga leaders. (71)



An Assembly of the Lliga, followed by a meal and a monster meeting were organized on 8 and 9 July in the Palau d'Art Modern on Montjuich in order to demonstrate that the catalanism of the Lliga still commanded popular support. Immediately afterwards the Joventuts were reorganized. (72)

In October the Sánchez Guerra government attempted to quell the indiscipline of the armed forces, dismissing Martínez Anido and his lieutenant, Arleguí by telephone because of their failure to reduce social tension in Barcelona and dissolving the military Juntas de Defensa. Unable however to contain the debate of the Picasso report on the military failures in Morocco, the government fell in early December. (73) The new government of Garcia Prieto would be the last of the constitutional monarchy, remaining in power until the coup d'etat of Primo de Rivera. As Molas notes, the situation of the monarchic regime was by now critical. (74)

In January, 1923, Cambó, in a famous speech at the Casal Nacionalista de la Barceloneta, attacked the policy of 'tot o res' defending the moderate, interventionist line of the Lliga against the impatient 'tot' of Acció Catalana. (75) In the elections to Cortes held on 30 April 1923 the electorate was able to make its choice between the two possibilities since Acció Catalana put up a candidate, Rovira i Virgili. Rovira, a prolific writer and theorist of nationalism, had not been associated with the Lliga, as he had been a member of the Bloc and the Partit Republicà Català.

There was a Lliga candidature of four names allied with a Jaumin which hoped to gain the first five places. The Radicals only presented two candidates for minority places. There were also two P.S.O.E. candidates as well as Rovira i Virgili, a Liberal and a candidate from the Cambra de Llogaters. The provisional results (see Table 3.36)

gave the majority places to the Lliga candidates and the Jaumin, with Lerroux following in the first minority place. In the second minority place, however, was Rovira i Virgili, with a surprisingly high vote. He had achieved more votes than the Jaumin in Districts II, III, IV, VI and X, and in the latter he had got more votes than Cambó. (76)

However the definitive results held an even greater surprise, as the candidate who followed Rovira i Virgili in the results, Emiliانو Iglesias of the Radicals had overtaken him due to a change in the figures in District VII, where it transpired that the Lliga regidor Tomas i Boix who was responsible for supervising the elections in that district, had changed the actes, falsifying the results. Thus the Lliga, a party which had come to power in Barcelona through an honest suffrage was seen to be fixing elections, and moreover in favour of their arch-rivals the Radicals, in order to prevent the election of the candidate of Acció Catalana.

The scandal was so great that the Lliga expelled Tomas i Boix, but before the expulsion was made known supporters of Acció Catalana attacked Lliga headquarters, breaking in and causing damage. On 10 June 1923 provincial elections were held in Districts II and III. The Lliga proposed an electoral alliance with Acció Catalana which was accepted for all Catalonia except Barcelona. Within Barcelona both parties presented full candidatures, as did the Radicals. The results showed a victory for Acció Catalana in District II, with the minority place for the Lliga. In District III the Radicals won because of the concurrence of the Lliga and Acció Catalana; the minority place went to the Lliga, but by a margin of only 125 votes. In view of the Lliga results Cambó announced his retirement from politics, alleging that his policies were a source of division within the Catalanist movement. (77)

To judge by these two elections, Acció Catalana had had a significant

impact in Barcelona (and also in Catalonia) and represented a renovatory influence within Catalan politics. The party had succeeded in gaining left Catalanist votes which had been lost when the U.F.N.R., the Bloc and the P.R.C. had failed. This renovation compounded by the evident disorientation of the Lliga and the foundation of new political groups in Catalonia such as the Unió Socialista de Catalunya in July 1923, would be cut short by the coup d'etat of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, Captain General of Catalunya, on 13 September 1923, with the support of elements of the Lliga.<sup>(78)</sup> The dictatorship would last until 1930, after which the whole political complexion of Spain, Catalonia and Barcelona would be completely changed.

## CONCLUSIONS

The above analysis has shown that there were very clear differences between different district of the city as regards their voting habits and preferences. In Tables 3.37-3.58 the information given in the previous tables election by election is summed up by district, so that the electoral trajectory of each district may be more easily examined. Charts 3-5 present some of this information-electoral participation and the republican share of the vote for three groups of Districts - I, V, VII, IX and X; II, III, IV and VI; and District VIII so that two main features of interest may be more easily visualised.

## ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

The general trend was the decline of the vote in general in all districts, but in a more accentuated fashion in Districts I, V, VII and X. This drop was paralleled by the decline of the Republican vote, and the latter is obviously the main cause of the former. In the bourgeois districts the drop in the Republican vote is as marked but began from a much lower level since the Lliga and its allies had the lion's share of the vote in these districts. The Lliga vote tended to increase in these districts with time and this is the main reason why their abstention figures did not increase as rapidly as the working class districts. The increase in the Lliga vote was much smaller in Districts I and X, though here the presence of independent candidates was sometimes strongly reflected in the vote, causing the abstention figures to be lower than was to be expected from the performance of the two main candidatures. In Districts V and VII the Lliga vote did not increase and independent candidates presented themselves with less success. In consequence these districts showed a much more uniform decline in electoral participation. Districts VIII and IX, which were of mixed social composition with a population of greater Catalan extraction than

the working class districts showed greater participation; District VIII maintained a relatively high Republican vote while District IX showed a greater tendency to vote for the Lliga and monarchist groups.

The decline of the vote was arrested in the elections to Cortes of 1918, 1919 and the municipal elections of 1920. This was a result of the Lliga autonomy campaign and the polarizing circumstances (the need to release the strike committees after the strike of 1917, the strike of La Canadenca in 1919, and the outbreak of social unrest from 1918. So high was the participation that in all districts it arrested the downward tendency of the vote, sometimes dramatically so as in Districts III and IX. The impetus given by events was not sustained, however and the slight decline during 1919 from the high level of 1918 became much more exaggerated in the 1920 municipal elections. And, although the electoral register is not available it is certain that the decline continued throughout the period 1921-23, since the numbers of votes cast in the elections of those years continued to drop.

A much more elaborate picture has therefore emerged from this analysis which points to important differences between the areas identified in Chapter 1 as being mainly working class. The two areas where the Radical Republicans were strongest at the beginning of the period under study remained faithful to the Radicals throughout and did not vote for political alternatives, though independent candidates, mainly ex-radicals could win a big vote in them from time to time. Districts VIII and IX, of more mixed social background and with a higher percentage of Catalans showed an initial tendency to vote for Catalan Republican options, as well as a lesser attraction to the Radicals at the beginning of the period. The Pacte de Sant Gervasi went down badly in these districts, as can be seen in the vote for the Coalició Republicana, particularly in 1914-1915. In District VIII votes transferred to the Lliga, and in District IX they seem to have gone to Independents and

Monarchists. Districts V and VII registered an almost uniform fall in support for the Radicals without however transferring support to other alternatives. These were areas of great immigration and were strongly influenced by the anarcho-syndicalists. It would seem that there was a withdrawal of the vote in these areas in general; in any case immigrant voters could hardly be expected to vote for the Lliga or left Catalanism.

From the above analysis it would appear, then, that the Barcelona working class did not find political expression through the electoral system in Barcelona in the years under study here. The Lliga, although it was ultimately able to win both the Mancomunitat and the Barcelona Town Hall, did not do so with working class support. The working class, after a brief flirtation with Lerroux's Radicals, withdrew from the established political system. The left Catalanists made repeated efforts to attract their support, but these all failed. In this connection a final problem remains to be examined; the idea which has gained wide currency that Layret was working with the most important of the Catalan sindicalist leaders, Seguí, towards the foundation of a working class party integrating the masses from the sindicatos with the left Catalanists. Was such a project really proposed? Could it have been viable in the official political and electoral system in Barcelona? Could it have been extended to Spain as a whole?

#### A NEW WORKING CLASS PARTY AS AN ATTEMPT TO BREAK THE MOULD?

Layret's intense political activity, especially in the years 1914-1920 has been described above; his continued efforts to found political parties in an attempt to create electoral space for his particular brand of obrerisme and republicanism were instrumental in the creation of the U.F.N.R., the Bloc and the P.R.C.

Nothing, however, has been said so far of Seguí's thought in relation to intervention by the working class in official politics, apart from a brief mention in the introduction of his so-called possibilism.

In this respect Seguí's thought has been ably resumed by Molas.<sup>(79)</sup> Seguí gave great importance to the problem of creating strategic alliances because of his own particular analysis of the possibilities of bringing about anarchism. For Seguí the working class was not theoretically or consciously ready to make the revolution; though all its acts were political it did not benefit from them.

Though it rejected bourgeois politics it could still seek alliances with other sectors in order to maximize the importance of its actions, while creating a massive organization, equipped to intervene in the struggle of the revolution and the future direction of society. Seguí therefore maintained constant relations with politicians from the left, among them Layret.

Following the assassinations of both figures (Layret in 1920 and Seguí in 1923), it was not long before references were made to the possibility that both had wanted to form a political party. The first would seem to have been Federico Urales, a pure anarchist opposed to Seguí, in La Revista Blanca in 1924.<sup>(80)</sup> Later, in the 1930's when the political climate had changed with the advent of the Republic, other groups whose policies were to try and win the anarcho-syndicalist masses over to participation in the electoral system such as the Bloc Obrer i Camperol and the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, created a much stronger version of the story, as part of their attempts to present working class electoral intervention as a legitimate policy and themselves as legitimate heirs to Seguí and Layret. Francesc Madrid, a supporter of the Esquerra Republicana and a contemporary friend of both Seguí and Layret gives the most complete version of the contacts between the two

which he supposed would have led to the creation of the new party and his version was taken up later by Pere Foix, another ex-Esquerra Republicana figure.<sup>(81)</sup> Present day historians such as Ferrer have taken up these versions and perhaps given the supposed contacts and project an excessive importance. Ferrer, for example, describes it as a 'gran projecte' and claims that it could have broken the mould of official politics in Barcelona in the period under study:

L'estreta relació Layret-Seguí estava a punt de donar una prova extraordinària de maduresa; els treballadors, no solament trobarien el seu partit, sino que irromprien a les eleccions desfent la falsa situació majoritària de les dretes, que es refiaven sobretot del seu tradicional abstencionisme.<sup>(82)</sup>

Was the relationship between the two so strong that they would have formed a new party? The same Ferrer, when interviewing a contemporary sindicalista leader and friend of Seguí's, Simó Piera, asked him about the project. Piera replied:

Layret era un home honrat, un polític honest, pero que s' havia hagut de formar en una época especialment turbulenta. Si no hagués mort tragicament, hauria arribat a assimilar moltes coses. Era gran amic de tots, especialment de Seguí, pero jo no crec que el "Noi del Sucre" hagués fundat un moviment polític al costat de Layret; el que sí es possible que hagués passat és que hauria recolzat seriosament l'acció d'en Layret. (83)

In the light of the electoral analysis which has been carried out here, it is open to doubt whether, if such a party had been formed, it would have had any possibility of success. From the above it has been seen that in Barcelona the electoral census discriminated against the working class who would presumably be the electorate of such a party. Secondly what would be the sphere of action of such a party? If it restricted itself to Barcelona in what districts could it expect an electoral success? Certainly not in the Radical strongholds, even in the early 1920's. In Districts IX and VIII the possibilities seem doubtful, given their social composition and previous electoral trajectory.



The only possible areas would seem to be Districts V and VII. Layret, in his last letter speaks of the new party having a national action but it does not seem possible that a victorious party could have come from the few industrialized cities which he mentioned.<sup>(84)</sup>

In conclusion a new working class party was no answer in the political system of the time in Spain and in Barcelona. The system offered nothing to the Barcelona working class and they rejected it, acting instead in the fields of unofficial politics which are the subject of the next chapters.

## CHAPTER 4

## WORKING CLASS ORGANIZATION AND ACTION TO 1916

## INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter it was shown that 'official' politics, as shown in the voting patterns of the working class districts, aroused only limited interest and involvement within the Barcelona working classes before 1911 and that a marked decline in interest occurred in the period 1911-1923. The exceptions to this assertion were the shortlived electoral support for the Solidaritat Catalana in 1907 and the large working class following won by the Republicans of Alexander Lerroux, a following which evaporated in the years 1911-1913. The reason advanced by present day historians for this loss of support is that there was a growing acceptance of anarcho-syndicalism among the Barcelona workers; this begs the question however of why anarcho-syndicalism should appeal to these classes.<sup>(1)</sup> What were the basic elements of the theory and mode of action of anarcho-syndicalism and who were its most influential thinkers and activists? To what extent were their views ratified or rectified by the mass of workers?

The answers to these questions must be sought in an analysis of the extent to which the principles and tactics of anarcho-syndicalism related to the needs and everyday realities of the Barcelona and Catalonia working classes (which have already been described in Chapter 1), along with an evaluation of the relative strengths and incidence of the different propagandists and activists at work both within and around the movement, and this must be followed by an analysis of other tendencies and modes of action within the working class which were in conflict with anarcho-syndicalism. Finally an analysis of strike action to 1916 will reveal the extent to which these new principles and tactics were being adopted.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY TRADITION

The working class movement in Barcelona had the longest tradition of organization and collective struggle against the conditions of capitalist production and indeed, against capitalism itself, in Spain. Active in the last two thirds of the nineteenth century, it had shown itself to be largely apolitical, when it came to showing support for official politics, at most expressing a preference for federalist views, and rejecting absolutely political and syndical centralism. It was through this apoliticism that anarcho-syndicalist ideas, as will be demonstrated below, were able to win a following within the Barcelona and Catalan working classes, just as anarcho-collectivist ideas had found an echo in the working class movement from the 1870's on. The U.G.T., which it must not be forgotten, was founded in Barcelona, and had its headquarters there from 1888 until 1899, was unable to make headway against this apoliticism, despite the displacement of the anarcho-collectivists by the anarcho-communists towards the end of the 1880's and the harsh repression of the latter throughout the 1890's. The move to Madrid signalled the growing reformist line of the Socialist leaders and their wish to subordinate the trade union organization to the political party. Left behind in Catalonia were a small number of active militants who, in the face of the decline of the U.G.T. within the region, would play an important role in the working class movement which would emerge after 1904. (2)

The disillusionment and demoralization within the Barcelona working class movement which followed on the failure of the anarchist-inspired 1902 general strike were capitalized upon by the Lerrouxist Republicans who were able to break the apoliticism of the workers and establish themselves in the Cortes and in the Barcelona Town Hall. Despite their pretensions to being a national party the failure of the Republicans to establish themselves firmly outside Catalonia and their weak implantation in the

rest of Catalonia outside Barcelona, as well as their increasingly obvious inability to represent the working classes (only masked by the demagoguery of Lerroix to a limited extent), would probably have led to the loss of their working-class clientele in any event; but it was the growth of a fierce opposition within the working class movement initially by the Catalan Socialists and then by the Catalan anarcho-syndicalists in opposition to them, which determined the exact timing of the process.

#### REORGANIZATION OF THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

##### Reorganization from 1904

The development of this opposition can be seen in the reorganization of the working class movement in Barcelona from 1904 onwards. Following the 1902 strike the movement had been reduced to a relatively small number of sindicatos de oficio, craft unions, which integrated only a small percentage of the total number of workers in each trade, and sometimes even distinguished between oficiales and peones in certain occupations such as the bricklayers. These sociedades obreras were linked only tenuously - the local federations of the anarcho-collectivists had ceased to exist, and there were few regional federations within each speciality.<sup>(3)</sup> The anarchist groups themselves had lost much of their credibility because of the failure of the 1902 strike and the repression being carried out by the authorities in response to the mysterious bombing campaign which had been carried out in the city since 1902.<sup>(4)</sup>

Given the loss of credibility and the disorientation of the anarchist groups, the first attempts at reorganization of the working class societies - the founding of the Unión Local de Sociedades Obreras de Barcelona y sus Contornos in 1904 - was largely inspired by Socialist activists.<sup>(5)</sup> The Unión was unable however to counteract the heavy defeats inflicted on the

Sociedades in 1904 and 1905, and it was not until 1906, through the mobilizations aimed at obtaining an eight-hour day and May day as a holiday (which paralleled the same effort by the C.G.T. in France that year), that it began to acquire importance. Later in the same year it was able to mobilize the growth of opposition to the Lerroxists who were then busily attacking the newly formed Solidaritat Catalana.<sup>(6)</sup>

While there was agreement that the workers should neither be formally for or against Solidaritat Catalana - it would have been foolish for a weak organization to stand up to a movement which, as was shown in the elections of 1907 was interclassist and able to mobilize a significant number of working class votes - demands began to be made for a new movement of 'solidaridad obrera' in opposition to both the Radical republicans and the Catalan Autonomists. The relationship of the new movement to both these forces would later be expressed by a drawing in the first number of Solidaridad Obrera, entitled 'Proletario, despierta' which showed a woman, representing Solidaridad Obrera awakening a worker, asleep through inhaling the opium of republicanism and catalanism, (symbolized in a misty dream over his head, by a female figure in a phrygian bonnet distributing money and banknotes to cloth-capped workers from a cornucopia, alongside men wearing the typical barretina of the Catalan rural workers accompanying traditionally dressed Catalan pubilles in a sardana around a female figure carrying the shield of the quatre barres and a flag with 'Autonomia de Catalunya' written on it).<sup>(7)</sup>

#### The founding of Solidaridad Obrera, 1907

At the initiative once more of the Socialists, the idea was launched in the summer of 1907 of holding a Congress to unite all the working class societies in a strict workers' solidarity, the Solidaridad Obrera mooted during the previous year, though for the time being the initiative was limited to Barcelona and its radius. The organizing committee included socialists, anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists. The meeting of some

thirty-four representatives of different sociedades obreras of Barcelona was held on the night of the 3rd-4th August in the local of the socialist dominated Asociacion de la Dependencia Mercantil, and formally constituted Solidaridad Obrera.<sup>(8)</sup>

This Barcelona organization to which fifty-seven societies were affiliated - the numbers of workers represented must have been very small - experienced problems in consolidating itself, and was only able to rent a local and begin publishing a newspaper with the financial aid of the educationalist Francesco Ferrer. Although the newspaper, which began to be published in mid October 1907 was forced to suspend publication from the end of November of the same year, the organization was able to survive the winter, and saw its example copied in the formation of a Solidaridad Obrera among the working class societies of Badalona at the beginning of 1908. In March 1908, at a joint meeting of representatives of the Barcelona and Badalona organizations which was also attended by representatives from other organizations in Catalonia, it was decided that Solidaridad Obrera should take on a regional character and it was agreed to hold a congress of the new body later in the year to discuss forms of action within the organization.

#### The Congress of Solidaridad Obrera, 1908

This Congress, under the name of Congreso Obrero de Cataluña was held in the local of Solidaridad Obrera in Barcelona on 6, 7 and 8 September 1908 with representatives from 122 societies attending.<sup>(9)</sup> There was a relatively high number of socialists present (relative to their total strength in the Catalan workers' societies). In 1907 the U.G.T. had been reduced to its lowest ever strength in Catalonia - six sections only, with 839 members in Barcelona and 15 in Tarragona, and in 1908 these figures were down to 469 in Barcelona only.<sup>(10)</sup> There was a considerable anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist presence and even some Radical Republicans,

despite the dispute already in progress between the Radicals and Solidaridad Obrera. A letter from Anselmo Lorenzo to the delegates remarked on the division among thinking workers, in the face of the ignorant indifference of the masses, between idealistas and practicos, and pointed out that the former might not arrive at finding the means to reach their ideal, whilst the latter, more preoccupied with the exigencies of the present, might put obstacles in the way of progress towards the ideal. The reference to anarchism and socialism was obvious, and Lorenzo concluded that the solution would be the task of the workers themselves.

The views of this old anarchist and survivor of the anarcho-collectivist Primer Congreso Obrero Espanol, held in Barcelona in 1870, reaffirm the contention advanced above, that the appeal of anarcho-syndicalism to the Barcelona and Catalan working class depended on how far it coincided with the views of the workers themselves, and this was well evident to the anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist militants of the time.

At this Congress of Solidaridad Obrera the Socialists were to find themselves relatively outgunned by the anarcho-syndicalists. They were forced to accept the anarchist inspired principle of one society, one vote (the Socialists wanted a system of proportional representation according to the number of members of a society), and this voting advantage was used to push through acceptance of the anarcho-syndicalist principle of direct action. On a matter which could certainly have seriously divided the nascent federation, and which was a battleground between socialists and anarchists - the principle of multiple base unionism - the decision was prudently made to adjourn discussion until the next Congress.<sup>(11)</sup>

#### The Second Congress of Solidaridad Obrera, 1910

This Congress, according to a decision of the 1908 Congress, should have

taken place in the following year, i.e. in 1909. However the Setmana Tràgica and the ensuing repression in that year caused its postponement until 1910. The events of 1909-1910 were reflected in the number of societies represented - 114 - and in the radical change in the balance of forces; because of the Setmana Tràgica and the posterior attitude of the P.S.O.E. in Madrid, the strength of the Socialists had declined dramatically, and they were unable to impede, among other things, the decision to make Solidaridad Obrera a national organization, a decision which would inevitably lead to conflict with the U.G.T., although the proponents of the move denied this. The decision on multiple base unionism was again deferred until a later Congress. (12)

The following Congress, that of 1911 was the first proper Congress of the C.N.T. and at it the move of the new organization towards revolutionary anarcho-syndicalism, and the declining numerical representation of the Socialists were seen to be even more complete. (13) Soon after this Congress the C.N.T. would be declared illegal and would be unable to reorganize until 1915. The Socialists were to become even more disorganized in Catalonia during this period, and their participation in the final Congress that will be discussed here - that of the Congreso Regional del Trabajo de Cataluña, the famous Congrès de Sants, in 1918 was only testimonial, though a certain deference to their views was observed, for reasons which will be elaborated below, basically because some of the principles of socialism, in particular multiple base unionism, had retained considerable force within the Barcelona and Catalan working class movement, and because of the tactical questions of the moment. It is intended in this chapter to examine the particular ideological developments within these Congresses, in particular those of 1910 and 1911, from the viewpoint explained earlier, that of analyzing the extent to which the principles and tactics of anarcho-syndicalism related to the needs and everyday realities of the Barcelona and Catalan working classes and of evaluating the relative strength and influence of the different tendencies



and activists at work within and around the movement.

This can best be done by examining the treatment of a number of inter-related questions at each Congress, with reference to data and discussions from intervening periods when this is available.<sup>(14)</sup> These questions can be categorized as the organization of the syndicates and their relationship with the federal and confederal organizations, apoliticism, relations with the U.G.T., syndical tactics and education. This last question will be left for Chapter 9 since its antecedents and some of its contemporary forms were to a certain extent outside the framework of the working class organizations, and it also needs to be considered in relation to the initiatives of the Barcelona and Catalan bourgeoisie in the same field. Before going on to look at these Congresses there remains a point to discuss, that of the transmission of anarcho-syndicalist ideas into Spain from France.

#### The French connection

In his preface to José Prat's La Burguesía y el Proletariado, published shortly before the 1910 Congress of Solidaridad Obrera, Anselmo Lorenzo briefly summarized the decline of the working class movement in Catalonia since 1902, and noted:

En tal situación llegan las corrientes sindicalistas a España y singularmente a Cataluña, no a darnos una idea nueva, sino a devolvernos corregida, aumentada y perfectamente sistematizada la que los anarquistas españoles inspiramos a los franceses, discutiendo desde Acracia y El Productor con La Revolté sobre la conveniencia de dar impulso revolucionario a las sociedades de resistencia.<sup>(15)</sup>

Prat himself claimed that:

...el Sindicalismo, en sus líneas generales, no es una teoría nueva ofrecida como última solución al proletariado. La cosa en sí es vieja. No ha hecho mas que cambiar de nombre, expresando con la palabra "sindicalismo" lo que antes aquí se conocía con el nombre de "societarismo obrero".<sup>(16)</sup>

It is beyond our scope here to profundize further in this matter, which is certainly one of great interest. It has already been indicated that there was a long tradition of societarianism within the Catalan working class, and José Negre claimed that the Spanish movement had nothing to learn from the French on this point. However the question of whether it was first in France or in Catalonia and Spain that there first occurred the particular mix of ideas which led to anarcho-syndicalism is too difficult a problem to resolve; as Bookchin remarks the relations between the movements of anarchism and syndicalism represent one of the unexplored aspects of modern European history.<sup>(17)</sup> The interest of Lorenzo's idea lies in his suggestion that there were connections between the intellectuals within or in contact with the working class movements of France and Cataluna. That there was a continual flow of Catalan and Spanish intellectuals and artists visiting France for varying periods of residence, at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century is evident from the careers of numerous intellectuals of the time, and equally there was an uninterrupted emigration of workers from south of the Pyrenees to France, and a more limited flow in the opposite direction.<sup>(18)</sup> Presumably these workers were responsible for bringing some ideas of the new organizative tendencies and ideas of the C.G.T. into Catalonia, whilst the introduction of the theoretical works of French intellectuals was simultaneously effected by a host of writers, amongst whom the most outstanding were Lorenzo himself, and Prat, whose intensive labour of introducing foreign texts is only now being revalued by present day historians, though it was evident to his contemporaries. The very work which Lorenzo was prefacing and which was mentioned at the beginning of this section makes plain Prat's knowledge of the French situation.<sup>(19)</sup>

What were the changes which came from France? Prat himself suggests changes in the orientation of the syndicates, which had to develop from sociudades de resistencia into revolutionary organizations, totally

outside religion and politics, (though the individual beliefs of members were their own affair), and whose aim was the economic emancipation of all the working class, to be carried out through organization, propaganda and the general strike. Other weapons would be available to them - "boicotaje" and "sabotaje", two gallicisms employed by Errico Leone, whom Prat cited, and the "label". After the revolution the syndicates would become responsible for the organization of production.<sup>(20)</sup> As will be seen all these ideas were to be adopted by the Catalan working class movement, and some of them would be considerably elaborated.

In conclusion it must be reiterated that the chicken and egg problem of where anarcho-syndicalist ideas first originated is a secondary one, and what is important is that they were acceptable to the working classes in Barcelona and Catalonia, where the fracas of the 1902 general strike had left the movement and its anarchist mentors searching for a new strategy; what will now be interesting is to see how these strategic considerations coalesced with a growing class consciousness and produced an original movement, suited to Catalan circumstances.<sup>(21)</sup>

#### IDEOLOGICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL BASES OF THE REORGANIZATION OF THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

##### Projects and Congresses before 1910

The Proyecto de Regulación de la Unión Local de Sociedades Obreras de Barcelona of 1904 is the only remaining evidence of the Socialist inspired attempt to provide some form of relation between the sociedades obreras after the experience of 1902.<sup>(22)</sup> The proposal came from the Socialists and, given the prevailing mood within the working class movement of the time, the project was a very neutral document. It began by stating that the aim of the Unión was to unite those Sociedades de Obreros whose aim was the improvement and defence of working conditions

through association. With regard to the relationship of the Syndicates to the Union it was laid down that:

Art. 2<sup>o</sup>. Esta unión no tiene ninguna facultad para discutir y determinar sobre la administración y marcha interior de las Sociedades adheridas. Estas seran autonomas entre sí, aceptando y poniendo en practica aquello qué, según su particular criterio, consideren practicable, siempre que no sea en perjuicio de las demás que compongan este organismo.

Each society could supply a delegate to the Comité administrativo, and was expected to inform the Committee of any initiative it proposed so that the other societies could be informed of it. All the societies were expected to practice the strictest solidarity. (23)

This first initiative had only a very limited success in the adverse conditions of 1905 and 1906, and in 1907 it was decided to launch Solidaridad Obrera, whose aim was summed up in its title - the solidarity, and hence the unity, of all the workers. (24) The manifesto announcing the Congress of 1907 stated this explicitly, and attempted to put no obstacles in the path of this unity, proclaiming the political neutrality of the new organization and emphasizing that the 'medio de lucha y de defensa' would be indicated by the societies themselves. (25) The regulations by which the new Federation would be run were decided at the Congress and showed considerable Socialist inspiration. They named a number of very concrete aspirations and even stated that the organization of the workers would be by 'ramos de produccion, en agrupaciones locales, en federaciones nacionales y en la confederación internacional del trabajo', i.e. in the style of the U.G.T. (26)

The importance of the Socialists was declining by the time of the 1908 Congress at which Solidaridad Obrera became regional. Unfortunately the debates of the Congress have not been recorded; however there do exist the Estatutos of the regional organization, which were edited in accordance with the decisions of the Congress. (27)

In these it is stated that the objectives of the Confederation were to:

...procurar el mejoramiento de todos los trabajadores, favorecer su cultura intelectual, darse mutuo apoyo para la creación y fomento de sociedades obreras y educarse en el ejercicio practico de la Solidaridad para el mejor fin de su emancipación económica y social.

In article 3<sup>o</sup> the means by which these aims would be brought about were described:

...la propaganda societaria de los principios económico-sociales, la enseñanza científica y racional para los obreros y sus hijos y la relación y organización de la clase obrera bajo la base de la mayor autonomía posible. (My underlining).

Article 4<sup>o</sup> stipulated that the type of societies which could enter the Confederation were all those legally constituted workers' societies of both sexes, though 'los llamados intelectuales' could only offer their cooperation, and could not participate in the administrative or directorial functions of the Confederation. It went on:

No podrá pertenecer ninguna sociedad que ostente un caracter político o religioso, ni de tendencia determinada que no se avenga al objeto y fin comun por las sociedades confederales perseguidos, como tampoco aquellas que se funden existiendo ya sociedad de resistencia constituida del mismo oficio; no obstante, se respetarán las existentes aunque sean del mismo arte u oficio creadas en los radios de los pueblos, hasta que por su completa autonomía y voluntad logren fusionarse cada cual en las de su oficio respectivo.

This last part of Article 4<sup>o</sup> is extremely interesting, establishing as it does a unique territorial base for each sociedad de oficio, but respecting those to be found in the newly incorporated areas of Barcelona, even though there existed a sociedad for the same oficio in the centre. Since the annexation of the outlying towns had taken place eleven years earlier it can be seen that there were either practical difficulties for the fusion of entities in these areas with those in the centre (and some of these, such as transport were discussed in Chapter 1), or there were resistances, either because a new organization in a sole sociedad was not effective because of the prevailing industrial structure, or because of the tradition

of jealously guarded local autonomy within the Catalan workers' movement. (28)

Compared with the bases of 1907 there had been a change in the type of sociedad demanded; organization by branches of production as outlined in 1907 had been substituted for organization by oficios. This change marked the waning socialist influence within Solidaridad Obrera, and returned to a tradition of organization which was deeply rooted in Catalonia. Equally significantly no sociedad de oficios varios would be accepted, except in the case of small localities.

In these first steps towards founding a new working class organization in Catalonia there can be seen two basic ideological features which were to manifest themselves again at the founding congress of the C.N.T. The most important was the emphasis on apoliticism. Even though, as has been shown, the first attempts at organization came from the Catalan Socialists, apoliticism had to be adopted as a unifying feature of any new organizational proposals. Secondly, despite the attempt by the Catalan Socialists to gain acceptance of the idea of organization by branches of production, the 1908 Congress voted for organization by trades, linked through federations of each industry and through local federations of all unions.

The organizational process was also gaining momentum - from being a local Barcelona organization, Solidaridad Obrera had progressed to cover all Catalonia. The next step would be for it to become a national organization. On 13 June, 1909 the Consejo de la Confederación decided to call the annual meeting according to article 8<sup>o</sup> of the Statutes, and fixed the date of 24 to 26 September, stipulating that it would be of national character.

Before this congress could take place there occurred the general strike

against the war in Morocco, and this developed into the events known as the Setmana Tràgica which were examined in Chapter 2.

### Consequences of the Setmana Tràgica

The immediate consequence of the Setmana Tràgica was a cruel and arbitrary repression by the Maurist government, with the active support in Catalonia of the clergy and the Lliga, directed against individuals implicated in the events of that week, but also against the working class organizations and the lay schools. Solidaridad Obrera, accused of instigating the revolt in collusion with the French C.G.T. and the Freemasons, had its local closed and was unable to publish its newspaper, or to hold the projected Congress of September 1909. Equally, many of the centres of the societades were closed. It was not until after the winter of 1909 that renewed attempts at organization could be made. Many militants of all tendencies were imprisoned awaiting trial and many others left Barcelona for longer or shorter periods. Fabra i Ribas, the most influential among the Catalan socialists went into exile in France and the Catalan Socialist newspaper La Internacional had to close down. (29)

In Madrid the P.S.O.E. campaigned against the repression, though it did not defend the extralegal events of the Setmana Tràgica, and turned its back on the reorganization of the Socialists in Catalonia, dedicating its energies to a new parliamentary venture, the Conjunci3n republicano-socialista. The Catalan Socialists, regrouping in December 1909 launched a new periodical, La Justicia Social, which was published not in Barcelona but in Reus, and which was destined to fill the gap left by La Internacional. (30) Although the new paper to some extent distanced itself from the Madrid direction of the P.S.O.E., it followed a line of moderate support for the Conjunci3n, and came to be increasingly criticised by anarchist and syndicalist sectors in Catalonia. This was worsened by the appeal they launched through Fabra i Ribas in Paris to the Bureau

Socialiste Internationale, demanding money for the reorganization of socialism in Catalonia. The appeal alleged that by aiding the Catalan Socialists the other parties of Europe would be contributing towards extinguishing one of the largest and oldest foci of anarchism in Europe. It provoked a sharp reply from the anarchists in Tierra y Libertad, and was also translated and reproduced in Solidaridad Obrera. Its publication was followed by a reply by Gas Belenguer, vice-secretary of the Catalan Socialist Federation which the directors of Solidaridad Obrera had doubts about publishing, because of the fear of giving publicity within its pages to the different tendencies within the Catalan proletariat. Gas' reply was moderate and favoured the neutrality of the syndicates in matters of politics and religion. (31)

Cuadrat has pointed out the interesting debate that took place between the socialists of La Justicia Social and the proponents of anarcho-syndicalism, principally José Prat, in the pages of El Obrero Moderno of Igualada, over the U.G.T. The socialists admitted that the U.G.T. was centralist and did not combat the argument of Prat that it was no longer an organization concerned with economic matters, rather it had become the extension of a political party. (32)

The involvement of the P.S.O.E. in the Conjunción republicano-socialista led, inevitably, to a demand from Pablo Iglesias at the end of November 1909 for the working class organizations to actively and unconditionally support the pact, through propaganda and agitation, which caused a debate within La Justicia Social, culminating in criticism of this policy in April 1910. (33)

The formation of the Conjunción and the support given it by the P.S.O.E. and the U.G.T. as well as by some of the more important unions belonging to the latter, placed the Catalan socialists in a difficult position in Catalonia. They divided themselves on whether to follow the political



line of Iglesias in Madrid or whether to maintain an economic line and hence retain influence within the Catalan working class. The unambiguous support of the P.S.O.E. and U.G.T. for the political-electoral pact of the Conjunción provoked the apolitical radicalism which was being manifested in Solidaridad Obrera, and which was manifested by the appointment of the committed revolutionary syndicalist José Negre to the general secretaryship in mid 1910.<sup>(34)</sup> The loss of influence of the Socialists within the working class movement would be shown at the Second Congress of Solidaridad Obrera.

#### REORGANIZATION OF THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT AFTER THE SETMANA TRAGICA

##### The Second Congress of Solidaridad Obrera, 1910

This Congress was held from 30 October to 1 November 1910, at the Palau de Belles Artes, Barcelona. The number of delegates has not been recorded, though as one commentator who was present pointed out, the delegates were able to spread themselves out at their ease in the spacious hall of the Palau, since their total number did not arrive at a hundred.<sup>(35)</sup> They represented a total of 114 Sociedades and Federaciones Locales, 35 of them from outside Catalonia, though significantly none of these came from the Socialist strongholds of Madrid or Bilbao. There were at least a further 40 societies which adhered to the Congress. Of the sociedades represented, not all belonged to Solidaridad Obrera, and in fact 4 belonged to the U.G.T. However all the delegates were allowed to vote on issues, whether or not the sociedad they represented was a member of the Federación. The number of workers represented by the societies belonging to Solidaridad Obrera at this time was very small, reflecting the disorganization caused by the Setmana Tràgica and the repression, and were possibly less than 4,500.<sup>(36)</sup>

The debate on the need for a national organization at the Second Congress

This debate was the real pole around which the Congress revolved. In it the loss of influence of the Socialists over Solidaridad Obrera was made patent, and, as can be seen from the minority motion which they presented, and from the candid admission by one of them afterwards they came to the Congress with the intention of stopping any proposal to make the Federación national. The issue was listed as Tema 3<sup>o</sup> in the agenda of the Congress and was placed with a further two temas - 11<sup>o</sup> and 13<sup>o</sup> - for the first ponencia.

TEMAS: 3<sup>o</sup>. ¿Es de necesidad o conveniencia para el sindicalismo que Solidaridad Obrera pase a ser una Confederación nacional?  
 11<sup>o</sup>. Una vez organizada la Confederación General del Trabajo, ¿precisa la constitución de Federaciones de Oficios y similares?  
 13<sup>o</sup>. Conveniencia de que los obreros esten organizados por artes y oficios. - Que los oficios similares o concurrentes a un objetivo comun establezcan federaciones. (37)

The ponentes included two Socialists, Duran of the Agricultores de Sitges and Puig of the Unión de Grabadores en Cilindros de Barcelona. They differed from the rest of the ponentes and produced a minority dictamen.

The majority dictamen was short and proposed a national organization which, once it had been formed, would negotiate with the U.G.T. with the aim of uniting the two working class organizations. The minority dictamen demanded that the organization should remain regional and should enter into relations with the U.G.T. The issue, after the two dictamens had been read was then put forward for debate, using the technique of three speakers for and three against. (38)

The first speaker for the dictamen, Farre of the Arte de Elaborar Madera de Terrassa emphasized that the motion should not be taken as indicating 'odio hacia la U.G.T.' since its purpose was to group together in a Federation all those sociedades which were not allied to the U.G.T. Puig, defending the minority motion asked for its approval and declared

that the U.G.T. would admit a Federación Obrera Catalana as a group within it, but if Solidaridad Obrera refused this and instead went national, then it would be declared blackleg ('amarillo').

This presumably excited the passions of the listeners as the next speaker, José Negre, had to remind them that in the Congress: '...no se busca la desunión, sinó que por el contrario, se busca luz y armonía entre todos los explotados.' (39)

He claimed that the demand that Solidaridad Obrera should become national came not so much from within the organization itself as from the entities outside Catalonia which were not integrated in the U.G.T. and which sympathized with the doctrine of direct action. As a national organization Solidaridad Obrera would not oppose the U.G.T. and would support it in all conflicts. And once the national organization was formed it would be possible to see which of the different methods of the two federations was the more successful. He ended by claiming that:

...sí la clase obrera de otras regiones hubiera estado agrupada en los sucesos de julio otro hubiera sido el fin de los mismos, y no se hubiera dado lugar a las brutales represiones que tuvieron efecto en Cataluña y en otras regiones espanoles. (40)

The other speakers for and against added little to the remarks of these first speakers. In the rectificaciones which they were then allowed before the vote was taken, Puig claimed that none of the arguments expressed by his opponents had convinced him, and that it was certain that the U.G.T. would modify its tactics if the Catalan Federation entered it. Again Negre had to appeal for calm, before going on to explain among other things that while it had been said that the new Federation would be solely composed of anarchists this was not true, and the strictest neutrality would be observed towards the decisions made by the sociedades within the Federación. The vote was taken after the other speakers had had their say and the president had summed up,

resulting in 84 for, 14 against and 3 abstentions. The decision was therefore taken to found a national organization which, whatever its defenders had said, would inevitably be forced sooner or later into conflict with the U.G.T.

Because of the lateness of the hour temas 11<sup>o</sup> and 13<sup>o</sup> were left over till the following morning, when they were unanimously agreed on.

The new national federation was therefore to be based on a typical model of Catalan working class organization - federations of craft unions - which were neutral in political and religious matters and tried to integrate all the workers of all shades of opinion within their craft and their area.

Tema 5<sup>o</sup> discussed the orientation of this unionism, whether syndicalism should be considered as a means to, or an end of, working class emancipation. The dictamen stated that it should be considered as a means of struggle towards the:

...emancipación integral de toda la clase obrera, mediante la expropiación revolucionaria de la burguesía tan pronto como el Sindicalismo, o sea la asociación obrera, se considera bastante fuerte numericamente y bastante capacitada intelectual mente para llevar a efecto la expropiación de aquellas riquezas sociales que arbitrariamente detente la burguesía y la consiguiente dirección de la producción. (40)

The end of syndical organization was therefore revolutionary, and the syndicate, in line with the French views which were mentioned earlier as being introduced into Catalonia during these years, is seen as not just the agent of revolutionary change but also as the mechanism by which production would be organized after the revolution. The dictamen was opposed by Farre of Terrassa, but on what grounds we do not know since the debate was not recorded. It was approved but no voting figures are given.

The tactics to be adopted by the syndicates were discussed in two related

temas, 7<sup>o</sup> and 9<sup>o</sup>:

7<sup>o</sup>. La huelga general para que surta sus efectos de eficaz defensa del proletariado ¿puede ser pacífica o ha de ser esencialmente revolucionaria? En todo caso, ¿en que forma cree el Congreso debe emplearse para su seguro éxito?

9<sup>o</sup>. Cuando estando una sociedad federada en lucha, es atropellada por la policía o la fuerza pública ¿que actitud han de adoptar las demás secciones federadas?. (41)

These two intertwined themes reflected the effect which the experience of the Setmana Tràgica had produced in the Catalan working class and its thinkers. The dictamen to tema 7<sup>o</sup> was written by the syndicalist socialist Joaquin Bueso, who had been present at the barricades in July 1909. (42) He affirmed that the general strike had to be revolutionary because the workers could not maintain it peacefully for very long before hunger would drive them to attack the stores and warehouses which, since these were private property, would bring them into conflict with the forces of order. These forces, apart from such conflicts, knew of no other way to maintain order except by imprisoning the most active members of the working class movement, which the rest of the workers would have to protest against, and in violent fashion: 'pues de lo contrario, en lugar de vencer a los tiranos nos inmolarían nuevas víctimas.' (43)

Regarding the most effective means of carrying out the general strike, it was recommended that it should not be used in order to obtain a small increase in wages or decrease in hours, but rather for a total transformation in the mode of production and distribution. Drawing on the experience of the Setmana Tràgica it was added that the general strike should not be restricted to one region but should be national. Cases might arise when a general strike had to be declared in a locality or region and in that case the local committee would have to study it and resolve whether it should be amplified or not. Finally, again with reference to the Setmana Tràgica, the Congress should agree to undertake a general strike in the case of 'aventuras guerreras' by the state, 'pues

en ellas el proletariado unicamente pierde sangre y no gana nada.' (44)

This dictamen was approved by acclamation.

Within the context of the labour movement in Catalonia and the mystique which had grown up around the general strike it represented a serious reflection on the circumstances in which such a tactic was justified, and an attempt to define it as a concrete resource for the working class.

Bueso also had a hand in the extremely long dictamen to Tema 9<sup>o</sup> which was also approved by acclamation. This analyzed the nature of the 'fuerza publica' which served only to administer the laws maintaining social inequality. Neither were the governments which controlled these forces neutral, nor could they pretend that the armed forces they sent into areas suffering strikes were there as a moderating force, as Canalejas had claimed in the case of the current strike of the foundry-workers in Bilbao. The benevolence of the government was shown more in its true light in the mobilization of workers on strike as had occurred with the railwaymen in France, thereby obliging the strikers to be blacklegs for themselves. Until now organized workers had tended to ignore attacks on other workers by the armed forces, but: '...en este Congreso, que tal vez sea el origen de una gran fuerza proletaria, bueno sera que demos el paso inicial de afirmar una neuva actividad para lo futuro.' (45)

New weapons would have to be employed - involving the whole locality through meetings, flysheets, posters and extraordinary numbers of the workers newspapers, boicotaje and sabotaje (sic) would have to be used, and if necessary the strike would have to be extended to the whole profession and later made general. However these responses could not be predetermined, firstly because like laws: '...al chocar con la realidad de la vida no responden en nada a las necesidades, a las palpitaciones imperiosas de la misma.' (46)

and secondly because the way should be left clear for more energetic

protest according to the importance of the case.

After the dictamen had been acclaimed it was proposed and approved that it should be reprinted and distributed throughout Spain. It represented an important step in specifying new syndical tactics to be employed by the new organization in the future, and also in its emphasis on evolving tactics to suit circumstances, and in making the degree of the action to be taken agree with the gravity of the case, it prefigured a flexibility in tactics which would characterize the new organization until the end of the period under study. This dictamen would be read again at the 1st Congress of the C.N.T. in 1911. (47)

Among other issues discussed at the Congress were the eight hour day, the need to form 'sindicatos de inquilinos' and the need for schools to be created within the syndicates. The work of women was also discussed. The tema relating to multiple base syndicalism, Tema 5<sup>o</sup>, is not discussed anywhere in the record of the Congress, and it can only be assumed that it was left out of the debates.

The 1910 Congress therefore represented a clear setback for the Catalan Socialists in that it proposed the formation of a national federation which was bound to conflict with the U.G.T. Moreover, on all the issues defined above as marking differences between socialists and anarcho-syndicalists - the organization of the sindicatos, the aim of union activity and the associated policy of apoliticism - their loss of influence was clearly shown. The refusal of the Congress to consider the problem of multiple-base syndicalism indicated however that this traditional basis of Catalan unionism still exerted a hold over the members of the unions which the Socialists might exploit and it was not dealt with until the first Congress of the C.N.T. in 1911.

### The first Congress of the C.N.T., 1911

The 1910 Congress had taken the first steps towards the creation of a new national working class organization. The Congress held at the Palau de Belles Arts in Barcelona from 8 to 10 September was to lay the foundations on which the national project of that organization would be based, expanding on the matters discussed at the founding conference of the previous year as well as considering new elements. Among the former were the structure of the new national organization, and apoliticism and relationships with the U.G.T. In regard to the latter it was suggested that a fusion of the two unions should be carried out, and it was agreed, that this would be done when the C.N.T. membership equalled that of its rival. New elements were the discussion on multiple-base syndicalism, which had been scheduled for the two previous congresses and had been left; the manner in which women workers should be incorporated into the movement; support for prisoners detained as a result of their union activities and the need for a national propaganda tour. The debate on rational education the previous year was also continued and this will be dealt with in Chapter 9.

The number of syndicates belonging to the C.N.T. in September 1911 was 140 and these had 26,571 members. 78 syndicates were from Catalonia and these had 11,889 of the members.<sup>(48)</sup> Affiliation to the C.N.T. had therefore been running at a high rate since the congress of 1910.

### The structure of the new national organization

Tema 1<sup>o</sup> dealt with the organization of the new national organization, asking:

'?Debe constituirse la Confederación Nacional del Trabajo a base de Federaciones locales y regionales?'<sup>(49)</sup>



In his Memoria de los Trabajos del Comité Federal para la organizacion de la C.N.T., Negre had already observed that the local working class organizations should form local or Comarcal federations, in order that the interests of all the workers in a locality could be combined, accustoming the workers to the idea that their emancipation should not be the work on one or other syndicate, but rather of all the syndicates at the same time.<sup>(50)</sup> This attempt to unite all the workers of a locality, apart from responding to a felt need which had manifested itself throughout the history of Catalan working class organization, had also then the aim of avoiding corporativism among the syndicalists and the creation of elite groups of workers. For the same reasons the federations should form a Regional Confederation, and these should form a national organization.

The dictamen to the tema, basing itself on somewhat pretentious analogies, affirmed that local and regional federations were the best way of uniting the working class. It further claimed that no committee of the national federation could ever feel in itself the necessities of all the different regions of the nation, since to do so it would have to reside in all the different localities at the same time (sic). It was in their localities that people defined their particular needs and the formation of the local federation would necessarily bring with it the unity of the working class of the locality as well as:

por ende la unidad de pensamientos, y por tanto, el engendro del espíritu de solidaridad que ha de ser lo que necesariamente producirá la fuerza del proletariado.

Pero si esto es cierto, hemos de convenir en que la localidad por si, si en efecto es una fuerza, aquella sería incommensurable con la formación de una federación regional que sería el atomo y la celula del cuerpo fuerte: la Confederación Nacional.<sup>(51)</sup>

The ponencia therefore advocated the formation of local, regional and national federations. It was approved unanimously.

### Multiple base syndicalism in the new organization

At a later session the delegates discussed Tema 1<sup>o</sup>, multiple base syndicalism. The dictamen pronounced itself resolutely against it, regarding the extension of syndicalism into cooperatives, mutual aid societies and the like as an extensive task, rather than an intensive one. There was considerable debate afterwards and one delegate, Lostau, moved that the adoption of the multiple base system in whole or in part should be left to the criteria of the syndicates and local organizations: 'según su modo de ser y situación particular, considerando muy aventurado y contraproducente querer medir a todos por el mismo rasero.' (52)

Ricart of the Panaderos La Espiga spoke against the dictamen and stated that the different entities should enjoy autonomy in this question. Negre emphasized the benefits of direct action and Ricart agreed that it was important, but cited the case of his own Sociedad, as one which showed the importance of multiple base syndicalism. The vote which was taken afterwards was 62 for, only 4 against and 1 abstention.

### Apoliticism and relations with the U.G.T.

Apart from considering the relationship of the syndicates of the C.N.T. with other working class organizations such as the cooperatives and mutual aid societies, the Congress also considered their relations with political organizations. Tema 5<sup>o</sup> dealt with whether the syndicates should share their locals with political organizations. Like the dictamen to Tema 1<sup>o</sup> the dictamen to this tema was extremely short and stated that since politics were a prejudicial factor for the emancipation of the workers the syndicates should separate from the political parties if they shared the same site. In the short debate that followed a delegate from Ecíja cited the case of his area where political parties and syndicates were united in complete harmony and pleaded for a wider criterion, but the dictamen was approved

by majority, though the voting figures have not been recorded. (53)

In this debate the delegates therefore repudiated the syndical practice of the U.G.T. Later that day, in the ponencia to a tema which must have arisen during the course of the Congress itself, since it did not figure in the original agenda, they were invited to consider the question of uniting the two syndical organizations:

?Es necesario unir o fusionar las dos entidades obreras nacionales denominadas Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (Solidaridad Obrera) y la Unión General de Trabajadores, distanciadas por simple cuestión de táctica cediendo al interés común de sus principios de resistencia al capital y emancipación económica de los trabajadores? ?Es además conveniente dicha fusión para unificar el esfuerzo de la propaganda societaria, hacer más extensa la organización obrera y más poderosa la acción proletaria en España? En este sentido, ?que bases de unión propone el presente Congreso para llegar a la realización de estos fines?(54)

The ponentes were Jaime Bisbe from the Federacion de Igualada and Salvador Seguí of the Pintores 'Nueva Semilla'.

They produced a series of 'Bases de inteligencia para la fusion' of the two organisms. (55) These stated that they would be fused 'con un caracter puro y simplemente sindicalista'. The question of tactics would be resolved after the fusion by a referendum among the affiliated societies. The organization of the new organization would be federal, with autonomy for the local, comarcal and regional federations. The sociudades would only have to contribute towards the confederal administration, organization, propaganda and cultural activities. In all other cases such as strikes, societies would be invited to express solidarity. However, those that wanted to establish pacts among themselves would be free to do so. Finally rules and regulations for the new organization would be drawn up by a committee with three members each from the two syndical organizations, presided by a delegate of the French Confederation General du Travail.

This interesting and, it has to be said, naive document which it is presumed Seguí had a major part in writing, clearly posed a number of unrealizable objectives. To begin with the tema itself, it has been shown that the differences which distinguished the C.N.T. from the U.G.T. in this period were much more than a question of tactics. There were figures within the Catalan socialist movement who were in favour of direct action and the general strike, but these were hardly orthodox within Catalan socialism and were definitely heretics within the national organization.<sup>(56)</sup> The problem went much deeper, especially as the U.G.T., linked to the P.S.O.E. which was determined to remain within the law and reinforce the Conjunción republicano-socialista, was not interested in changing its tactics. Moreover the changes proposed were also organizational, and of considerable importance. For example a centralized organization like the U.G.T. was hardly likely to accept a confederal structure. Equally the attempt to get round the problem raised by the different attitudes towards the question of union dues, another of the great divisions between the socialists and the syndicalists, was a woolly compromise unlikely to satisfy either side, because of the limited facilities it granted to the proposed confederal organization - presumably it was hoped to keep the fees down in this way - and because it then only allowed the principle of solidarity in the case of strikes. Having then proposed to levy dues on the syndicalists, while taking away strike pay from the socialists it went on to allow societies to make what arrangements they liked!

The president of the session proposed an amendment to the effect that, once the C.N.T. had as many members as the U.G.T. the fusion would be carried out, and this proposal was approved unanimously by the delegates in order to avoid any debate.

The incorporation of women into the C.N.T.

Tema 4<sup>o</sup> covered the incorporation of women into the C.N.T.; the dictamen recognized the position of women as doubly enslaved, and claimed that the education of women today would pay dividends in the future, as women were responsible for the early formation of the succeeding generation. The means by which this education was to be carried out were not, however, specified, in order not to 'centralizar los procedimientos'. The debate did not enter deeply into the problem; the most interesting proposition, from Salud, of the Pintores de Barcelona was that 'la organizacion de la mujer debe hacerse por separado de la del hombre, a fin de que de esta forma sean ellas las que directamente hagan las demandas a la burguesia y que no hay que perder de vista el Arte Fabril, que es uno de los ramos más necesitados de organizacion.'

It was countered by a delegate who argued that all those belonging to the Arte Fabril should be organized, through propaganda, and it was this argument that finally won the approval of delegates. (57)

Support for prisoners

It was agreed that a special fund would be created for those imprisoned as a result of their union activities, by deducting a fifth part of the cuota paid by the member. (58)

Propaganda

This matter was discussed in depth, and it was agreed that the 'excursiones de propaganda intensiva y extensiva' should be carried out in all regions, at the expense of the federations in each locality visited. Negre indicated that to have maximum effect, the method followed should be that of the French C.G.T. First a poster announcing the visit of the speakers

should be put up in the locality, followed by a second announcement detailing their names. A third poster would announce the imminence of their arrival and finally a poster would give the day of arrival. These would serve to create an atmosphere of curiosity, and a good attendance would be ensured. The wholesale distribution of leaflets at the meeting would then leave a permanent record after the words of the speaker had faded from memory.

The proposal won wide sympathy and shows the extent to which French syndicalist practice was permeating the thinking of activists in Catalonia. (59)

### Conclusion

By 1911 the Barcelona working class had embarked on a new course. The radical reorganization of the working class movement after the defeat of 1902 had led to the exclusion of Socialism in Catalonia and to revolutionary syndicalist hegemony.

The danger to the status quo of the new organization was recognized straight after the 1911 congress when it was banned in Barcelona because of its attempt to organize a general strike in support of the striking miners in Bilbao.

The organization would not return to legality again until 1914, and its new committee did not begin to function until 1915. (60) It now remains to examine the practice of the working class movement in the intervening years through studying strike action.

## STRIKES IN BARCELONA, 1910-1916

### Introduction

There have been few studies of strikes in Spain and in Catalonia. Tuñón gives a very general overview of the numbers of strikes each year, with some indication of their causes and the way in which they ended. The study of the strike in the modern world by Roig i Fransitorra has a chapter on the history of strikes in Catalonia which, without going into detail, isolates the main trends from 1905 to 1931. Massana, in a recent brief article has undertaken a comparative quantitative analysis of strikes in Barcelona, Spain and other European countries, in the period 1900-1939, to study relationships between economic growth and its fluctuations, the implantation of syndicalism and trade-unions, and the major features of the political conjuncture. (61)

### The political dimensions of strikes

For the period under study here Massana distinguishes between strikes which were 'economic' in intent and those that were 'political'. (62) Certain strikes in the years 1910-1923 were concerned with overtly political ends; the general strike of July 1909 to protest against the war in Morocco, the strike against the cost of living in 1916, the general strike of 1917 and the strikes to protest against the assassinations of Layret in December 1923 and Seguí in 1923 are examples which come readily to mind. Many others were apparently economic, being concerned solely with wages or hours of work. But, as Gurvitch pointed out, the distinction is not an easy one to make, for all strikes have a political dimension. (63)

The strike is a rupture, albeit provisional, in the organization of work,

and creates a new solidarity among the workforce, in contrast to the normal conditions of production which try to atomize relations among the workers. In Barcelona, in the period under study, the Lliga was attempting to create such atomization through its policies for zoning industry and splitting the workplace-place of residence nexus which gave the Barcelona workers an immediate solidarity. Thus a strike which was ostensibly about wages also carried a political lesson for those involved. Seguí held this view very clearly:

La gent creu que nosaltres només demanem una pesseta més de sou i una hora menys de treball, per exemple. Estan equivocats. Nosaltres volem emanciparnos coma treballadors i destruir, per tant, la llei del salari. (64)

Thus the strike was to be, to use the title of Seguí's novel, an 'Escuela de rebeldía', and a study of strikes in Barcelona is long overdue.

However, in Barcelona province during the years 1910-1923, there were some 779 strikes involving 354,224 strikers. It is clear that it would be impossible to examine all of these individually and, except for certain significant strikes, (of which one, the Setmana Tràgica, has already been studied), the approach here will be to use the available quantitative data to discover to what extent the strike was used by the working class in Barcelona, their reasons for striking and the concrete results of their strike action, and to relate these to the organizational processes which were taking place.

This data is examined below; as in the case of other data used in social analysis, the method of collection and elaboration means that its usefulness is limited and any conclusions drawn must be regarded as tentative.



Sources of quantitative information on strikes in Spain and Barcelona,  
1910-1923

The quantitative data available on strikes in the years 1910-1923 is incomplete throughout the period at the national level, and for most of the period in the case of Barcelona.<sup>(65)</sup> Any interpretation of this data must therefore be subject to reserve; despite this qualification the available data show several clear trends at national level, and to a lesser extent, for Barcelona which would appear to be consistent with the economic developments discussed in Chapter 1 and with the organizational developments in the working class organizations which are discussed in this chapter. For this reason then, the inclusion of this data would seem to be justified here. However the limitations imposed by the method in which it was collected and processed must be detailed.

Collection of information on strikes and social conflicts was undertaken by the local Juntas de Reformas Sociales at the request of their parent Instituto de Reformas Sociales in Madrid, which, from the date of its founding in 1904, was the official body responsible for organizing the collection of data and for its collation and analysis on an annual basis.

The Instituto learned of strikes through communications from the local mayors (who were the chairmen of the Junta de Reformas Sociales in their areas), from the Civil Governors, through information received from the regional delegations of the Instituto, through newspaper reports and through communications from the U.G.T. since this union had members on the local Juntas.<sup>(66)</sup> Thus the procedure for establishing that a strike was in course, or had recently taken place, was not comprehensive and was probably less so in the case of a region like Catalonia where the U.G.T. had scarcely any members, and where the C.N.T., apart from being declared illegal for various periods during the years 1910-1923, was not interested in collaborating with a state institution. In 1911 the Instituto would

complain of the lack of interest shown by workers themselves, as well as by their employers and by the responsible bodies in its work and similar complaints would be repeated in 1913 and 1920. (67)

Furthermore the Civil Governors did not always give the necessary cooperation since they regarded strikes as problems of public order, and their sole actions when one took place were to telegraph the Ministro de Gobernación and to take security measures. In the light of the behaviour of certain of the Civil Governors of Barcelona it is entirely possible that for certain periods this important channel of communication was closed (notably during the governships of Salvatierra - December, 1919 to May, 1920 and Martínez de Anido - December, 1920 to October, 1922). (68)

As well as lack of comprehensiveness in data collection, the procedure followed was not reliable in that, upon investigation of a dispute it was found that:

...la huelga, cuyos datos pedía el Instituto, no revestía caracteres de tal, y en otros, que el conflicto social era tan solo una cuestión municipal; o la detencion por la Autoridad de una Comisión de Obreros; o una simple petición sin paro de trabajo; una suspensión voluntaria y accidental; mero deseo de hacer los obreros un día de fiesta; reclamaciones obreras inmediatamente atendidas y amistosamente resueltas, y, ultimamente, algunos Sres. Alcaldes han participado que no les era posible remitir los datos, dada la generalidad del conflicto; que no hubo huelga, sino colision entre obreros, que fueron detenidos y que el conflicto se resolvió sin paro, en virtud del contrato de trabajo. (69)

A further factor reducing the likelihood that the data was comprehensive was that there was no compulsion on the local Juntas to investigate a strike when asked to do so. (70) Moreover many of the Juntas either had difficulties in complying with requests, or were organizationally lacking, so that investigations were not properly carried out, or the basic information took so long to collect that any necessary further investigations could not be carried out. (71)

Finally the Instituto was often unable to process the data it received in

the most complete fashion because there was no acceptable census of the employed population.<sup>(72)</sup>

Because of all these factors then, it is not surprising that the statistics presented annually by the Instituto should sometimes deal with less than half of all the strikes reported to it.<sup>(73)</sup> Nor would it be surprising that in certain areas the Juntas found themselves overwhelmed by the work and failed to send in details of the strikes in their area: large urban areas with complex concentrations of industry such as Bilbao and Barcelona were regularly unable to report on all the strikes they were asked to investigate and for certain years did not send in details of any (1918 and 1919 in Barcelona).

Fortunately some complementary sources are available for Barcelona; during the years 1903-1914 the Catholic journalist M. Sastre y Sanna published an annual account of strikes in Barcelona and went into considerable detail in analyzing them.<sup>(74)</sup> Furthermore the AE published an annual table of strikes in the city which will be used here. Though it is not known how the tables were compiled, they would appear to be incomplete when measured against the statistics given by the Instituto, but give more information and will be used for data referring to Barcelona.

Strikes in Spain and in Barcelona, 1910-1916. Numbers and causes.

Table 4.1 gives an indication of the number of strikes in Spain in each of these years, and the main reasons for them. This absolute data is also given in the form of percentages. From these it can be seen that a regular pattern emerges. Firstly in almost every year the number of strikes is relatively low. Massana has tried weighting the absolute numbers of strikes in each of the European countries by relating it to the active population, but still obtains the same result: Spain had a low number of strikes in this period, compared to the other European countries.

Secondly, in most years with the exception of 1910, strikers were primarily concerned with wages and then with issues such as union recognition and solidarity. Hours of work and the organization of work was in roughly equal third place as a reason for striking. Until 1914-1915 mixed bargaining for wages allied with other demands was low.

Table 4.2 gives the equivalent data for Barcelona. There are certain problems arising from this data - for the years 1910-1914 both the AE and Sastre y Sanna give information, but they do not always agree. The AE does not give total numbers of strikes for the year, preferring instead to give only those strikes for which full details are available. The totals for 1910-1914 are those given by Sastre, and differences will be noted, particularly in 1910-1911. For 1910 there is no clear explanation; in 1911 it was because the AE counted a series of strikes in the woodworking sector by the separate workshops, whereas Sastre counted this action as a single concerted strike. (75)

The table shows that strikes in Barcelona made up a considerable proportion of the Spanish total and Table 4.5 shows that, in terms of numbers of strikers, Barcelona always contributed over one third of the Spanish total, except in 1911 and 1912. The pattern in Barcelona was however different from the national one. There was a constant and relatively high number of strikes in Barcelona until 1914; the peak year was 1913 because of the strike of the textile workers in which more women than men participated (see Table 4.5). In 1911 and 1912 hours of work or a mixed claim involving wages and hours were a primary cause of strikes. From 1913 to 1916 issues of solidarity and union recognition became more important as the C.N.T. reorganized and began to gain importance. The causes of strikes were therefore more complex in Barcelona than nationally. Wage demands, of course, provoked solidarity strikes. In several years such claims coincided with demands for union recognition coupled with solidarity strikes, as if the struggle in one enterprise

sparked off demands in others. Thus 1914 was a year in which the textile industry, after the experience of 1913, came out repeatedly in support of the textile workers of the Ter and Freser riverside factories in the interior of Catalonia who were demanding better conditions. (76)

A second feature differentiating Barcelona's strike pattern from that of the rest of Spain was that mixed claims were the pattern in Barcelona. Instead of making a single claim which could become the cause of a long drawn out strike if the employers refused to settle, the Barcelona workers tended to put in a claim involving wages and some other feature of the organization of the work. In this way a settlement could be obtained without loss of face to either side by compromise over part of the claim.

This feature underlined the long tradition of organization in Barcelona in the course of which antagonisms between workers and their employers had become softened through mechanisms of this sort.

#### Strikes in Spain and Barcelona 1910-1916. Duration and outcome

Table 4.3 gives data for the years 1910-1916 in the whole of Spain, showing that, in 1910, 1912 and 1913, strikes lasted on average a month or more; in 1914, they lasted 3 weeks and in 1911 and 1915, 2 weeks.

In 1910 more strikes were won than were lost, though their length was considerable. In Barcelona a high number of strikers were involved, evidence of a high state of working class morale, aided, no doubt, by the founding congress of the C.N.T.; confidence was therefore high enough to maintain long strikes. But in 1911 the picture appears dramatically reversed in favour of the employers - more strikes were lost than won, they were short and fewer strikes were involved, a sign that the workers gave in rapidly. In fact the data is misleading here, as the strikes of September, 1911 in Vizcaya, are not recorded in the Instituto statistics.

This attempt at a general strike was seconded by the C.N.T., causing the suspension of the latter, and the whole affair led to the suspension of guarantees and the closure of all the U.G.T. centres.

In 1912 the length of strikes rose, though again more were lost than were won. In this year there was a prolonged railway strike. The Federación Ferroviaria, belonging to the U.G.T., decided at its July congress to demand wage increases and reductions in hours. The strike began in Catalonia where the U.G.T. was in the minority but was soon seconded all over Spain. The Government undertook a practice which they were to repeat in later strikes, that of militarizing the workers on strike. This was a tactic employed in 1911 by Briand in France and was bitterly criticised. However it failed to achieve its objective and the government, in the face of the unanimous support amongst the workers for the strike, was forced to negotiate. Negotiation of strikes was a common feature in 1912, indicating greater strength of the working class movement and a better economic conjuncture.

The situation was reversed in 1913 when many more strikes were lost than were won, and nearly as many negotiated. In 1914 the same trend continued, with the length of strikes dropping and the number of strikers drastically down on the previous year as the workers lost confidence. 1915 was an especially bad year, during which only 16% of all strikes were won. Their duration was the shortest since 1910 and the number lost was exactly the same as the number negotiated, at 42%, showing that working class confidence was still low, in the year of initial depression following the declaration of the First World War. In 1916 the beginning of the war boom coupled with the increasing effectiveness of the U.G.T. and C.N.T. became apparent; the number of strikes doubled, compared to 1915 and the number lost went down by 20%, whilst those negotiated were reduced by 25%. The percentage of strikes won more than doubled over 1915.

In Barcelona the pattern, in so far as the available data can be relied upon, was broadly similar, except that, in general, more strikes had a negotiated solution there than in the rest of Spain. This was because, as observed earlier, strikers in Barcelona were more likely to make a number of demands and negotiate some of them. This pattern can be observed particularly in the years 1911 and 1913, both years in which few strikes were won outright and many were lost altogether. In 1915 the reorganization of the C.N.T. became apparent from the number of strikes for union recognition; by 1916 the rise in living costs was making itself felt, to judge by the high percentage of strikes for wage demands, and by the huge turnout for the one day general strike to protest against the rising cost of living which was called by the C.N.T. and U.G.T. for 18 December 1916.

#### Conclusion

In Barcelona strikes and organization went together, as in 1910 and 1915-1916. By this latter date the C.N.T. only counted with some 15,000 members, as against 121,553 for the U.G.T. <sup>(77)</sup> The war boom, inflation, and housing crisis of the succeeding two years were to be fully taken advantage of by the C.N.T. militants to increase the membership of the syndicate. Finally a particular event in 1917 - the August general strike - would be instrumental in deciding the orientation of the new organization away from organized politics, and would deal a mortal blow to the Lliga project.

## CHAPTER 5

## NINETEENTH CENTURY STYLE PROTEST MODIFIED (1):

## THE GENERAL STRIKE OF AUGUST 1917

## INTRODUCTION

The Moroccan situation which had been the immediate cause of the 1909 crisis in Spain and the revolutionary outbreak of the Setmana Tràgica in Barcelona, remained quiet from 1910 until 1920-1921 when renewed disturbances among the tribes of the Rif led to further military intervention by Spain. The disastrous defeat at the battle of Annual brought into question the role of the monarchy due to the unfortunate part the King was rumoured to have played in personal interventions in the military handling of the campaign. Such was the discontent that the monarchy was in imminent danger and was only saved by the coup d'etat of General Miguel Primo de Rivero in September 1923. The immediate victim of the 1923 crisis was the Restauración parliamentary system which was abolished.

Although the Moroccan situation was not a source of working class discontent during the years 1910-1920 there were plenty of others which resulted in the period being one of intense political and social unrest. In Chapter 3 it was shown that the unrest at political level was characterized by the complete degeneration of the political system of the Restauración, both in the decline of its two main parties and in its inability to renew itself by absorbing new political formations like the Lliga Catalana. The two main parties had come increasingly to resemble each other.<sup>(1)</sup> The Liberals were representatives of the wheat growers of Castile whilst the Conservatives were representatives of the olive growers and latifundists of Castile, and they had become increasingly similar in their policies and more and more representative of the



agrarian sector in opposition to the industrialists of the Lliga. This increasing ideological identification of these parties did not mean that they possessed rigid internal coherence. Far from it; personality clashes had led to the formation of six factions within the Liberals by 1917 and three within the Conservatives.

At the social level, Chapter 4 described the growth in the membership and strength of the two main unions - the C.N.T. and the U.G.T. - indicating a growing unrest among the working classes. Chapter 1 indicated that this unrest was largely due to the increasing cost of living; the rise in prices relative to wages was spectacular during the years of the First World War and was paralleled by a rise in membership and militancy of the unions as the workers tried to catch up.

In November 1916 the C.N.T. and the U.G.T. signed a pact of alliance to undertake joint actions against the increase in prices. It was this pact which was ultimately to make possible the revolutionary protest of August 1917. The first result of the pact was the twenty-four hour general strike of 18 December, 1916, in protest against the inability of the Romanones government to stop the continued rise in the prices of basic articles and food. This was, according to Balcells, the first successful general strike of the century in that the number of strikers actually exceeded the membership of the two unions.<sup>(2)</sup> The government response was to suspend the constitutional guarantees and close the Cortes.

The same response occurred when the C.N.T. and the U.G.T. published a joint manifesto on 27 March 1917. This document was written with the participation of the P.S.O.E. and went further than strikes against the increases in the prices, by demanding fundamental changes in the political and social system to guarantee the people reasonable living conditions and basic freedoms.<sup>(3)</sup>

Those who signed the manifesto were arrested as soon as the constitutional guarantees were suspended, and released a week later.

The militancy of the working class organizations was matched by that of the republican parties. The voting strength of these parties lay in the wage earning middle classes who were as affected by the price inflation as the working classes and were without the organizations to counter it. These parties - initially the Reformistas of Melquíades Alvarez, the Partit Republicà Català of Marcel. li Domingo, Francesc Layret and Lluís Companys and, later, the Radicals of Lerroux, were united by the summer of 1917 in planning a democratic-republican revolution. The traditional understanding between republicanism and socialism in Spain facilitated the entry of the P.S.O.E. into the combination of left anti-dynastic forces.

The working classes and middle classes were therefore united in the need for reform by the summer of 1917. The crisis of the monarchy was to go much deeper however because of two other factors.<sup>(4)</sup> The first was the disenchantment with the regime shown by a great number of those who, in ordinary circumstances, were its greatest supporters - the military.

## MILITARY PROTEST, MAY-JUNE 1917

Discontent within the Infantry had led to the formation of Juntas de Defensa of officers.<sup>(5)</sup> It would seem that the discontent began with the Moroccan campaign of 1909 and especially after the disaster of Barranco del Lobo. The problem was that promotion in the Infantry did not depend on merit or antiquity.<sup>(6)</sup> The officer who had served his time in Africa and shown valour in battle could find himself displaced by an officer who had done none of these but who had better contacts in Madrid. The idea of creating a movement of officers, an equivalent of the syndicalization which was taking place among the workers, gained support in the years 1910-1915. It was seen as a movement in favour of social and economic improvement for the officers as well as a cohesive and strong force with which to intervene in politics if the need arose. Throughout 1916 the Juntas were being organised in Barcelona and the surrounding provinces and from November 1916 onwards were being rapidly created in all other areas of the country. Although the Romanones government knew from November onwards of their existence, nothing was done to prevent their activities at first<sup>(7)</sup> and when moves were made against them it was too late.

The crisis broke on 24 May 1917. From 10 May the Juntas had been officially dissolved though they had continued functioning. On the 24th the Infantry Junta gave out circulars which attracted the displeasure of the War Minister who wrote to the Captain General of Catalonia commanding him to dissolve the Juntas. In an interview on the 24th with Marquez, head of the Juntas, and again on the 25th the Captain General asked for the dissolution of the Juntas and twice received a negative reply. On the 26th the War Minister demanded either the dissolution of the Juntas or an on the spot trial. The refusal of the Junta Superior to agree to a dissolution led to the immediate arrest of its members. On the same day all the Juntas de Defensa of Spain presented themselves for arrest.

Meanwhile the Government, fearful of a scandal if the news of the arrest and of a subsequent military trial were made public, tried to get Alfau, Captain General of Catalonia, to rescue the detained from the military sphere and subject them to an arresto gubernativo . Alfau refused to do this on legal grounds at a meeting in Madrid with the War Minister and was relieved of his duties, being replaced by General Marina, who, it seems, had no such scruples, and who set out immediately for Barcelona.

On arrival in Barcelona Marina found the situation to be extremely delicate. Already, when the train on which he was travelling had passed through Valladolid and Zaragoza, the Juntas de Defensa of those areas had cabled Barcelona to ask if they should stop the train and detain Marina. Once in Barcelona he found the atmosphere to be favourable to the Juntas and that while other Corps of the army had announced that they would obey him in any action they had also stipulated that they would not carry any ammunition. The King therefore asked a confidante in the Cavalry to make confidential approaches to the Barcelona officers in an attempt to solve the crisis. (8)

On 31 May rumours circulated to the effect that new officers were to be sent from Madrid to replace those who had been arrested for forming the Junta Superior, and that Marina would hold a revista de comisario the following day to welcome them. The Artillery Officers sent a message that if the Infantry Officers did not free those arrested then they themselves would do it. The climate induced by these rumours and events was such that on 1 June the acting Junta Superior (which had replaced the one whose members had been arrested) sent an ultimatum to Marina demanding freedom for those arrested and their rehabilitation as officers, and guarantees that there would be no reprisals. The Junta outlined the officers' grievances schematically, stating that the troops would only obey the Juntas, and giving a limit of twelve hours for an answer to their demands. The crisis was not solely restricted to Barcelona.

On the same day the Juntas in various regions, including Zaragoza, Valladolid and Valencia presented themselves to their Captain Generals or to their Military Governors to express their solidarity with those of Barcelona.

At five in the afternoon news was received that the Junta was to be set free that evening following a meeting of the Consejo de Ministros. Although, as Lacomba observes, the news was not given to the country - the note given to the press covered up the true facts and reduced the whole affair to an event of only military significance - the capitulation of the Government was a crucial event.<sup>(9)</sup> For the first time in the twentieth century it marked the subordination of civil and political life to the military, and, although peaceful, the whole affair of the Juntas de Defensa was in effect a pronunciamiento, though in a different style from those of the nineteenth century.<sup>(10)</sup>

## POLITICAL PROTEST, JUNE-JULY 1917

Background

The general crisis of 1917 was much deepened by the military discontent. The second factor which was to make the situation even more difficult was the action of the Lliga Regionalista. This had come increasingly into conflict with the centralist dynastic parties in the Cortes because it represented the industrial interests of Catalonia against the agrarian interests of the Conservatives and Liberals. Already throughout 1916 Cambó, with the tactical support of most of the Conservatives had blocked the approval of the Cortes for the law on War Profits proposed by the Liberal Minister of Finances, Santiago Alba, arguing that the agrarian interests had also profited from the war and that it was therefore unfair to expect the industrialists and businessmen to be the only ones to have to pay taxes on their extraordinary profits. The conflict was about more than the non-payment of a few taxes. Rather the Catalan bourgeoisie in accordance with the project it had embarked upon which was described in the Introduction, was seeking to increase its political influence.<sup>(11)</sup>

The opposition to the Alba project led Romanones to close the Cortes in February 1917 and to the resignation of the government in April. The running of the state was handed over to a transitional government of no standing headed by Garcia Prieto. Thus Cambó's success in blocking the plans of the Government had brought about its downfall but in the process the Liberals had blocked any further possibilities for the Lliga by closing the Cortes. In this situation the Lliga was forced to extend its influence beyond the regional boundaries of Catalonia and to attempt to form a wide political grouping representing the industrial and commercial interests of all Spain against the decayed policies and parties of the old system. Contacts were made with other nationalist parties but the problem

of the regional origins of the Lliga still remained to be solved. The opportunity to overcome these was offered by the refusal of the new conservative government of Dato and Sanchez Guerra to reopen the Cortes following a demand made by the Lliga, after a meeting on the night of 7 June at which the general political situation, and especially, the military problem, had been discussed. Although he was already dying, Prat de la Riba was asked to write a manifesto which would explain the ideas of the Regionalists, and this was presented on 14 June. In it Prat reaffirmed the proposals of his famous manifesto of the previous year Per Catalunya i l'Espanya Gran in which he advocated a new federal regime and the reopening of the parliament. (12)

#### Preparations for the Asambleia de Parlamentarios

The following day during a meeting in the Congreso, the Lliga Deputy, Rodés put forward the project of an Assembly of Catalan deputies and senators, which was enthusiastically received. The Government was alarmed and took steps, suspending the constitutional guarantees and re-establishing the censorship of the press on the 25th. Following a series of interviews with the other political groups by Cambó, and the failure of his renewed demand to Sanchez Guerra for a reopening of the Cortes, Abadal i Calderó, acting in the name of the Lliga, sent a message to all the Catalan deputies and senators, inviting them to a meeting in the Barcelona Town Hall on the 5th; the Ajuntament on the following day offered, as well as full adhesion to what was now called the Asambleia de Parlamentarios, all the necessary elements for it to carry out its task, including 5,000 pesetas to defray costs. The initiative won support from a wider section of public life than even the somewhat mythologised Solidaritat Catalana of 1907, since it included the Radicals of Lerroix, who had been the main enemies of the Solidaritat ten years earlier. (13)

On the 5th all except three of the Catalan parliamentarians met in the Town Hall. (14) Three proposals had been put to the meeting; one by Macià was so radical and restricted to the Catalan sphere that the presidency of the meeting persuaded him to withdraw it. Macià agreed, provided that it remained in the minutes. A second resolution was proposed by the conservative sectors, but no speaker was found to advocate it, and it was therefore ruled out of order. The final proposal was therefore adopted by the meeting. It was proposed by the Lliga politicians - Cambó, Roig i Bergada, Llisas, Rodés and the Republican politicians - Lerroux, Zulueta, Nogués and Sedó. It called for ample autonomy for Catalonia and the transformation of the Spanish state through the concession of regional autonomies. Through the development of the collective energies of the different parts the organic cohesion of the whole would be strengthened.

Two agreements were also made at the meeting, that the Government should reopen the Cortes and that these should be constituent, and should deliberate the organization of the state, the autonomy of the municipalities and the military problem. Secondly that if the Government would not reopen the Cortes then all the parliamentarians of the state would be invited to a further Asamblea on 19 July in Barcelona. (15) These agreements were transmitted by telegram to the Government on the same evening, along with a notice that the three presidents of the Asamblea, Abadal, Giner de los Rios and the Marqués de Marianao, wished to see Dato on the 7th. Dato received them as requested, but with evident coldness and promised to put the conclusions of the Asamblea before the Council of Ministers that same day. At this council a note was drafted answering the parliamentarians demands, and was published the following day.

In it the Government refused to reopen the Cortes. Moreover, apart from accusing the parliamentarians of sedition, the answer concentrated on the aspect of the agreements which dealt with the problem of Catalan autonomy,



indicating, as Marcel. li Domingo pointed out, an attempt to present Catalonia to the rest of Spain as separatist, the same tactic as Romanones had employed in 1909. Domingo went on: '...no es Cataluña quien quiere separarse de España. Al contrario. Es Cataluña que pide en voz alta lo que toda España pide en voz baja.'<sup>(16)</sup> And indeed, the Government note was ill received, not only in Catalonia, but in the whole of Spain, raising criticism among the Liberals from Salvatella and the Conservatives from Bergamín.<sup>(17)</sup>

The Catalan parliamentarians sent a protest telegram to the Government on the 12th. It was answered by Dato, who spelled out that the Asamblea de Parlamentarios could not take place. As Hurtado pointed out this undiplomatic answer changed the game, in that the issue now became one of whether or not the Asamblea would take place.<sup>(18)</sup>

The preparations for the Asamblea showed the remarkable ability, already described in Chapter 3, of the Lliga at organizing spectacles.<sup>(19)</sup> The parliamentarians had to resort to clandestinity to circumvent the censorship and this in itself gave rise to an excited state of public opinion. In Barcelona numbers of flysheets and handouts were published illegally, including some false anarchist ones, which contained violent phrases and were produced by Governmental agencies in an attempt to frighten the middle classes.<sup>(20)</sup> The parliamentarians however showed an equal skill at burlesque in their manner of publishing their information. The Republicans published various numbers of a Boletín de Información which had a 'pie de imprenta' from Teruel, while the various Fulles Numerades of the Regionalists were issued without 'pie de imprenta' and bearing the signatures of all the parliamentarians. The Fulla No. 1 was issued on 12 July inside La Veu de Catalunya, causing the immediate governmental suspension of the paper. An attempt to bring out the Veu the following day led to the Civil Governor impounding it before it left the printing works. Subscribers to the Veu then received a copy of El

Poble Català, 2nd edition, which was really the Veü and contained the Fulla No. 2. Despite having passed the censorship it was seized by the police. On the 14th El Poble Catala came out with a page entitled 'Nova col. laboracio del Poble Catala' which was made up of material from La Veü and constituted a new Fulla. This new stratagem lasted three days before El Poble Catala was suspended. The Lliga therefore published a number of the Sitges local paper El Baluart de Sitges, which was not subject to the censorship as it was published outside Barcelona, and this caused such a tremendous impression that the police were obliged to seize the printing works in order to prevent its further publication. So on the following day, the 19th, news of the Asamblea was published in a number of La Costa de Ponent from Vilanova i la Geltru. Thus in an ingenious and impertinent manner the parliamentarians reached the 19th without losing contact with the public for a single day. (21)

The Government had not been idle meanwhile. It had launched a war of rumours which had been painstakingly rebutted in the Boletines and Fulles, such as accusing the Asamblea of being an aliadophile manoeuvre to force Spain into the First World War (while abroad it was presented by the Government as a pro-Germany manoeuvre to prevent the programme of the aliadophile Dato government). A later rumour was that the Government would dissolve the Cortes, meaning that the parliamentarians would lose their parliamentary immunity and could be legally imprisoned for participating in the Asamblea. (22)

#### The Military and the Asamblea

Meanwhile a fierce contest was being waged by both sides for the support of the Juntas. Cambó had written to Marquez on 10 July, to try and win their approval, denying the separatist nature of the Asamblea and praising the action of the Juntas on 1 June, and trying to prove that the Asamblea also wanted the same renewal and salvation for Spain. (23) The government

had authorised Matos, Civil Governor of Barcelona, to speak with the Juntas, and permitted them to deal directly with the President of the Council of Ministers without previously having to pass through the Minister of War. <sup>(24)</sup> On the 14th a letter was published by an 'important General', addressed to his companions in the Barcelona garrison, insisting on the separatist nature of the Asamblea, connecting it with a foreign manouevre and demanding support for the Government. <sup>(25)</sup> The King also seems to have played a part, although its exact nature is difficult to determine. Pabon claims that the Juntas tried hard to send messages to the court, which was passing the summer in Santander, via the military priest, Padre Planas. He mentions a message from the Juntas to the King which Planas took to Santander at some unspecified date before the Asamblea took place, which the King would not listen to, and which showed a clear sympathy for the radical reforms to the crisis proposed by the Asamblea. <sup>(26)</sup> Lacomba however states that the King asked Planas to talk to Marquez and to persuade him to see Cambó to ask him to suspend the Asamblea. The Juntas decided then that Marquez, accompanied by two captains, Herrero and Villar, should dine with Cambó in the presence of Planas. At the dinner, in the Capuchin monastery of Pompeya in Barcelona, no agreement was reached, and the military men finally left the room, while Cambo and Planas carried on talking. At the end a plan was agreed, by which the Asamblea would meet and make its agreements in secret, without giving rise to any subversive movement, and when it met publicly and formally the Civil Governor would suspend it officially. The version of the Asamblea given by Hurtado would seem to confirm the Lacomba version, and the story points out the Chinese-box nature of the Asamblea de Parlamentarios. <sup>(27)</sup> Cambó, in his attempt to use the political crisis in Spain to promote the role of the Lliga within the whole of Spain and to bring about a renovation of the Spanish political system, had to ally his conservative party with the potentially revolutionary Republicans and Socialists, and to offset these he needed to win the support of the

Maurists and the Juntas de Defensa. Yet he was unable to forge an alliance of these distinct groups, because the Maurists abstained, making more necessary the participation of the Juntas, who in a note published on 16 July announced that they would remain faithful to the legally constituted Government. Therefore a political revolution was ruled out of the question, yet the Asamblea could still serve as a spur in the side of the Government, which might serve to win concessions, and the Lliga could not back down in any case. Thus a conservative party had to act with possibly revolutionary partners, in a revolutionary manner, but without provoking an insurrection. Moreover it was essential to involve the populace in support of the Asamblea, again without allowing this to go too far, providing the Juntas with an excuse to quash the movement. This reasoning lay behind the careful instructions given to the people of Barcelona on the day the Asamblea was due to take place, and the refusal by the Lliga to be involved in the events of the August strike. In this refined way the Lliga cocked a snook at the Government while playing a double game with it and with the public.

On 18 July the parliamentarians, under the leadership of the Lliga, published instructions to the citizens recommending calm and the closure of all shops and offices during three to six when the Asamblea would be held but, in an official note published jointly by Republicans and Regionalists it was specified that work in factories and warehouses should be continued as usual, and that the public should keep well away from the Plaça de Sant Jaume. (28)

#### The Asamblea de Parlamentarios

The 19th therefore began with great public anticipation. Groups of Guardia Civil patrolled the streets, moving on persons and breaking up groups of three or more, in the area around the Town Hall. In the Plaça de Sant Jaume forces of Guardia Civil and Guardias de Seguridad were

stationed. The parliamentarians were observed speeding in cars in all directions, which both served to shake off the police, in a visible manner for public consumption, while also preventing the public from knowing where the meeting would be held, and from congregating there and causing an alteration of order. Dutifully the shops closed between three and six. (29)

The agreements which the Asamblea had to discuss had been worked out that morning in the house of Bertran i Musitú in Sant Gervasi, and were informally discussed during the lunch held in the all-glass restaurant of the Parc de la Ciutadella, which had been booked for a 'wedding party'. The Asamblea then moved to the Palau de la Ciutadella, also known as the Palau del Governador and at that time the home of the Comissió Executiva de la Exposició de les Indústries Eléctriques.

Present were some 68 parliamentarians, (55 deputies and 13 senators), representing the industrial and mercantile sectors, the middle classes from the professionals to the small businessmen and shopkeepers, and from Reformists to Republicans, and, in the name of the socialist proletariat, Pablo Iglesias of the P.S.O.E. (30) In accordance with the plan between Cambo, Marquez and Planas they had already agreed what they had to discuss and the main lines of argument; according to Lacomba the Civil Governor also knew what their programme was, and finally, and this was the point of the Asamblea, they had agreed to hold it symbolically, but to use it as a means of pressure on the Government to obtain Cortes Constituyentes, and that Melquíades Alvarez should figure in any government which would call elections to such Cortes. (31)

The motion for discussion and approval consisted of three parts, the first containing protests against the attitude of the Government to the Asamblea, the failure to convoke the Cortes, and the use of censorship and smear campaigns, etc., the second and most important part called for

the election of Cortes Constituyentes, in elections supervised by a coalition government, and the third part called for three commissions to be appointed which would continue the work of the Asamblea. These commissions would study constitutional reform and municipal autonomy and the problem of the military, the organization of education and the administration of justice, while the third would deal with the most important social and economic problems. The Asamblea then proceeded to elect persons to these commissions when it was interrupted by the police officer Bravo Portillo, accompanied by a Teniente Coronel of the Guardia Civil and some forces. Bravo demanded that the meeting be dissolved and, in the face of the refusal by the president Abadal, left to bring the Civil Governor to dissolve the meeting. Matos arrived and spoke to those present, and in the face of their united refusal to desist from meeting unless dissolved by force, he symbolically arrested them one by one and led them from the building where they were unconditionally released. The crowds in the streets cheered the deputies and forced some of them to make speeches in the Rambles, unaware that the charade that had been played out was not the revolutionary movement they supposed. (32)

The Government reaction was delivered that evening by the Ministro de la Gobernación, who claimed that the Asamblea had not been able to take place since it had been stopped by Matos before it began. However the arrival of the Parliamentarians in Madrid and the multitude of reports of the deliberations of the Asamblea which appeared in the press soon laid the Government lie. (33) On the 21st the Lliga issued a manifesto which affirmed that the Asamblea had been a triumph and that it could be the salvation of Spain. (34) On the 27th the Parliamentarians elected to the commissions at the Asamblea met and began to work, editing a document which censured the government for standing in the way of a political renovation of the country, a renovation which, judging by the satisfaction with which the news of the Asamblea had been received, was wanted by the people. (35)

The judgement of the Asamblea must be that it was a qualified success. Firstly it had actually been held, and had therefore taken the Lliga out of the limited Catalan ambit. But because of its Catalan origins and the presence in it of Republicans, Reformists and Socialists it had failed to win the support of the Maurists and the Juntas de Defensa, whose participation might have brought about a significant change in the political pattern of Spain, by bringing down the oligarchic parties, (though, given the policy of the Lliga, it would not have attacked the monarchy). The military, in passing over to the side of reaction, were to temporarily save the system, converting themselves into the new oligarchic group, which, when it fell, would bring the monarchy with it. The Lliga, meanwhile had, through a magnificent balancing act, managed to use the Asamblea as a means of pressure for a constituent Cortes. But after the events of August it, too, would pass over to the side of reaction. The second meeting of the Asamblea, due to be held in Oviedo, was not possible due to the August strike. During the strike, attempts by Lerroux to involve the Asamblea in the events led to the Lliga having to declare before a military judge and to withdraw completely from any involvement in a strike which they had done so much to promote and yet did not want. At the third meeting of the Asamblea in Madrid, on 30 October, Cambó continued to press the line that no parliamentarian should accept a post in any Government which did not profess allegiance to the principles of the Asamblea. Yet when the crisis, caused by the failure of the Dato government and the military to come to an understanding, finally broke out at the end of October with Dato's resignation, and the King decided to form a coalition government, offering a place in it to Cambó, the latter accepted. And so the bourgeois revolution came to an end. It now remains to examine the August general strike, the last of the three revolutionary protests in the Spain of 1917.

## WORKING CLASS PROTEST, AUGUST 1917

Introduction

In the analysis of the general crisis which affected Spain in the summer of 1917, the actions of the military in May-June and the parliamentarians in June-July have been examined. In August it was the turn of the working class movement. In the Introduction to this chapter the development of working class unrest and the pacts and joint actions of the C.N.T. and the U.G.T. in winter 1916 and spring 1917 were described. The discontent of both groups and their wish for change continued into the summer, and following the manifesto of the Juntas de Defensa on 1 June, the Socialists took the decision to call a revolutionary general strike, when the moment was right, and, if necessary and even if the movement was immature, immediately, if the Juntas tried to impose a military dictatorship. Melquíades Alvarez, who, as mentioned earlier, acted as link between the Socialists and the Republicans and Reformists, was able to persuade them that such a revolutionary general strike could bring in a Republic and a pact was signed between the three groups on 5 June, and a strike committee appointed, consisting of Melquíades Alvarez for the Reformists, Lerroix for the Radicals, Largo Caballero for the U.G.T. and Pablo Iglesias for the P.S.O.E. (though the latter delegated his duties to Besteiro, because of his delicate state of health). The C.N.T. did not take part in the Committee because of its apoliticism, though some of its members cooperated with Lerroix in the organization of the movement in Catalonia; Lerroix was also made responsible for Aragón, Valencia and Andalusia, while Melquíades Alvarez was responsible for Asturias and León and Pablo Iglesias for Madrid, Castilla and Vizcaya. (36)

Throughout June and July it became more and more evident that there was a disjunction between the arrangements for the strike which were being made by the Socialists in Madrid and the Anarcho-syndicalists in Barcelona. (37)



Since the main events of the summer took place in Barcelona it is easy to understand why the men of the C.N.T. felt that the opportunity would be lost if the Socialists did not move faster, and it is difficult to understand how the U.G.T. and the Socialists could take so long to organize themselves.

The difference, of course, was that the Socialists and the U.G.T. wanted to help the Spanish middle-classes to make the democratic revolution which these were too weak to carry out for themselves, whereas the C.N.T. wanted to bring about a change in the present political situation simply to see what would happen, and without being committed to a Republican alternative. The principal preoccupation of the Socialists was therefore to try and hold back the C.N.T. while at the same time attempting to embolden their republican allies. (38)

On 17 July the C.N.T. issued a manifesto in Solidaridad Obrera, which defined the anarcho-syndicalist programme for the revolution which the Asamblea de Parlamentarios might bring about (see Appendix 5.1). Meaker, like Lacomba, refers disparagingly to this document, qualifying its demands as 'numerous, sweeping and in places less than lucid', compared to the moderate demands which the Socialists were to include in their manifesto issued during the August strike. Lacomba, making the same comparison, emphasizes the radicalism and political irreality of the cenetista aspirations. As an example Meaker picks out the demand that wars should only be declared after a plebiscite (he omits the earlier section of the same demand which states that the executive power should not have the right to declare wars), and that those who had voted affirmatively should be sent to fight. Put like this the demand is quaint, but set in the context of a neutral nation, where strong pro-German and pro-Allies elements (and among the latter were the P.S.O.E. - U.G.T. and the Catalan petty bourgeoisie) were continually demanding that Spain should become involved in the Great War, and remembering that when the

Anarchists had gone to heckle a pro-interventionist meeting by Lerroux in May they had been locked in the hall where the meeting was due to take place and beaten up, one of them suffering a bullet wound, then the demand makes a great deal more sense. And the point is valid for many other of the demands - those in the economic sphere ranged from a demand for a seven hour day to one for the semana inglesa, a five and a half day week with work stopping on Saturdays at midday, and there were others for a minimum wage, the suppression of intermediaries in the selection of staff for the Town Hall, Diputación and State (the intermediaries through corruption held several jobs and contracted others to do the work for them. They received the wage from the employers and paid a part of it to the worker), suppression of work by persons under 14 years old, the suppression of piecework etc. In the political, social, juridical and administrative fields there were thirty-four different demands, ranging from the abolition of diplomacy and ambassadors (and in this connection the work of the ambassadors of the warring nations in Barcelona in disrupting production and in signalling to warships and submarines on the high seas the departure of ships with goods bound for their enemies so that they could be torpedoed in the Mediterranean, must be taken into account), to absolute freedom for the press, passing through various demands for nationalization of transports, the land and the subsoil, the insurance companies, etc. As the manifesto says at the end:

No es esto ni un programa mínimo ni tampoco máximo. Entendemos que toda la clase obrera revolucionaria nos acompañará con su fuerza, y que esa fuerza es quien indicará en que extensión realizaremos nuestras aspiraciones, limitándolas o haciéndolas más amplias. Pero dentro de eso cabe indicar una dirección, y tal ha sido nuestro propósito al trazar este programa. (39)

In the situation of mid-July, between the rebellion of the Juntas and the prospect of the Asamblea, the programme of the C.N.T. was entirely reasonable, though it alarmed the socialists considerably. When Pablo Iglesias came to Barcelona to participate in the Asamblea he held an interview with the C.N.T. leaders Seguí, Miranda, Valero and Pestaña,

which Pestaña has reported at length. His peevish air displeased the cenetistas, and he uttered an exclamation of surprise at every explanation given by them of the advanced state of their organization. He insisted that the Socialists could not work in this manner and that the C.N.T. would have to wait, and they finally lost their patience with him and left. (40)

According to Meaker, though he gives no source for the statement, Iglesias could only persuade the C.N.T. leaders to wait four days before launching a revolutionary general strike in Catalonia alone, and Largo Caballero, secretary of the U.G.T. decided to come to Barcelona to dissuade them from such a move. (41) Both Largo and Pestaña have left accounts of the meeting which was held in the country, in the foothills of the Tibidabo, at Les Planes. Here, surrounded by gun-carrying cenetistas, ready to fire on the police if they happened to arrive, the delegates of the C.N.T. launched a series of accusations against the U.G.T. and its leaders which Largo rebutted at length, and with dignity, though Pestaña notes that the terror in his face was visible, especially at pitched moments of the discussion. He convinced the C.N.T. to wait on events, and as the delegates left in small groups he was accompanied by Seguí and Pestaña who attempted to mollify him a little; before arriving at the tram terminal in Sarrià they told him it would be best to separate, since they were well known to the police and he could be detained along with them if the police happened to find them together and so they took their leave:

Nos despedimos con un ligero apretón de manos y rápidamente se alejó en la dirección indicada. Y debió respirar tranquilamente cuando, ya en el tranvía, quedaba atrás la pesadilla de aquellas horas de discusión tumultosa y agitada. (42)

The railway strike in Valencia and the general strike

The impatience of the C.N.T. was related to the progress of events in Valencia, where a railway strike had broken out on the 19th which was to prove to be the spark which would finally set off the conflagration of August. This particular strike had a long history which stretched back to the summer of 1916, when the Federación Nacional de Ferroviarios had been formed. Its best organized section, that of the Sindicato Norte, based in the railway company of that name, put forward various demands on work and pay to the management in June, but the latter had refused to recognize the union and a strike had therefore been called. This was resolved within a few weeks by the Instituto de Reformas Sociales at the end of July, but the concrete details were still being worked out between negotiators of the company and of the workers when the strike broke out in Valencia. (43)

The reasons for the Valencia strike have never been cleared up. Lacomba puts it down to a mistaken impression on the part of the railwaymen that the Asamblea de Parlamentarios signalled the beginning of the revolutionary general strike, and that it was instigated by Government agents provocateurs.

Certainly the Government knew of the plans for the strike and perhaps thought that if it isolated a strike in one sector at the same time as the Asamblea then it could discredit the latter in the eyes of the Juntas and force a division between the Lliga and the leftist components of the Asamblea. But the question then is whether the Government was so sure of itself that it could afford to provoke a strike on the same day as the Asamblea, and, even if it had perfectly calculated the probability of the strike not spreading, was a strike in Valencia the best way of influencing military and parliamentary opinion? In the light of these considerations it might well be true that the strike was a mistake, triggered by a speech

of Marcel. li Domingo as he passed through Valencia on his way to the Asamblea.<sup>(44)</sup>

Although the strike only lasted three days it was relatively hard for the authorities to control. By midday on the 19th not only had the trains stopped, but so had the trams and on the following day the whole city was shut down, including the bars. The Estado de Guerra had to be declared on the 21st, and on the 22nd, which was a Sunday, the situation calmed down. On Monday 23rd there was a general return to work, with the exception of the railwaymen and the tram-men who would not go back without a guarantee of no victimization.<sup>(45)</sup> The problem was soon resolved for the tram-men as the company was willing to make concessions. But the Compañía del Norte refused to readmit those men who had been most responsible for the strike of the 19th and after the strikers had gone to the Military Governor, who refused to have anything to do with the problem, it was taken to the team who were negotiating the 1916 settlement in Madrid. The negotiating team met with a blank refusal to reinstate those sacked and on 1 August called for a railway strike to take place from the 10th. They continued to make attempts to resolve the situation, constantly reducing their demands to the company but the latter would not arrive at any compromise and the Government refused to intervene.<sup>(46)</sup> So even if the Government had had nothing to do with the July strike it had used the threatened August strike to set in motion the revolutionary general strike, since, as Largo Caballero observed:

Acuerdo tan descabellado [the decision to strike by the railwaymen] colocó a la Unión General en situación muy difícil. Si se abstenía, no podía evitar que se uniesen a la huelga ferroviaria los trabajadores de otros oficios en la creencia de que éste era el pretexto para la huelga revolucionaria, no obstante no haber una dirección ni quién asumiera la responsabilidad, y tal abstención se podría interpretar como una deserción de la Unión General y, especialmente, de las Ejecutivas. Si se aconsejaba no secundar a los ferroviarios, se podía suponer lógicamente que era la desautorización de estos; debilitaría el movimiento y si perdían la huelga, caería la responsabilidad sobre la Unión. Todo eso sin contar con la actitud que adoptaría la Confederación Nacional de Trabajo a la que habíamos convencido para el desistimiento de la huelga de Cataluña.

Ante situación tan difícilísima se acordó lo más grave: la huelga general revolucionaría para el lunes, cargando así con la responsabilidad de un movimiento que ninguno queríamos, por no dejar abandonados a los trabajadores en momentos tan difíciles y críticos y, además, para orientarla e imprimirle un carácter político social. (47)

Given the time that they had had to organize their strike the Socialists and the U.G.T. seem to have done very little organizational work, such as entering into a pact with the Lliga through the Asamblea for the establishment of a progressive bourgeois government, or sounding out the military, and the Government had cunningly picked the moment to cut short the ill-prepared strike and to break the left-bourgeois block in the Asamblea. (48)

However for the working class movement the scent of revolution was in the air during the first ten days of August. The Government announced the introduction of press censorship on 4 August, though this would not come into effect until the 9th. (49) There was a flood of manifestos, some apparently written by Government departments in an attempt to discredit the strike and special efforts were made to win the military over to the working class cause, especially as the Guardias de Seguridad had formed their own Juntas and presented their petitions (which were of a strictly laboral character) to the Government on the 5th, threatening a strike if they were not met. (50) The Government managed to work out a solution, but efforts continued to be made by the unions and parties. Marcel. li Domingo published manifestos in the newspaper he edited, La Lucha, exhorting the soldiers to support the workers, and climaxing his campaign with the remarkable article 'Soldados' which was clearly seditious, pointing out that the King and the Government would soon be made to leave power and would ask the army for aid; the soldiers who were only in the military for a short period, but who were citizens for life, should choose between the demands of the King and Government and their duties as citizens. (51)

In Madrid the U.G.T. and the Socialists had named a strike committee of Largo Caballero and Anguiano (president of the Sindicato del Norte) for the U.G.T. and Besteiro and Saborit for the P.S.O.E. as well as Virginia Gonzalez, founder of the female section of the Socialists.

Instructions for the strike had been drawn up and the signal was to be an article by Besteiro in El Socialista which would begin with the words 'Cosas veredes'. A manifesto was drawn up, though it would not be released until the 14th and which contained a demand that the strike should be pacific and echoed the demands of the Asamblea de Parlamentarios, and those of the Conjunción Reformista-Republicano-Socialista, as well as stating that the strike should be maintained until the demands of the joint U.G.T.-C.N.T. manifesto of March were met. (52)

Thus, after all the pressure of the C.N.T. for a strike, it was the U.G.T. which called it and the C.N.T. which followed. Because the strike was decided at the last moment there was virtually no coordination between the two, though the Madrid Committee did contact Seguí and Lerroux. But it was left to the anarcho-syndicalists to make their own strike in Catalonia in their own style. A revolutionary committee which included Vidiella, Seguí, Miranda, Herreros, Minguet, Aragó, Viadiu and several others was established, whose aims were fairly unclear, even, according to Vidiella in his account of the strike, to the committee itself. In this account he goes on to say that: '...estic segur que en el fons tots desitjavem, -i en això coincidíem amb els socialistes, - que el moviment fos capitalitzat per la burgésia republicana-democratica, encara que !pobre de qui hagués gosat exterioritzar-ho!' (53)

To this end Pestaña was delegated to make contact with the 'separatistas del Doctor Julia', with the Catalanists of Macià and the Republicans of Marcel. lí Domingo. (54) A plan was agreed by which the C.N.T. promised to maintain the strike for a whole week during which Domingo would incite

revolt among his followers and Macià would go to his district of Borges Blanques, arm as many of his followers as he could and bring them to Barcelona, making the villages en route rise up.

In the account of the strike which follows it will be seen that the only revolutionary violence that occurred during the week came from the anarcho-syndicalists, while the others were arrested or went into hiding. It would be wrong however to believe with Lacomba that while the C.N.T. controlled areas were the scene of violent confrontations with the army, the areas controlled by the Socialists were any more peaceful. In Bilbao there was firing on troops and a tram was derailed, causing several deaths, while in Asturias the violence lasted after the strike was over and several divisions of the army had to be sent in to quell it. There were also several incidents in Madrid where there was a riot in the prison.<sup>(55)</sup> But there was a lack of coordination between areas and the Socialist strike organization was soon broken, especially after the committee was arrested on the Tuesday.<sup>(56)</sup> Events outside Barcelona then, had little relevance to what happened in the city during the strike and this account will now concentrate on the course of the strike in Barcelona.



## THE GENERAL STRIKE IN BARCELONA

The first day: the failure to stop the trams

In Barcelona El Progreso published the announcement of the strike of the following day, as well as instructions on how it was to be carried out in the issue of Sunday 12 August. This number was promptly seized by the police. The city remained calm and no incidents were reported until the evening when a group of workers who had been drinking in a bar on the Carretera de Sants, tried to stop a tram by throwing a petrol bomb at it. The driver attempted to escape by setting the tram at full speed and the assailants then fired on it, lightly wounding the driver and a municipal guard on board. A Guardia de Seguridad who tried to chase the attackers was shot twice in the stomach and died shortly afterwards in the Hospital Clinic.<sup>(57)</sup>

In the small hours of Monday morning a small bomb was exploded under the tram bridge in the Riera de Sant Andreu, and another which had failed to explode was found nearby. At 4.00 a.m. the goods train to Bilbao was fired on from a bridge in El Clot, though no casualties were caused.<sup>(58)</sup>

Apart from these two incidents Monday began with an aspect of normality. In the centre the shops opened and the usual traffic was to be seen in the streets. In the industrial districts the majority of the factories opened as usual, but groups of strikers were soon going from one workplace to another bringing out the workers. In only one case did they meet any resistance, when the portera at a factory in the c/. Badal in Sants tried to stop the strikers from entering and was wounded by a shot from a revolver.<sup>(59)</sup>

By 10 o'clock the strike had become absolute and the shops began to close. The strikers entered the markets where the women were shopping as usual at

that hour and began to persuade the stallholders to close. In the Boquería they attacked the carts carrying produce, and the Guardia de Seguridad had to clear the market. (60)

Attention then turned to stopping the trams. In the Rambles groups of strikers boarded them, took down their destination boards and used these to smash all the windows and then insisted that they return to the sheds. The same tactic was tried in the Riera Alta-Carme and there was a short battle with the soldiers which left a striker dead. The tram service was also attacked on the lines to Horta, Sarrià and Sant Andreu, and on the Sants line the strikers commandeered a tram, and set it off at full speed in the direction of the sheds, where it crashed into several others parked at the entrance. Given such situations the trams were all taken back to their sheds by 11 o'clock. (61)

In Horta, Sarrià, Sant Andreu, Les Corts and Hospitalet the wires were cut, as well as those of the electric lighting and the telephone thereby cutting off these areas from communication with the centre of the city. (62)

During the early afternoon the military and civil authorities met and decided unanimously to declare the Estado de guerra in the city of Barcelona and province. The bando was immediately put up in the usual places and squads of soldiers posted to strategic points. (63)

Once Marina, the Captain General, had placed his men in the different zones of the city, he tried to start up the tram service at 4.00 p.m., beginning with line 30, the Circunvalació, and that of Les Arenes-Dressanes, with personnel of the company taking the trams out, escorted by a pair of soldiers on the platform. Throughout the afternoon there were repeated attacks on the trams, in c/. Salmeron in Gràcia (where shots were fired from the building of the Centre d'Unió Radical which finally had to be stormed by troops), in the Ronda Sant Antoni and in Plaça Espanya. The

attack in the Ronda de Sant Antoni led to a shoot out between strikers and the troops of the Regimiento de Covadonga who returned the fire with such relentlessness that five strikers were killed. In the Plaça Espanya a Guardia Civil was killed. (64)

Apart from a lively exchange of fire in the streets around the Plaça Universitat (extending from Aribau down Pelai to Vergara) which sowed alarm in the cafes of the Rambla de Canaletas, the rest of the night was calm. Only three newspapers were printed that night - La Veu de Catalunya of the Lliga, the Diario de Barcelona, and El Noticiero Universal. In the latter there was news of the meeting of the Comisión de la Asamblea de Parlamentarios which had been held in the afternoon to discuss the reports which had appeared that morning in La Publicidad and El Diario de Barcelona. These had said that the Parlamentarios had decided to support the strike and had appointed Lerroix as director. Cambó had already telegraphed the Madrid papers and the meeting of the Comisión was held in order to write a declaration stating that the strike and the Asamblea were not related, stressing that the latter had nothing to do with the former. Cambó was worried that the military would turn against the strikers and did not want to be associated with them; equally he feared that a military-strikers confrontation would weaken the conjuncture of forces in opposition to the current political system. (65) As events turned out he was to be proved right. Throughout the day the strikers had only attacked the trams; but once the military were given the role of maintaining order through the declaration of the Estado de guerra a clash was inevitable, and while the trams continued to be a source of conflict throughout the strike, the aggression of the strikers was to be increasingly directed against the soldiers, and these were ready to return, in much greater degree, any attack on them. As the Comisión began the work of writing the document the first sounds of gunfire were heard, in the first of the evening interchanges which were to take place all week. The declaration took a long time to write and was finally only finished on

Tuesday evening. It was decided therefore that the Lliga paper should issue a denial of the affirmations of La Publicidad and El Diario de Barcelona, though this would not save the Lliga and the Asamblea from the suspicion on the part of the authorities that they were responsible for the strike and the accusation by the Republicans and the workers that the Lliga had encouraged them into undertaking the strike and then abandoned them. (66)

#### The second day: attacks on the military

On Tuesday 14 August the situation was very quiet at first. Shops and factories were closed and only the markets opened, under strict military vigilance. Because of the fear that food might become scarce if the strike continued for any length of time people stocked up, buying up most of the commodities on offer. (67) There was such a thirst for news that the few newspapers on sale were rapidly sold out. (68)

The trams were taken out, some driven by military engineers and some by personnel of the company who had been dissuaded by their superiors and the military authorities from calling a halt. (69) They were guarded by soldiers positioned at both ends of the cars and ready to shoot.

From relatively early on shooting took place in District V and a group of exaltats had tried to assault the police station on the c/. dels Angels, but were beaten back by regular troops sent as reinforcements. There was further shooting in various other streets of District V (Sant Pau, Mendizabal, Sant Ramón, Arc del Teatre, Plaça del Teatre). In the barri de Santa Catalina on the other side of the Rambla there was also an exchange of fire. (70)

In the outlying districts exchanges between the Guardia Civil and the strikers were general by 11 o'clock. A Guardia Civil who was keeping

the way open for trams in the Carretera de Sants, near c/. Riego was shot dead. In Sant Martí there was an attempt to lift the tram lines which was cut short by a charge of the Guardia Civil. In Sant Andreu the strikers faced up to the Guardia Civil and there was an intense battle, resulting in several wounded among the strikers. Firing also took place in Horta, Poble Sec and Gràcia. (71)

In the afternoon cannon were placed in various parts of Districts V and VI where there had been more shooting. In the Barceloneta some revolver shots were fired against the troops who responded by attacking a bar on the corner of c/. Llauder and Passeig Baix Muralla where they supposed the attackers were hidden, gravely wounding the owner and his assistant. Shots were then heard from the direction of the Docks warehouse and the troops again intervened heavily, firing from the barracks in the Plaça del Palau, killing two civilians. Later that evening the police station in the Barceloneta was attacked, but the assailants were dispersed by gunfire. (72) Fearing that the strikers might turn their attentions on the Somatent in order to get hold of weapons, the Captain General ordered that the Somatent of Sants, Hostafrancs, Les Corts, Sant Gervasi, and Sant Andreu, should deposit their arms with the military authorities. (73)

In other districts of the city similar attacks were made by strikers on the military. An ambush was laid for the escort of soldiers which was taking a group of prisoners along c/. Entença to the Modelo prison, producing an intense exchange of fire in the barri del Ninot. Some alarm was expressed in the nearby Hospital Clinic when spent bullets ricocheted into the wards. (74)

A little later in the afternoon an attack was made on the tram station in c/. Vilamari and the firing spread along Aragó and Diputació, to the Plaça de Catalunya and from there down the Rambles to the port, going both north and south to the Plaça del Palau and the Passeig de l'Aduana.

That evening a torpedo boat anchored in the port in front of the Portal de la Pau, its cannons trained up the Rambles, as a show of force. (75)

Cannon were also used that evening in Gràcia. Nine rounds were fired against a house in c/. Salmeron where there had been shooting against the trams pulling up the hill to Lesseps. The Infantry captain Justo Fernandez de Pablos was fatally wounded in this area, at the tram points on the corner of Salmeron-Travessera de Gràcia, when he and his men were sweeping down the hill, clearing the openings of the side streets from where, it was suspected, the fire against the trams had come. (76)

Tuesday was the most bloody day of the week long strike. Other victims on the same day included a sixty-seven year old Serbian, who had fallen wounded at Diagonal-Passeig de Gracia and who was repeatedly shot by the Guardia Civil and killed at the moment when the Red Cross stretcher bearers were going to pick him up. A child of eight was killed in the Paral.lel and another child of two badly wounded in his father's arms. A youth of seventeen who ventured out into the street was shot through the heart seconds afterwards. (77)

While the shooting was taking place the Parlamentarios were finishing their declaration which had then to be submitted to the authorities so that they could authorise its publication. (78)

The police were meanwhile trying to find those they considered to be the ringleaders of the revolt. They searched the house of Emiliano Iglesias, Radical deputy and Editor of the Radical newspaper, El Progreso, under the impression that they would find clandestine documents, but the search was fruitless since Iglesias was in France. They were also unsuccessful in their search for Marcel. li Domingo. (79)

From 6 o'clock on the tram service was again suspended. Rumours of grave events in Sabadell ran through the city, encouraged by the lack of

newspapers and all attempts to find out the true situation from official centres were fruitless. (80)

According to the official notices published by the Captain General the strike remained unchanged throughout Spain, though the railway strike had extended to the lines of the Madrid-Zaragoza-Alicante company, causing the service to be reduced considerably.

The third day: the authorities maintain food supplies

Wednesday 15 August was the holiday dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin, and was the Festa Major of Gràcia, though on this occasion there were no celebrations. The shortage of supplies led to the markets opening for only a short period and prices rose considerably. The few carts which arrived with supplies from outside Barcelona had to be shepherded through the streets by soldiers. Despite this some of them were attacked by gunmen. (81)

Because of the ill-feeling among the public at the price rises in the markets the Town Hall published a bando, later in the day, to prevent them. The municipal authorities were therefore working in full accord with the military authorities in an attempt to calm the mood of the general populace. The military authorities for their part were determined to make a show of force. Thus the trams were sent out from 10 o'clock onwards, driven by staff under military orders, and escorted by strong contingents of soldiers. The military also engaged in controlling the points and clearing the lines of the numerous stones which had been placed on them during the night. (82)

The service was continued, on three lines only, until well into the afternoon when the power was cut, due to the sabotage of a cable.

When the electricity was finally restored the trams were taken to the

sheds because of the lateness of the hour.

The insistence by the authorities on maintaining the tram service provoked an attack on the trams during an otherwise quiet morning, in the Ronda Sant Antoni - District V area, with a heavy exchange of fire reported.

In the afternoon, following the shooting and wounding of a man in the Carretera de Sants a new bout of firing from the rooftops began, and, as on the previous day, it grew more intense and extended as the day went on, continuing until well into the night. It was most intense in the barris of Sants, Gràcia and Poble Nou, and the balance was several dead. In some districts it was observed that the shooting resembled firing from Browning revolvers, and that it provoked a fierce response from the soldiers, as in the case of the Pacos observed in the last days of the Setmana Tragica. It was said that in some cases a whistle had been heard before the shots and the popular version as in 1909 was that this was a measure fomented by the authorities to justify a longer and harder repression. (83)

News had already reached the city of the events in Sabadell, where cannon had been used to reduce resistance and the authorities in Barcelona had no compunction in stating that they were fully prepared to use similar measures. The Captain General published a bando during the afternoon requiring blinds and shutters to be kept open at all times and stating that if there was any aggression against the troops from a house then all present there would be arrested. Furthermore if there was continued firing then cannon would be used and the house demolished if necessary. As a symbolic gesture soldiers with firemen's ladders were sent to open the blinds of houses on the Rambles and in the Plaça Catalunya, whose occupants were away on their summer holidays. (84)



Some of the barricades which had been constructed in the streets of Carretas, Aurora, Sant Rafel, Sant Martí, Sant Geroni, Sant Pau and c/. de la Cadena were demolished by cannon fire and cannons were also used to menace houses in Carme, Muntaner and Pça. Universitat from which shots had been fired. (85)

Thus the authorities were seeking to impose themselves on the armed men in the streets, and simultaneously trying to quieten the dissatisfaction of the population over the food supply and prices. There remained a further policy to bring the strike to an end, that of arresting those considered to be its leaders. That morning the declaration of the Asamblea de Parlamentarios had been published, but not in the form which the Lliga wanted. It had appeared in a self-styled Boletín de la Revolucion and the mayor visited Cambó in the afternoon to tell him that all the members of the Comité de la Asamblea would be arrested because of it, despite the fact that the Comité had published a note saying that it was not involved and had demanded authorization to officially publish the declaration. (86)

The police were searching for Lerroux and Macià without success; but Marcel. li Domingo had been detained by a trick, and even though he enjoyed parliamentary immunity as a deputy, he was taken to the Police Station and from there to the military barracks at the end of the Rambla where it seems he was ill-treated. Later that night he was taken to a warship, the Reina Regente anchored in the port and kept there for the duration. (87) There were also considerable detentions of lesser fry, such as the private secretary of Emiliano Iglesias, Vicente Lopez Galindo, and the head of the printing workshop of El Progreso, Villafranca (brother of Soledad Villafranca, the last lover of Ferrer). Simple militants were also rounded up and led in long files to the Modelo. The top staff of the electricity enterprise La Canadencia were arrested by mistake when it was believed that shots had been fired from the Hotel Regina on c/.

The shops had remained closed, but in mid morning the Municipal Guard went through the streets, inviting their owners to open up and guaranteeing their security. (92)

The tram service was restored in greater numbers, with personnel of the company and armed escorts. Thus there was created an impression of a certain return to normality, and the streets, deserted at first, began to see more animation as the day advanced. In the Rambles, Passeig de Gracia, and c/. Salmeron food shops and bars began to open and people began to come out from their reclusion in their houses and small groups began to form around the damaged houses, curious to see the damage caused by the cannon fire. (93)

The hard line against the strikers continued. On Thursday morning the first summary court martial was held and an exemplary sentence of life imprisonment dictated. More political and sindical centres had been closed and the President of the Lerroxist Casa del Pueblo, Benitez, arrested, along with Lerroux's private secretary. More sensationally the Jefe de la Brigada de Anarquismo y Socialismo, Francisco Martorell was arrested and imprisoned in the Modelo, accused of having facilitated information to Lerroux and Iglesias to help them to escape from the city. Cambo and other members of the Lliga were taken to give witness before a military judge over the affair of the Boletín de la Revolución, while the Lliga published denials of any involvement in the strike. (94)

The strategy of the authorities seemed to be yielding results. The Parlamentarios had split, the Republican leaders were in hiding or arrested, and the Lliga placed in a difficult position. Food supplies and prices had been maintained, thereby removing a powerful source of discontent which might otherwise have mobilized the population against the authorities. The tram service had been maintained and the authorities felt so sure of their capacity to maintain normality that the Captain General published a

bando in the afternoon, requiring all commerce to reopen. The morale and organizational possibilities of the strikers had been damaged by the large scale arrests and the closure of centres. The control of news from outside had been so effective that the strikers had been unable to find out the true situation outside Barcelona. Finally the Army and the Juntas de Defensa had shown themselves willing to suppress the strike by all means. The point was neatly underlined by the publication in the evening edition of El Noticiero Universal of the congratulations sent by the Captain General to Benito Marquez Martinez for his conduct and that of his troops in Sabadell. (Marquez, it will be remembered was president of the Junta Central de Defensa del Arma de Infantería; the bloody suppression of the revolt in Sabadell showed that the workers could expect no support from him or the Juntas).

The strike appeared beaten and there were no incidents during the day until the late afternoon when there was a phenomenal exchange of fire, which, as on other days, extended from one area to another, beginning in the Plaça Catalunya and extending to the Paral.lel, and from the Granvía to the Port and the Plaça Antoní López, extending from there to Poble Nou and on to Gràcia and Sant Gervasi. Barricades were re-erected in District V and the denuded areas of the streets in front of the barricades where the setts had been torn up to construct the barricades were flooded with water from the public fountains. Some barricades were erected close to the sewer manholes so that those behind the barricades could escape down them if necessary. That of the Carrer de la Cadena was destroyed by cannon fire and cannon were again used in some streets to menace buildings from which there had been firing. (95)

The trams, which were full, were stopped because a cable had been cut, and later, when the power was restored, they were returned to the sheds. Once the firing stopped there was no further action that night. From Sabadell news arrived that all was quiet.

The end of the strike

On Friday 17th the situation was virtually back to normal. The only shooting which took place was in the area of the Dressanes where the Captain General had ordered the detention of the group of delinquents who had attacked shops. When these put up resistance two were shot dead, and another two badly wounded. The other twelve were taken to prison. (96)

In the markets there were greater supplies, especially of meat, and the prices were all displayed clearly, though some stallholders refused to serve people who were not their regular customers. (97)

The trams were in normal service, though still under military escort. Bars and some central cinemas opened and there was general activity in the streets. The Captain General announced that he had hopes that the strike would be over by Monday, since the situation in Barcelona was visibly normal and the railway strike in Spain on the way to a solution in the case of the M.Z.A., though still unsolved in the Compañía del Norte.

On Saturday all the shops opened and the tram service was complete. Some banks and commercial establishments opened, as did some factories. The bars and cinemas returned to normal. No incidents were reported during the day or night. On Sunday the florists put up their stalls again in the Rambles. The beach of the Barceloneta, as on Saturday, was full of people taking advantage of the hot weather; the only feature lacking for a normal Sunday was that there was no bullfight. (98)

The balance in Barcelona of what commentators began to mistakenly call the Setmana Comica was of 33 deaths, of whom six were military personnel, and of a minimum of 48 wounded, though the list is very incomplete. (99)

There was none of the damage to property of the Setmana Tràgica, and the barricaded areas were considerably less than in 1909, being restricted principally to the District V.

## CONSEQUENCES OF THE 1917 STRIKE

In Barcelona the immediate consequence of the 1917 general strike was that hundreds of working class militants in Barcelona were imprisoned and many more, like Seguí, had to go into hiding. The working class centres were closed and the C.N.T. suspended. The constitutional guarantees were not restored until 19 October 1917 and it was not until 22 November that the C.N.T. was able to return to normal functioning.<sup>(100)</sup> However the setback was not grave as the C.N.T. had only recently begun to organize itself. Indeed the events of 1917 were to lead it to undertake a process of profound organizational development.

In the rest of the peninsula some 3,000 protesters were arrested. The most spectacular punishments were the life sentences handed down to the Socialist strike committee in Madrid, but these only had the effect of creating popular sympathy for them; in April 1918 they were all elected to the Cortes, increasing the Socialist representation there from one to six diputados.

In terms of the expectations it had aroused the general strike of 1917 represented a notable failure for the Barcelona working class movement; the workers had chosen a moment when the regime of the Restauracion seemed to be in total disarray, with the army and the middle classes against it. But no sooner had the working class movement taken up a revolutionary posture than the other two protesting groups returned to the fold: the politicians and the middle classes stood by and disowned their revolutionary protest and the army actively repressed them.

The result was to turn the Barcelona working class movement away from any involvement in official politics whatsoever. To this effect explicit declarations of apoliticism would be made at the Congrès de Sants in 1918. In future working class action would be restricted to pure syndicalism,

though overlain by the terrorist actions of the pistolers.

The other lesson of the 1917 strike for the C.N.T. was that, as in 1909, the Catalan and Barcelona working class movement had found itself isolated in Spain. It had made the mistake of assuming that the workers of the rest of the peninsula shared its readiness for revolution. Out of step with the Socialists and unable to mobilize support among the landless agrarian labourers, it was easily picked off.

## CHAPTER 6

## NINETEENTH CENTURY STYLE PROTEST MODIFIED (2):

## THE WOMENS' STRIKE OF JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1918

## INTRODUCTION

As the First World War entered its last year, its direct and indirect effects on the non-belligerent nations became increasingly evident.<sup>(1)</sup> The German blockade of shipping caused increasing shortages of certain raw materials within Spain as imports fell, and the Catalan textile industry was badly affected by the lack of cotton and by the decrease in electricity production caused by the lack of coal. Within Spain the growing disorganization of the overtaxed railway system - the chief mode of distribution of raw materials, and agricultural produce - resulted in an almost complete breakdown in distribution in the winter of 1917-1918, a winter which was, moreover, one of the coldest in living memory in Catalonia and the whole of the north of Spain.

The shortages caused by the blockade and by the problems of distribution inevitably resulted in an intensification of the price rises which had been taking place since the beginning of the war. Table 1.19 gave details of the rise in the cost of subsistències, and showed that, although prices had risen by about 20% between September 1914 and July 1917, they rose by almost 6% in September 1917 and by no less than 17% the following month, and by the end of January 1918 had risen by a further 10%.

As has been seen in Chapter 5, this price rise had caused a significant change in working class consciousness and militancy, provoking an understanding between the C.N.T. and the U.G.T., and joint action as in

the one day general strike of December 1917 and the revolutionary strike of August 1917.

The repression which followed the August 1917 strike disrupted organized working class activity; the suspension of the guarantees and the closure of the working class newspapers and centres meant that it was not until almost December 1917 that the working class movement could again begin reorganizing.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that a major protest against price rises should take place outside the structures which the working class movement was trying to create. This was the womens' strike of January-February 1918, which began on nineteenth-century lines, with formal protests to the authorities about prices and informal seizures of food and coal, and evolved into a massive protest - at one point 24,000 women did not enter work - which was still largely spontaneous and ill coordinated, but which was throwing up a leadership group and which was, therefore, repressed by the authorities.

Despite the importance of this strike, it has not received more than cursory treatment from historians; in part this is because of problems of documentation - those involved were ordinary working women, and it is reasonably certain, from the data provided in Table 1.11 that at least a quarter of them were illiterate. They have therefore left no written records of their activities, nor are they within the reach of oral history at this stage.<sup>(2)</sup> Since the strike was suppressed by the declaration of the estado de guerra, with the consequent censorship of the press, the latter part of the strike is unknown to us.

The womens' strike, then, represents an intriguing challenge; but there is documentation for the first two weeks and this will serve as the basis for a brief study here.



## WOMEN AND THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

In Chapter 1 it was shown that women formed a significant part of the Barcelona proletariat and that the wages they received were notably inferior to those of men. Because of the prevailing social attitudes, men were ashamed if their wives or daughters had to work; to soften the blow to their prestige they therefore consented to women receiving a lower wage than men, even when they did equivalent work. That this attitude was as much held by women as by men is shown by the relative lack of organization of women workers and by their lower levels of militancy.<sup>(3)</sup> Table 4.5 shows that in the five years 1912-1916, the number of women strikers was much lower than men in Barcelona, with the exceptions of 1913, when there was the important textile strike, and 1916, when women outnumbered men in the one day protest strike against prices in December.

The relative cheapness and docility of women workers encouraged employers all over Europe to attempt to employ them, whenever possible, to carry out jobs formerly executed by men.

Los jornales de la mujer son, en muchos casos, inferiores a los del hombre, y sin embargo, la utilidad que reportan a la industria textil es equivalente a la de aquel, pues no exigen las manipulaciones de la misma grandes esfuerzos. Cuando el telar era de mano, la capacidad industrial productora de la mujer era inferior a la del hombre, pero las actuales maquinas la tran igualado, no habiendo diferencia ni en la cantidad ni en la calidad de los productos.<sup>(4)</sup>

The result was often a justified suspicion by male workers that female workers were intruders, unfairly competing for 'male' jobs. In his oral testimony to the Inspección de Trabajo, after the textile strike of 1913, the delegate of the La Constància syndicate, Joan Martí, expressed this feeling:

Antes en los talleres había un 25% de hombres; hoy no pasa del 1 al 2%; el resto son mujeres, a quienes se puede explotar a medida del deseo, y, como sobran brazos, resulta que los obreros tienen que

dedicarse a otros oficios, con perjuicio suyo, y los que trabajamos en este ramo tenemos que conformamos con un jornal de mujer, y hasta sin saber lo que al cabo de la semana vamos a ganar.(5)

These social attitudes, then, meant that women were doubly oppressed at work (without taking into account the oppression they suffered in the home, and in relation to sexual values).<sup>(6)</sup> They were forced to work because mens' wages were inadequate, yet they received wages which were still lower than those of the men, even when they carried out the same tasks. Secondly, they were not properly integrated into the labour force, and were therefore denied the opportunity to organize themselves to improve their conditions. In consequence the working class was divided, and this was a severe obstacle to the working class movement.

The opinions expressed within the movement all stressed the importance of involving women, in order to achieve solidarity and bring about the social revolution.<sup>(7)</sup> There was no realization of the specific problems of women, nor any attempt to bring about changes in these by creating female organizations. Women, then, were restricted to a limited role in the syndicates and in such circumstances were rarely able to have a voice in their policy. This situation was to change, following the formation of the Barcelona textile syndicate, La Constància, in April 1913.

#### La Constància and womens' protest, 1913-1916

In July 1913, La Constància began a campaign to force manufacturers to comply with the laws passed in 1900 restricting the hours which women could be made to work on night shift. Coupled with a demand for an increase in wages the syndicate began a strike on 30 July 1913 which lasted until 15 September and was settled by a Royal decree limiting hours of work.<sup>(8)</sup>

This was an important strike; it was peaceful and the workers were

unanimous in their action. By 9 August there were 256 factories on strike in Barcelona, and some 24,000 workers out of whom 80% were women. Women themselves played an important role in organizing the strike.<sup>(9)</sup>

The relative success of this strike encouraged the growth of the syndicate; in April 1913 it had 2,000 members. On the eve of the strike these had increased to 8,000, and by its conclusion to 18,000.<sup>(10)</sup> At the end of the strike some of the male members broke off, to form their own group, the Sindicato de Contra maestres El Radium. This action illustrates that the prevailing social attitudes of men were not changed by the strike; they formed their own syndicate in order to avoid being swamped by the women in La Constància and to mark the difference in status between themselves and the women under their control.<sup>(11)</sup>

In 1916 La Constància again called a strike, this time for higher wages, which lasted from 15 July to 3 August, in which some 17,000 workers took part, of whom nearly 14,000 were women. This strike was marked by considerable violence by both strikers - in particular women - and the authorities, and resulted in a defeat for the syndicate, and the loss of part of the membership.<sup>(12)</sup> Recuperation took place over the following two years, though it was interrupted by the general strike of August 1917 and the ensuing repression. By 1918 it had a total of 11,000 members.<sup>(13)</sup>

The experience of La Constància shows that, given an appropriate organization, women were capable of undertaking the mutual defence of their own interests. The lack of organization led them, however, into uncoordinated acts of protest, such as the initial protest against the mobilization of troops in July 1909, or that which began the strike to protest against prices in January 1918. Despite this informality the latter strike was beginning to acquire an organization and direction before it was crushed by the declaration of an estado de guerra.

## THE 1918 STRIKE

Origins

Of all the price rises which were taking place in the winter of 1917-1918, it was the price of coal which was to be the detonator of the womens' protest.<sup>(14)</sup> The high price was caused by shortages occasioned by distribution problems. The lack of energy had already caused a protest by manufacturers to the Civil Governor, complaining that they had already been forced to lay off 10,000 workers. In the domestic sphere the shortage was equally acute; La Publicidad published a cartoon on Reis, January 6, showing two shivering children placing their shoes on the balcony to their flat to receive their presents from the Reis and the caption ran 'Queridos Reyes Magicos; traenos carbon, mucho carbon!'<sup>(15)</sup>

Despite the publication of a note on the 9th by the Civil Governor, reminding merchants of the fixed price for coal, the shortage and high prices continued, and led to isolated violent acts. On the 9th itself a coalmerchant in Sant Andreu who was selling at double the fixed price found himself the recipient of a beating from an outraged woman customer, whilst the other women who were queueing took the opportunity of helping themselves to his stocks.<sup>(16)</sup> On succeeding days attacks on coalmerchants or on carts carrying coal became almost commonplace, and they had to be protected by the police.<sup>(17)</sup> The attacks also spread to other shops, notably bakers.<sup>(18)</sup> This type of protest had much in common with the pre-industrial food riots, in particular the 1789 rebomboris de pa in Barcelona.<sup>(19)</sup> The general protest which developed also had an initial phase which was more appropriate to the nineteenth century.

The initial phase of the protest

It was in the Dressanes neighbourhood in District V, that the first move was made towards calling women out to protest against price increases. Its protagonist was a simple 'mujer del pueblo' called Amàlia Alegre. After listening to a group of women in a shop discussing prices, she put up a handwritten notice in the C/. de l'Olm, inviting the women of Dressanes to march in an ordered demonstration and visit the civil authorities to explain their crushing economic situation. (20)

400 women took part in the demonstration, on 10 January. They paraded peacefully to the Town Hall, and from there to the Gobierno Civil. They spoke with the Governor, Auñón, who tried to calm matters by telling them that the Junta de Subsistències would be meeting the following day. This satisfied the demonstrators. So much so that, when they were dispersing, they mistook a functionary, who came out on to a balcony to see them, for the Governor himself, and chanted their gratitude to him: 'Viva el padre de los pobres'. (21)

This mild demonstration was followed by a considerably more radical one the following day. In the morning groups of women toured Dressanes, Sant Martí, Sant Andreu and Barceloneta, calling, without much success, for a strike by women workers. In the afternoon a demonstration began at 4.00 p.m., as women left their factories, which circulated in the area, and finally entered the entertainment zone. Here groups of women smashed the glass doors of the music halls and entered, obliging the artistes to stop. The women also made all the bars de camareras close. (22) Finally they forced the closure of the big department store El Siglo. After this the demonstrators wandered the area; by 10.00 p.m. they had all gone home.

On Saturday 12 June there was normal working in the factories, but when

they closed at midday, a demonstration again formed, headed by a woman with a placard which said 'Abajo las subsistèncias', who was to become a common sight at all the demonstrations held in the ensuing two weeks. The demonstrators went to the Gobierno Civil and a commission told the Governor that the women were losing patience with the price rises. They received an assurance that he would be meeting with the Junta de Subsistèncias on Monday 14; he also stated that he would not tolerate violence on the streets, such as was occurring in shops and against coal carts. A different demonstration in the afternoon protested that the Junta should meet on Sunday; although the Governor protested that this was impossible they insisted that they would return the next day.

On the Sunday, La Publicidad editorialized on the protest; women had raised the alarm over prices, and such a protest had to be taken seriously; after all the Setmana Tràgica had begun with a demonstration by women, although the situation then was very different, and the current womens' protest could have grave consequences. The Civil Governor also had the precedent of the Setmana Tràgica in mind; he called a meeting of the Junta de Subsistèncias on the Sunday morning, but this took the scarcely helpful step of prohibiting the sale of subsistèncias from Barcelona to other areas. This was enough, however, to satisfy the demonstration of women which formed that evening in the centre, and marched to District V to collect Amàlia Alegre from her house before going on to the Gobierno Civil. (23)

The University students had planned a demonstration for Monday 14 January, but did not carry it out as Amàlia Alegre and the women around her stated that they should not do so. (24) They felt that an intervention by men would provoke disorders, and thereby give the authorities an opportunity for repression of any demonstration. Despite this timidity on the part of some, others among the protestors were profoundly radicalizing in attitude, in favour of more vigorous action, as La Lucha recognized in

its headline, 'Otra vez camino de la revolución'.<sup>(25)</sup> That evening there were two demonstrations, which both met outside the Gobierno Civil. A commission from the first, headed by Amàlia Alegre, went into the central patio, climbed the stairs and went in. The Governor told them that he was unable to work because so many commissions came to see him and that he was in no position to give an answer on prices. The commission therefore gave him two further days in which to resolve the problem and returned to the demonstration.

The women did not agree with the commission and demanded that a commission from the second group should go in. However these women were denied admittance at the entrance. They insisted, and there was a certain amount of pushing and shoving, and the Guardias de Seguridad blew a toque de atención on their trumpets.

Versions of events differ after this. Solidaridad Obrera accused the Guardias of firing several shots, whereas La Publicidad said that they seized some lengths of pipe and pointed these at the women as if they were guns. The result was a panic on the stairs with the women at the top trying to turn and descend, whilst those at the bottom were forced upwards by the pressure of the crowd behind them. The bannister then broke, and a great number of women fell from the stairs onto those underneath. The Guardias drew their swords, cleared the patio, and took those hurt to the first floor. Left behind on the stairs were a huge number of womens' shoes, lost in the confusion.<sup>(26)</sup> Outside, the mounted guards dispersed the crowd. Seventeen women were seriously enough hurt to go to hospital.

#### Radicalization of attitudes by the protesters and the authorities

The next day, Tuesday 15, the Civil Governor announced that, given the violent turn events had taken, the forces of order would proceed with less

consideration than hitherto. (27) Thus the demonstrations which took place on the Tuesday were subject to considerable police brutality. In the morning groups of women toured the factories calling women out, and met with a ready response. A demonstration marched along the Rambles to the Plaça Catalunya, calling out the women it encountered on the way, including a bride in her wedding dress coming out from the ceremony in the Betlem church, who was obliged to join in, despite the protests of the groom.

In the evening a meeting was attempted in the Plaça Reial, but it was sealed off by the police. Various demonstrations formed around the area, the main one being in the Rambles. Here men were kicked out if they tried to join in.

Tuesday also saw an increase in the number of shops attacked, and the proliferation, all over the city, of gangs of women, demanding charity from shopkeepers with menaces. There was no coal in the shops and the merchants refused to allow the carts to go out. (28)

The following day the new policy of the authorities was displayed with the greatest vigour during the afternoon, when the women tried to hold a meeting in the Parc de la Ciutadella. (29) They attempted to congregate near the aviary of the zoo, but were herded together by mounted police under the orders of Bravo Portillo, and beaten. Regrouping in the area near the ornamental fountain, they protested against the brutality of the police and were rewarded by being driven from the park under a hail of blows. (30)

Assaults on shops continued on Wednesday; in one the shop assistant took a revolver out from under the counter in order to intimidate the assailants.



The radical tendency takes over the protest

On Thursday the women held an important meeting in the Globo Cautivo theatre. In it two opposed attitudes were expressed, and the confusion generated provoked a more syndical attitude to emerge. Already that morning the editorial in Solidaridad Obrera had demanded that the women should not be taken in by the politicians and administrators. Rather they should take direct action, make all the shops close, and thus drive everyone onto the streets in protest against being hungry. The workers' movement stood ready to intervene when required, and men were ready to defend them against brutality. (31)

The posturing of the men of Solidaridad Obrera was far from the minds of the women at the meeting, who debated whether their protest should be pacific as demanded by Amàlia Alegre, or whether it should include more vigorous methods, as advocated by Rosario Dolçet, among others. (32)

After a long and animated meeting in which Alegre was accused of being sold to the authorities, specific demands were agreed; the reduction in the price of subsistencias to pre-war levels, a 20% reduction in rents, and the re-employment of those sacked in the railway strike of August 1917, in order to restore railway transport and allow the efficient distribution of coal and food.

On Friday 18 January the 'syndicalization' of the protest became evident with the publication of the numbers on strike. 263 factories were closed, and 20,372 women and 1,783 men, not at work. No demonstration was held either, though attacks on shops continued. (33)

On Saturday the representatives from each neighbourhood appointed as a commission at the Globo Cautivo meeting visited the Civil Governor. It included Amàlia Alegre, and a women who was to make her mark on the strike in the following week, Lola Ferrer. They were followed in by

another group who, in their words, didn't trust them, and when the two groups argued bitterly, they were cut short by an announcement of the Governor. A single, unified price list was being prepared and this would reduce prices instantly when it came into force on the Monday. (34)

The remainder of the weekend was peaceful; two meetings were held on the Sunday; the larger, in the Cine Montaña heard speeches on the need to reduce rents, to accept prostitutes as sisters, but to fight against the evil causes of prostitution, on advanced men, who did not, however, do much in the home for their wives and children, as well as attacks on Amália Alegre. The afternoon meeting in the Ateneu Racionalista de Sants was presided by Lola Ferrer; it was more restricted in that protest tactics against prices were the only issues discussed. It was decided to continue with strike action, to repudiate the authorities price list, and to continue taking goods from the shops. (35)

On Monday it became evident that the tasca was not going to work. The retailers refused to accept it because it only applied to them and not to the wholesalers. Moreover it did not distinguish sufficiently between different grades of the same good.

20,050 women stayed out on strike on Monday; in Sant Andreu, Sant Martí and Poble Nou the strike assumed general strike proportions, and in these areas, and in the markets all over the city, there were riots and looting. In District V, Alegre called a meeting to protest against such excesses; it was supported by women from her district. (36)

Despite such good intentions Tuesday was a worse day. The carters refused to venture out into the streets, and looting and menacing behaviour increased. 24,087 women were on strike, and some 1,809 men were affected and had to join in. Three meetings were held; one on the exhibition site in Montjuich, one in the Ateneu Racionalista, and a third in the

Radical Casa del Pueblo del Distrito V, organized by friends of Alegre. The meeting on Montjuich attracted a crowd of 3,000 women, who heard Lola Ferrer attack Alegre.

A price list was drawn up and approved by the women. Ferrer also spoke at the meeting in the Ateneu Racionalista, where the price list was also approved. In the meeting in District V, it was decided to appoint commissions in each district whose task would be to enforce the price list of the authorities.

The same day the editorial in Solidaridad Obrera had emphasized these differences in the strike. The early protest had been like asking for charity, and it was only now, when the protesters had achieved a more correct perspective, that they would attain lasting results, by fixing their own prices in the shops. (37)

On Thursday the Civil Governor left Barcelona; he did not, however, resign, but had been recalled by the authorities. 23,575 women were on strike, and there was a meeting of 8,000 women in the afternoon near the Monumental bull ring. Lola Ferrer spoke, attacking Amália Alegre, and stating that the women had to win by their own resources, not by asking help from the authorities. She also claimed that if women looked to be losing the protest, they could call the men in.

At this point Bravo Portillo arrived with a force of police and attacked the crowd, arresting Lola Ferrer. The protest by the women was so great that he was forced to release her, and to allow the meeting to continue. It finished at 6.00 p.m., and Lola Ferrer was escorted away on a cart, whilst Bravo stood, 'mustio y caria, contecido' watching her leave. (38)

On Friday 25 January there were violent street demonstrations outside

various shops where goods were being sold at high rates, and an unpleasant incident in a chemist's shop where the women gained entry. Chemicals were thrown on the floor to create ammonia gas and two women were overcome by the fumes.

The women attempted to hold a further meeting on Montjuich. It was intended to take place at the Font del Gat, but it was surrounded by Guardia Civil and Lola Ferrer did not turn up, so the women began to descend the mountain. They were met half-way by Ferrer, who explained that she hadn't wanted to speak among the bayonets earlier, and went on to criticise the Guardia. They were all young and must have novias, as well as only just having left their mothers. They were not, therefore, so far removed from the women they were persecuting now. Ferrer's voice was weak after so many meetings, and she soon left, but not before asking if the strike should continue, and receiving a unanimous yes. Then she went and caught a tram. The women slowly dispersed. (39)

#### Repression of the strike

The following day, Saturday 26 January, the Estado de Guerra was declared and censorship of newspapers imposed; the Captain General issued a bando requiring all factories to reopen on Monday. No details are available of the progress of the strike after that because of the censorship, though by Friday 1 February it seems that most of the women in Sant Andreu, Sant Martí and Clot were still out. (40)

Writing in Solidaridad Obrera in April, Lola Ferrer regretted that the suspension of guarantees had ended the protest, forcing the strikers to return to their posts as workers and as mothers. (41)

## CONCLUSION

Although so little is known of the women's protest, and in particular of how it ended, certain conclusions can be drawn. The first is the ability of women to defend their own interests; the second is that this protest began as a small scale anachronistic demonstration to complain to the authorities, and by the time the Estado de Guerra was declared, had become a more disciplined and organized movement. This was due to the influence of those women who had participated in the syndical movement. The lessons would not be forgotten by the C.N.T. From early 1918 the movement redoubled its efforts to get women to join.

## CHAPTER 7

## WORKING CLASS ORGANIZATION AND ACTION 1917-1923

## INTRODUCTION

The Congrès de Sants of the Catalan Regional Federation of the C.N.T. (the Confederació Regional del Treball, or C.R.T.) has been recognised by historians as a formative influence on the development of the national organization in this period.<sup>(1)</sup> As such the Congrès cannot be treated as an isolated event, but rather should be set in the context of the process analyzed in earlier chapters, of the elaboration in Barcelona, Catalonia and in the whole of Spain, of a working class alternative to the concurrent project of the Lliga Regionalista.

The importance of the Congrès lay, in part, in the intermittent nature of the process of elaboration of this working class alternative. It has been pointed out how often the organizational process was forcibly suspended by the periods of repression exercised by the authorities following the strike of 1902, the Setmana Tràgica, the Congress of 1911, the textile strike of 1913, the strike of 1917 and the womens' strike of 1918.

Because of these periods of repression the national organization of the C.N.T. was unable to develop. Whereas the C.R.T. had begun to function normally by mid-1914, it was not until a year later that the national organization was revived in name.<sup>(2)</sup> Moreover it did not begin to acquire a truly national dimension until after the Congrès de Sants, when the organizational forms, modes of action and political ideology elaborated at the Congrès, were adopted in much of Spain. It is clearly the case that the decisions taken at Sants reflected the needs and everyday realities of the working class in parts of Spain outside

Barcelona, though admittedly in the special circumstances created by the impact of the First World War in Spain. To this extent the Congrès de Sants was an important formative influence on the national organization, but it is not the intention to examine here the adoption at national level by the C.N.T. of the decisions taken at Sants. Rather it is intended to analyze the proposals of the Congrès de Sants and to consider their appeal to the Barcelona and Catalan working classes.

The proposals and the debates on them have been preserved in the minutes of the Congrès.<sup>(3)</sup> The fifty-five temes for discussion advanced by the participating syndicates can be summarised as falling under the following headings: the organization of the syndicates and their mutual interrelationships; direct action; apoliticism; relation with the U.G.T.; and the need to incorporate women into the syndical organization.<sup>(4)</sup> A further concern, that of rationalist education, will be discussed in Chapter 9.

These proposals, like the Congrès, did not arise from a vacuum. They must be considered as an integral part of the process of elaboration of the working class project. The earlier stages of this process have been considered in previous chapters, and the analysis here will begin with the reorganization of the C.R.T. and the preparation of the Congrès.

#### BACKGROUND TO THE CONGRÈS DE SANTS

As indicated above the C.R.T. began to function normally towards the middle of 1914, and the C.N.T. was revived in 1915. In Chapter 4 it was noted that, as a reflection of this process, strikes in 1915 and 1916 were primarily concerned with issues of union recognition. In 1915, however, there was a crisis of confidence among the Catalan bourgeoisie, induced by the uncertainty caused by the outbreak of the First World War, and strike action was largely unsuccessful. By 1916

the picture had changed, and the war boom allowed the syndicates to be more effective, as shown by the strike statistics.

Despite the boom the situation of the Barcelona working class worsened in this period, as was demonstrated in Chapter 1, in regard to the cost of living and the provision of housing. A further element which was not considered earlier were changes in the scale and pace of production, made possible by widescale electrification, and introduced in order to meet the demands for increased production.<sup>(5)</sup>

In these circumstances the militants of the C.R.T. were able to channel working class discontent, as indicated in Chapters 4 and 5, towards revolutionary class consciousness. Parallel with this effort was the attempt to reorganize the syndicates in order to effectively combat the Lliga project.<sup>(6)</sup>

If the creation of a new revolutionary consciousness was evidenced by the alliance created with the U.G.T. and the support for the token protest strike of 18 December 1916, and the revolutionary general strike of August 1917, the concern for reorganization was shown in the call for a regional congress in Solidaridad Obrera in January 1917.<sup>(7)</sup> It was followed by a debate in the newspaper and a further demand for reorganization in February.<sup>(8)</sup> In March certain members of the Committee resigned, alleging that the current failure of the syndicates to enter into a confederal organization prevented the working class movement from undertaking both its defensive and its emancipatory activities.<sup>(9)</sup> The Committee therefore tried to heal the divisions by calling for a Regional Congress to be held on 29 and 30 June, and 1 July 1917.<sup>(10)</sup>

In its announcement of the Congrès the Committee indicated two problems requiring resolution; the existence of two or more syndicates in the same locality for the same trade, and the economic difficulties of



Solidaridad Obrera. The first of these points was taken up again in a series of articles in June.

In the event the Congrès did not take place, because the Government, preoccupied with the Juntas de Defensa, suspended the constitutional guarantees, and prohibited all public meetings.<sup>(11)</sup> In any case the C.R.T. and the C.N.T. were preparing for the revolutionary general strike called by the U.G.T.

The events of the summer of 1917 and the subsequent repression of the syndicates prevented the debate on syndical organization from continuing, and it was not until the restoration of guarantees in mid-October 1917 that it could be taken up again. From then until June 1918 there was an intense debate within the movement as to the form it should take, though the renewed suspension of guarantees from 26 January 1918 to April 1918 further prevented public discussion.<sup>(12)</sup>

Shortly after the reappearance of Solidaridad Obrera the Committee called for the postponed Congress to be held; an indication of how advanced the debate had become is furnished by the fact that the dates of the Congress were scheduled for 28, 29 and 30 June 1918, only five weeks after the announcement.<sup>(13)</sup>

On various dates during the following weeks the Committee invited the syndicates to send in their suggestions for discussion at the Congrès, and to name their delegates, as well as the amount they would contribute towards the expense of organizing it.<sup>(14)</sup> Throughout June the debate in Solidaridad Obrera continued, and there were numerous meetings within the syndicates to determine their views. Finally on 26 June 1918 Solidaridad Obrera published the list of 55 temes to be discussed at the Congrès. On the same day the Barcelona delegates met to group these in some coherent fashion, and decided to form eight major groups: of

these the third dealt with the organization of the syndicates, the fourth with rationalist education, the fifth with relations with the U.G.T., the sixth with statutes for the new organization, and the seventh with those still imprisoned for the 1917 protest. The remaining three groups contained diverse temes; group one dealt with direct action, the involvement of intellectuals in the syndicates and the incorporation of women. Group two was concerned with means of propaganda, Solidaridad Obrera, propaganda tours, etc., and group eight with the eight hour day, invalids and the militarization of workers. (15)

The issues of Solidaridad Obrera for 26, 27 and 28 June contained numerous articles on the aims of the Congress and the specific subjects for discussion. There was general agreement that the principal aim was the creation of the Sindicat Unic, to overcome the divisions caused by having too many small syndicates within an industry and a locality, and to allow the mentalization and training of workers so that they could take over their industries after the revolution. (16)

#### THE CONGRÈS DE SANTS

The Congress was held in the Ateneu Racionalista de Sants, in c/. Vallespir; it was this that gave rise to the name 'Congrès de Sants'. 164 delegates attended, representing 153 syndicates, whose total membership was 73,860. Of the delegates, 93 were from Barcelona, representing 56 syndicates and 54,572 workers. (17)

The opening session on the 28th began with a speech of welcome, and the reading of messages of solidarity. The credentials of the delegates were checked. It was decided to hold a meeting of closure and it was proposed that this would take place in the local of the Centre Autonomista de Dependents del Comerç i de la Indústria (C.A.D.C.I.).

Finally commissions were chosen to meet and put forward propositions for each of the eight groups of temes.<sup>(18)</sup>

In the evening part of the first group relating to direct action was discussed. The following day, the 29th, the remainder of the first group and the whole of the second group were debated, and the debate on the Sindicat Unic was begun, though it had to be carried over until the following day, the 30th. The fourth group was discussed, as well as part of the seventh on this same day. Finally the remaining groups were dealt with on the morning of 1 July, apart from part of group eight, which had to be left because the delegate who had the copy of the dictamen had gone missing. Finally the closure meeting brought the conference to an end.

#### The new organization

The form the regional organization would take was the subject of the longest and most intense debate at the Congress, and indeed was the main reason it was held. The extended discussions which had been taking place within the movement since 1916 indicated both the depth of feeling on the issue, and the need to come to a definitive agreement in order to prevent conflict within the working class movement.

The dictamen which was presented to the Congress was:

'La ponencia se hace suya la proposición del Sindicato de Lampareros, Latoneros y Hojalateros de Barcelona, concretándose en la siguiente forma:

Primero. Que el Congreso acepta que la organización obrera no llegará a alcanzar su máximo de potencia positiva si no dirige todos sus esfuerzos a la creación de los sindicatos únicos de ramos e industrias.

Segundo. Los sindicatos ya constituídos en principio a base de ramos e industrias, deberán continuar extendiendo su organización a todas las secciones que aún permanezcan aisladas de su respectivo seno.

Tercero. Que aquellos sindicatos a base de ramos e industrias ya constituídos y que tengan alguna sección aislada, deben pasar a fusionarse al Sindicato del ramo respectivo si no quieren quedar aislados de los trabajadores organizados.' (19)

It therefore called for the establishment of a Sindicat Unic for each branch of industry, and the integration of all sections within the Sindicat.

This idea, which came from contemporary French syndicalism, was not new in Catalonia. Already in 1915, the Sindicato Unico de Elabora Madera had been founded, following a strike of carpenters employed on the construction of the Monumental bull ring. Their protest had been undermined by the employment of carpenters from Gràcia who belonged to a different syndicate. Proposals in 1916 and 1917 that the Sindicat Unic should be extended into other branches in order to confront the new conditions brought about by the war continually met with the same objection, that such a move would be an attack on the autonomy of the individual neighbourhood syndicates. (20)

The opposition to the dictamen at the Congres followed this same line of argument, pointing out that federations were sufficient to unify the working class. The debate, of course could not be resolved at this simple level because the Sindicat Unic was intended to do more than to merely include all the workers in a trade in a local union and to link them to other similar unions through a federation. It was intended that it should include all the workers at a workplace in a single union, irrespective of their trades. In this way it would unite skilled and unskilled workers and break status consciousness as a divisive factor among workers. Equally it allowed for links of solidarity formed through residence near the workplace to be expressed. Where these were absent, as in certain peripatetic trades such as the construction industry, or because, thanks to the Lliga's policies, workers were residing in

scattered locations some distance away from their workplace, then it substituted the solidarity engendered by daily contact and identification with the workplace. As Seguí put it, when advancing 'una serie de disquisiciones de orden social y filosofico' in answer to critics of the Sindicat Unic:

... que sea aceptada la implantación del Sindicato único como medio mas eficaz para poder responder al actual momento historico y hacer prevalecer la personalidad del proletariado ante la burguesia al terminar la guerra.(21)

The Sindicat Unic was not, therefore, designed to destroy the spirit of solidarity found in the neighbourhood syndicates, but rather to extend it, and, where it was lacking, to replace it with the spirit of the workplace. The way in which the new organizations finally evolved will be discussed below and will bear this out.

The actual shape the Sindicat Unic would take was also brought into the debate. Although the dictamen had called for them it had not specified in any way how they would be organized, and several delegates stated that they might have no reservations about them if only they could have some idea of what they would be like. One of the members of the ponencia dictaminadora attempted to answer by suggesting that each section of the Syndicate would be able to work independently, but that there would only be one Junta Central, to which any section would address itself, and through which it would receive the solidarity of other sections. Interestingly the delegates of the sailors' syndicate, La Naval, pointed out that this occurred in the United States, and gave a short history of strikes there.(22)

The debate took, in all, the whole of the evening of 29 June and the morning of 30 June. It was finally agreed to accept the dictamen, along with the following proposicion:

Que el Congreso declare como base de organización, en lo futuro, los Sindicatos únicos de Ramos o de Industrias.

Que todos los oficios o industrias que lo hagan o esten realizandolo prosigan en su cometido, y los que no, que realicen cuanta propaganda sea necesaria para conseguirlo a la mayor brevedad posible.(23)

Thus the outline form of the new organization was decided. The way in which it was put into practice and the implications which it had will be discussed below.

#### Direct action and apoliticism

If the vehicle for working class protest was to be the Sindicat Unic, the content of that protest was to be apolitical and directed against those considered directly responsible by those who were directly involved. The dictamen discussed at the Congrès was to answer the question: '¿Debe ser la organizacion a base de accion directa, multiple o mixta?', and it was criticised as being too rigid, since it called for the exclusion from the C.R.T. of all syndicates which functioned on a multiple base, or did not practise direct action. The Socialists present considered that direct action should not be considered as the only possible course of action, but rather as one amongst many possible alternatives in any dispute. A confrontation between the two viewpoints was avoided because of a third, more conciliatory tendency which argued that, whilst the C.R.T. should be pre-eminently in favour of direct action, other forms of action should not be ruled out. This third view won the day, showing that delegates to the Congrès were willing to make concessions in order to avoid alienating potential support for the organization. The final version of the dictamen therefore read:

En las luchas entre el capital y el trabajo, los Sindicatos adheridos a la Confederación vienen obligados a ejercer de un modo preferente el sistema de acción directa, mientras circunstancias de verdadera fuerza mayor, debidamente justificadas, no exijan el empleo de otras formulas distintas.(24)

Direct action in itself implied apoliticism, but this latter was fully spelt out in a dictamen debated in the same session. The question read:

?Pueden los políticos profesionales ostentar la representación de un Sindicato? ?Pueden estar los sindicatos domiciliados en Centros políticos?

The dictamen was short and to the point:

Los políticos profesionales no pueden representar nunca a las organizaciones obreras y éstas deben procurar no domiciliarse en ningún Centro político. (25)

It was approved after what the minutes of the Congrès called 'laborious discussion', though no record has been kept of what the discussion was about.

Discussion implies difference of opinions; it can reasonably be assumed that there were clashes between anarchists and socialists on this issue. The support given by the Congrès to the motion shows that the old Catalan tradition of apoliticism was again reasserting itself, after the series of disillusion which the Catalan workers had had with the politicians, whether the Lerrouxists after the Setmana Tràgica and in 1911, or the Republicans in 1917. The abandonment of parliamentary politics was therefore complete; this did not mean, however that delegates turned their backs on the U.G.T.

#### Relations with the U.G.T.

Despite the failure of the 1917 strike relations between syndicalists and socialists remained good in Catalonia; the numerical strength of the latter was small, but the syndicalists were conscious that they needed to retain the goodwill of the U.G.T. elsewhere in Spain. Thus the Committee of the Congrès did not want to exclude socialist representatives from attending, and a number from the heartlands of Catalan socialism, Reus and Tarragona, did attend. (26)

The chief concern of the Congress was that of the need to build a strong working class movement, both in Catalonia and in Spain. It was necessary, therefore, to consider the amalgamation of the C.N.T. with the U.G.T., and the ponencia dictaminadora stated that:

...la Unión General de Trabajadores adolece de defectos, no tan solamente en lo que se refiere a su ideología, sino también a la práctica en lo que se relaciona con las luchas que inevitablemente tenemos que entablar los trabajadores contra la clase capitalista; y considerando a la vez que la Confederación del Trabajo, en las prácticas de la lucha, los principios que la informan reflejan a veces una falta de sentido práctico, creemos de necesidad que el Congreso acuerde ver con simpatía la fusión antedicha [i.e. of the C.N.T. and U.G.T.]... (27)

and recommended that a commission be formed from the two organizations to call a national assembly of syndicates with the aid of the Federación Obrera de Zaragoza.

This dictamen was rejected and, after discussion delegates approved a much simpler motion which began:

El Congreso debe ver con simpatía cuantos trabajos se realicen para la unificación del proletariado español en un solo organismo.. (28)

and went on to outline the same mechanism for a national assembly as the rejected motion.

#### Women and the syndicates

Despite the evidence of the womens' strike that there were a number of extremely competent female leaders, and organizers, and in spite of the campaign mounted by La Constància to increase womens' participation in the syndicate, not one woman attended the Congrès de Sants as a delegate. In this situation it is not to be wondered at that the delegates hardly discussed the subject of women in the syndicates, merely approving the following dictamen:



- a) Es una obligación ineludible de todos los sindicatos procurar por todos los medios lícitos la organización en sindicatos de las mujeres - compañeras, hijas, etc. - que empleando su actividad en alguna industria u oficio convivan con ellos.
- b) En los sindicatos mixtos deberán las juntas administrativas ser mixtas también, a fin de que la mujer se interese por sus luchas y defienda directamente su emancipación económica. (29)

### Conclusions about the Congrès

Lladonosa has analyzed the speeches made at the crowded closure meeting, and isolated the main themes which the speakers themselves identified as important. (30) The items which have been analyzed above feature as the major achievements of the Congrès, both for the contemporary speakers and for the historian.

The success of the Congrès de Sants was demonstrated by what happened afterwards in Catalonia and Spain. Although the delegates had voted for Sindicats Unics they had laid down no procedure by which these might be formed; so great were the demands for guidance that, when the minutes of the Congres were published they contained a 'Proyecto de reglamento de Sindicato Unico que sometos a la consideración de la organización obrera, para lo que le pueda servir' (Appendix 7.1). Despite this the new organizations began to be formed in Catalonia and by the winter of 1918-1919 the new organization was virtually complete and ready for the major test of the Canadenca strike. (31)

Outside Catalonia the development of Sindicatos Unicos was only a matter of time; so popular did they prove that by the time of the Congreso de la Comedia, when the decision was taken to adopt them nationwide, the C.N.T. had a membership of 714,028. (32)

Although the delegates had voted at Sants to take steps towards a single syndical organization for all the workers of Spain, their project did not succeed. Misunderstandings with the socialists led the C.R.T. to

break off relations in August 1918.<sup>(33)</sup> Despite the intention of the U.G.T. congress of October 1918 to collaborate with the C.N.T., in Catalonia relationships became progressively worse. Finally the conflict between socialist and syndicalists in the Typographers' strike in December 1918, and the assassination of a syndicalist worker, Sallent, made it impossible for any collaboration.<sup>(34)</sup>

These developments led the Catalan delegates to the Congreso de la Comedia to argue that the U.G.T. was no longer to be taken seriously, and should be absorbed by the C.N.T.

#### THE MODEL OF THE SINDICAT UNIC AND STRIKES 1917-1923

In Chapter 4, the data base available for strikes in Spain and Barcelona was discussed, and it was pointed out that for the period 1910-1923 much information for Barcelona is lacking. Nevertheless it was possible to analyze strikes in both Barcelona and Spain during the years 1910-1916. Unfortunately this is not possible for Barcelona for the years 1917-1923, due to the loss in these years of the basic sources employed for the earlier period, the AE, and the series of Sastre Sanna.<sup>(35)</sup> Massana shows that the data of the Instituto de Reformas Sociales for the years 1917-1923 also contains very little data on Barcelona.<sup>(36)</sup> The analysis here will not, therefore, include Barcelona, and will only make reference to the whole of Spain; nonetheless it can be assumed that the general conclusions are equally applicable to Barcelona, since the city was generally acknowledged to be among the leading centres of strike activity during this period.<sup>(37)</sup>

The pattern of strikes, as shown in Tables 7.1 and 7.2, has two clearly differentiated periods, around the axis of the ambiguous year 1920. From 1917 to 1920 the movement was upward to the astonishingly high total of 1920. The length of strikes and the number lost fell from

1917 to 1918, and remained at the same level approximately in 1919, before both indices rose in 1920. In this period wages were the cause behind over 50% of all the strikes for which information is available. From 1921 to 1923, the effects of the economic crisis are apparent. The number of strikes fell drastically in 1921, but went up again to almost half the 1920 figure, remaining constant in 1923. The length of strikes also increased in 1920 and 1921, though they became shorter in 1922 and 1923. In these years fewer strikes were won, and more lost. The advantage to the workers of 1917-1920 had passed to the employers in 1921-1923.

#### Strikes and organization 1917-1923

The workforce may have been at an advantage in the years from 1917 to 1920 in that the employers were willing to concede wage increases, but this in itself does not explain how they were able to take advantage of this situation.

The answer must lie in the organization which was adopted following the Congrès de Sants, firstly in Catalonia and rapidly in all those parts of Spain where anarcho-syndicalism had a hearing. This is shown in diagram form in Fig. 7.1; it can be seen that its base resided in the section of a syndicate; the different sections were drawn together in each workplace by the Syndicate. Then all the syndicates in each locality were drawn together in the local federation, and through it the Comarcal and regional federations. Locality therefore played a strong cohesive force in the new organization, reflecting the strong cohesive role it played in Catalan and Spanish working class life. There was also scope for syndicates to meet, in the Regional Congresses, to discuss professional matters.

Nearly every historian has spoken of the new organization decided upon

at the Congrès de Sants, as a kind of centralization, yet it would seem evident from this diagram that centralization of this complex structure was impossible. Co-ordination, however, was facilitated by this model, and this was the last link in the C.N.T. project, enabling the syndicate to capitalize upon neighbourhood solidarity, and to expand enormously in a short period in the whole of Spain, to 714,028 members in late 1919 as observed earlier.

#### Repression and the downfall of the C.N.T. project

It remains to speculate upon the reasons for the failure of this project in the years 1920-1923. Part of the reason lay in the direct repression exercised by the authorities, part in the terrorism which plagued all Spain and particularly Barcelona, and part in the failure of the syndicates to affect the consciousness of other sectors of society and to win them over from the Lliga project. Thus in Barcelona they failed to enter into alliance with the petty bourgeoisie, and they were therefore unable to gain tactical alliances to withstand the onslaught of the authorities, nor did they avoid alienating the middle classes. Secondly they did not function well in clandestinity and concerted action proved very difficult to organize.

To illustrate and analyze these processes, a highly successful strike in Barcelona, that of La Canadenca will be discussed, followed by an examination of a vital field for consciousness raising, the schools, and finally, the failure of the C.N.T. to create a counterculture to existing social attitudes, will be demonstrated through the analysis of the Barcelona Transport strike of 1923.

## CHAPTER 8

SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF THE NEW SYNDICAL ORGANIZATION:  
THE STRIKE OF LA CANADENCA, FEBRUARY-MARCH 1919 AND  
THE GENERAL STRIKE OF MARCH-APRIL 1919

## INTRODUCTION

The events of 1909, 1917 and 1918 had taught the Barcelona workers that insurrectionary protest was not the way to achieve changes in working conditions or in the political and social order. By 1918 a new leadership had emerged within the C.N.T. and had effected a fundamental reorganization at the Congrès de Sants. It was this reorganization which permitted the successful strike of La Canadencia in early 1919. The unity shown by the working class movement on this occasion led to an overvaluation by members and leaders of the capabilities of the movement and a second strike from March to April 1919 resulted in defeat. During the course of the two strikes fundamental changes in attitude and in organization took place within the Barcelona middle classes and within the relationship these had with the military. These changes were to have important consequences for the working class in Barcelona and in all Spain.

## THE CANADENCA STRIKE, FEBRUARY-MARCH 1919

The genesis of the strike

The strike of La Canadencia<sup>(1)</sup> began in the invoice section of the offices of Riegos y Fuerzas del Ebro, a filial enterprise of La Canadencia at the end of January 1919 when a few eventuals, casual workers, were transferred to the permanent staff, resulting in a drop in wages of those concerned. Unwilling to accept this decrease the workers concerned appealed to the Sindicat Únic de l'Aigua, Gas i Electricitat which was then being formed in the plant, a move which resulted in their being sacked.<sup>(2)</sup>

Three days later the other 140 workers in the invoice department began a go-slow in support of those who had been dismissed and in defence of the right to join a union. The strike therefore developed away from being strictly a labour problem into the political issue of the recognition of unions by management.<sup>(3)</sup>

The action of the management was to call in the police to eject the invoice clerks. This provoked the solidarity of the other sections of the enterprise and on 8 February all the workers of La Canadencia were on strike. The same day a number of workers at one of the two other electricity producing enterprises in Catalunya, La Energía Eléctrica de Cataluña began a strike in solidarity.

On 12 February one of the meter readers, Joaquim Baró, was killed in an atentado. It would appear that he had refused to strike; other cases of intimidation were known to have occurred.<sup>(4)</sup> The conflict spread to all the other electricity producers and began to worry the authorities since so many of the factories in and around Barcelona were dependent on electricity for their motive power.<sup>(5)</sup> A meeting on the 14th in the Palau de la Generalitat of the directors of La Canadencia, La Energía

Eléctrica and the Catalana de Gas i Electricitat under the presidency of Puig i Cadafalch, president of the Mancomunitat, failed to find any solution. (6)

Strikes were also occurring in other sectors such as the printing departments of El Diluvio, among the carters and the Sociedad de Cocheros y Chauffers la Fraternal. A strike of the textile workers began on 17 February. (7) In this disturbed panorama any further action by the Canadenca strikers was likely to find support.

The electricity is cut off

On 21 February all the workers of La Canadenca abandoned the Barcelona plant, thereby worsening the industrial situation. Since the workers in the hydro-electric stations remained at their posts, electricity continued to arrive at Barcelona; however it was not distributed. The effect was immediate: the trams stopped circulating and there was no light. The tram company, which had been given ten minutes notice according to Solano, had been able to send orders by telephone to all the lines that the users should be repaid their fares and made to leave the trams which were then to be returned as fast as possible to the sheds. Out of the 600 trams on the streets when the ten minute warning was given, only 70 had to be abandoned awaiting collection later. (8)

As there was no light the majority of the shops closed once it had grown dark while the public buildings were illuminated with candles. The Town Hall workers were sent home, leaving only the Municipal police at their posts. (9)

At a quarter to five the authorities assembled in the Capitanía General to discuss the situation, the Captain General being in favour of declaring an Estado de Guerra whilst the Civil Governor thought it unnecessary.

The meeting ended at six thirty p.m., and was followed by a press conference in which the Governor gave notice that the Canadencia was to be taken over by the State for the duration, though he avoided the question of whether or not the workers would be militarized. For the moment the army engineers would be sent in though the rest of the troops would be confined to barracks. The director of the Canadencia, Mr. Lawton, who had been present at the meeting had already consented to these arrangements, as had the English Ambassador. (10)

A further meeting, to exchange impressions on the strike, was held at seven o'clock between the Army authorities, the Civil Governor, Mr. Lawton and the engineers of the Canadencia, and representatives of the two other electricity companies. Since the personnel of the hydro-electric plant at Tremp in the province of Lleida were also on strike there was now no electricity at all arriving in Barcelona. If the army and navy engineers had to do all the work of returning the service to normal it would take four days; the strike which had stopped seventy per cent of the industry of the province of Barcelona was therefore on with a vengeance. (11)

At eight o'clock the tram company began collecting the trams which were still in the streets, using lorries and horses to tow them. In the c/. Pelaió a group stoned a tram at about nine o'clock and a shot was fired. The Guardia Municipal, carrying torches, had to intervene, but no other trouble was experienced. (12)

The work of taking over the Canadencia proceeded rapidly; on the same night of the 21st the lighting was restored in some areas and the service was normal by the following night though it was to be cut again on the 25th. (13)



Governmental crisis and stalemate

Meanwhile the Romanones government was running into parliamentary difficulties due to an internal crisis over the nationalisation of the Canadenca. The crisis was solved by replacing Argente, the Ministro de Abastecimientos, by the unconditional Romanones supporter Leonardo Rodriguez. Romanones announced however that his stay in power would only be temporary, for the duration of the crisis only. As Solano observes 'La verdad és que no resultaba muy apetitoso por aquellos días el ejercicio del poder'.<sup>(14)</sup> On the 27th Romanones suspended the Cortes. Thus, while the local authorities maintained a united front throughout the strike, the Government was in disarray, a reversal of the situation during the Setmana Tràgica, and one which left the initiative firmly in the hands of the local authorities.

On the 25th a meeting between the Governor, the Mayor of Barcelona, the President of the Mancomunitat and various members of the strike committee achieved nothing.<sup>(15)</sup> On the 27th the tram workers came out, in the first action of their newly formed syndicate. They were followed by the workers of the other two electricity producers, the employees of Gas Lebon and Catalana de Gas, the two gas producers and the employees of the Sociedad General de Aguas. The Sindicat Únic d'Aigua, Gas i Electricitat had arrived at a complete strike throughout the whole branch of production.

The Government response was cautious, reinforcing the garrison and sending a pair of warships to the port. Otherwise the policy was to wait and see. The union response was not to formulate any demands to the government, in keeping with the policy of direct negotiation with management agreed at the Congrès de Sants. As the committee put it in a letter to the Civil Governor:

Si el Estado se ha incautado de los intereses de la citada Compañía La Canadencia y siendo el Gobierno el causante de la suspensión de garantías constitucionales, de la clausura de los Sindicatos obreros y de la prisión de obreros a consecuencia de la suspensión de garantías, la Comisión solo accederá a tratar con V.E. con la garantía absoluta del levantamiento de las citadas limitaciones. Si, por el contrario, la Compañía continúa al frente de sus intereses, el Comité discutirá directamente con ella la solución del conflicto. (16)

On 1 March the Mayor of Barcelona, after days of trying, finally persuaded the Committee to present their conditions which would have to be met for further discussion to take place. These were:

- Primera. Libertad de los presos detenidos a causa de la suspensión de garantías.
- Segunda. Apertura de los Sindicatos clausurados.
- Tercera. Inmunidad del Comité de huelga y de las Juntas y Sindicatos.
- Cuarta. Plazo de dos días para recibir la contestación oficial. (17)

These demands were transmitted to Madrid by the Mayor. The response from Morote, Subsecretario de la Presidencia, was that the limit of forty-eight hours was too short a time in which to study the problem completely. On receiving this news the strike committee decided to pursue the matter no further.

The only other initiative came from the Company, which published a large advertisement in the press inviting the workers to return to their work and stating that those who had not returned by 6 March would be considered sacked. On 7 March, by which date not one of the strikers had returned, the Government therefore played its hand, announcing the militarization of all the workers in Barcelona in the lighting, electrical energy, gas and water services. (18)

#### Resistance to militarization and red censorship

There were two immediate consequences of the government decree. The first was one of the few acts of violence associated with the strike, the explosion of a bomb in carrer Corcega near the Henrich printing works

which caused one death and several injuries.<sup>(19)</sup> The second was one of the more original features of working class response found in the strike, the censura roja or red censorship. The Sindicat Únic d'Arts Gràfiques informed the directors of the Barcelona newspapers that it would impede the publication of any news connected with the strike which it considered harmful to the workers' interests. The reasons for this move were described by Piera:

Aquest pas era motivat pel fet que la nostra premsa havia estat suprimida i, apart de les publicacions clandestines, no teníem altres mitjans de comunicació amb els vaguistes. Cal també reconèixer que aquesta situació no ens era nova i que estavem acostumats a editar les nostres publicacions com podíem, ja que, molt sovint, ens era negada la legalitat. Però en aquella ocasió, observant la injustícia que reflectia la premsa, decidíem reaccionar. Els òrgans conservadors publicaven tot el que volien en defensa dels interessos patronals i "estrangers", com eren els de La Canadenca, mentre que els diaris progressistes eren censurats dràsticament si intentaven fer sortir alguna informació que ens pogués beneficiar. Així, doncs, no ens quedà altre recurs que llançar aquesta consigna: "O tots gaudim de la llibertat de premsa o ningú se'n beneficiarà". D'aquesta manera, el Sindicat de les Arts Gràfiques fou l'encarregat de portar l'acord de l'anomenada "censura roja", deixa en igualtat de condicions les autoritats, els patrons i els treballadors.<sup>(20)</sup>

The militant interpretation of the censura roja by the typographers caught the newspaper editors by surprise and the red censorship was to last until the typographers themselves went on strike on the 15th in support of the strike committee in their meetings with the Patronal and Morote, the government representative. They returned on the 18th to give the news of the meeting and the agreements reached and then stopped work again in support of the general strike the following week. On their return to work in mid-April the newspaper proprietors, following the example of the proprietors of Madrid who were opposing the censura roja then being practised in their enterprises, united in opposition against the syndicate and effectively brought the red censorship to an end.

On the 9th the Captain General published a bando outlining the legal situation for the strikers and ordering them to report to the recruiting

station in military zone 27.<sup>(21)</sup> The Sindicat d'Arts Gràfiques refused to publish it, and it did not appear in any newspapers apart from the Diario de Barcelona and El Progreso. The syndicate imposed a fine of 1,000 pesetas on the former and 2,000 on the latter, as well as fining the union representatives 50 and 100 pesetas respectively for allowing publication of the bando. In answer to the bando the Strike Committee published a circular which was profusely distributed among the workers, stating that anyone who accepted the ruling would have to take the consequences in his own person.<sup>(22)</sup> In spite of the four-year prison sentence which was threatened against all those who did not go to the recruiting station, the workers refused to be mobilized. Large-scale arrests were therefore carried out and those detained led to Montjuich in long files.<sup>(23)</sup>

On 12 March the tram workers stopped again, both in solidarity with the strikers of La Canadencia and in support of their own demands. The public transport system was completely paralyzed, but only momentarily, since the tram service was partially renewed at midday of the same day by military engineers and the Soldats de Quota, who offered themselves voluntarily.<sup>(24)</sup> Whether or not their action was voluntary, the fact that these soldiers, from the monied middle classes, lent themselves to strike-breaking activities, and shows that these middle classes were not passively accepting the strikes and were moving towards an offensive anti-working class position, as would be made abundantly clear during the general strike of April.<sup>(25)</sup>

On the 13th the Romanones government, preoccupied by the situation in Barcelona, declared the estado de guerra in the city and province, and named a new civil governor, Carles Montañés, who, as was seen in the Introduction, was a key figure in the foundation of the Canadencia and was now an important engineer there. Politically, Montañés was of Catalanist sympathies. As had become customary in these protests, the