Red Barcelona

Social protest and labour mobilization in the twentieth century

Edited by Angel Smith

London and New York

Red Barcelona

Barcelona is now one of the most glamorous cities in Europe, renowned for its *modernista* art and new post-Olympic Games architecture. For much of the twentieth century, however, it was better known as the 'Spanish Manchester', the 'city of the bombs' and 'rose of fire'. This reflected both its importance as the leading industrial centre of the Mediterranean and its revolutionary traditions, particularly the importance of anarchism within its labour movement.

Interest has often focused on the barricades and revolts of 'Picasso's Barcelona' at the turn of the century and the great social revolution unleashed by the Civil War and chronicled by George Orwell. This book explores this 'red' or 'red and black' heritage, and how it has been transformed as the century has progressed.

As one of Europe's great industrial and revolutionary centres Barcelona has been in need of a detailed social and cultural history, yet there is a paucity of detailed research. This book redresses the balance. Focusing on the entire twentieth century, it allows for the coverage of long-term trends, and deals with both classic and newer themes of labour history, such as:

- transformations within the labour process
- the development of and splits within the organized labour movement
- gender and labour
- labour and democratization
- the relationship between 'popular' and working-class protest, and between labour and nationalism

This novel and authoritative work will interest not only those working on Spain, but all scholars and students of comparative history.

Angel Smith is Lecturer in Modern Spanish History at the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of Leeds. He has published widely on Catalan and Spanish labour, and on nationalism and national identity in Spain. His books include *An Historical Dictionary of Spain* (1996), *Nationalism and the Nation in the Iberian Peninsula* (1996) (co-edited with Clare Mar-Molinero), *The Crisis of 1898: Colonial Redistribution and Nationalist Mobilization* (1999) (co-edited with Emma Dávila-Cox), and *Nationalism, Labour and Ethnicity* (1999) (co-edited with Stefan Berger). At present he is completing a history of labour and anarchism in Catalonia between 1898 and 1923.

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The truth is that we are slaves. Will we take this city? Just look at it, this splendid city, look at these lights, these flames, listen to these magnificent noises – automobiles, streetcars, music, voices, bird songs and footsteps, and the indiscernible rustle of silks and satins – to take this city with these hands, our hands, is it possible?

Victor Serge, *Birth of our Power*

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Important abbreviations and acronyms

AO	Alianza Obrera/Workers' Alliance
ASO	Alianza Sindical Obrera/Workers' Trade Union Alliance
BOC	Bloc Obrer i Camperol/Workers' and Peasants' Bloc
CADCI	Confederació Autònoma de Dependents de Comerç i de la Indústria de Catalunya/Autonomous Confederation of White-collar and Shop Workers
CC OO	Comisiones Obreras/Workers' Commissions
CNT	Confederación Nacional del Trabajo/National Labour Confederation
CONC	Comissió Obrera Nacional de Catalunya/Catalan National Workers' Commission
CRT	Confederació Regional del Treball/Regional Labour Confederation
FAI	Federación Anarquista Ibérica/Anarchist Iberian Federation
FOUS	Federación Obrera de Unidad Sindical/United Workers' Labour Federation.
FTN	Foment del Treball Nacional/Promotion of National Work
HOAC	Hermandad Obrera de Acción Católica/Workers' Brotherhood of Catholic Action
JOC	Juventud Obrera Católica/Catholic Workers' Youth
OSE	Organización Sindical Española/National Syndical Organization
PCE	Partido Comunista de España/Spanish Communist Party
POUM	Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista/Unified Marxist Workers' Party
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español/Spanish Socialist Workers' Party
PSUC	Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya/Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia
SO	Solidaridad Obrera/Worker Solidarity
TCV	Tres Classes de Vapor/Three Classes of Steam
UGT	Unión General de Trabajadores/General Workers' Union
USC	Unió Socialista de Catalunya/Catalan Socialist Union
USO	Unión Sindical Obrera/Workers' Trade Union Alliance

1 Barcelona through the European mirror

From red and black to claret and blue[1]

Angel Smith

Over the past decade Barcelona has become one of the most glamorous cities in Europe. It already enjoyed some reputation amongst cultural elites as the home of the young Pablo Picasso and capital of Salvador Dalí and Joan Miró's Catalonia. This reputation was greatly enhanced in the 1980s as the city's early twentieth-century *modernista* (Catalan Art Nouveau) architectural heritage came into fashion. Antoni Gaudí in particular came to be seen, for the first time, as an architect of international standing and his buildings were converted into major tourist attractions. The end of the 1980s saw the beginnings of a massive urban renewal programme which was to underpin the celebration of the 1992 Olympic Games and bring the city to wider attention. In a matter of five years Barcelona undertook probably the most ambitious urban and architectural development of any European city since the post-war reconstruction of western Europe. Part of the decaying industrial suburb of Poble Nou on the shoreline was razed to the ground and replaced by the Olympic Village, port leisure facilities and miles of new beaches. Across Barcelona, on the mountain of Montjuïc, the Olympic Ring of stadiums was built, and this was all accompanied by the construction of a new system of ring roads.

Barcelona in many respects became a very different city from that of the 1960s and 1970s. Yet just as important as real physical change was the new portrayal and imagination of the city. The old medieval centre – the Gothic Quarter – still retained its place in the affection of inhabitants and tourists. However, *modernista* Barcelona was pushed to the forefront, with buildings such as La Pedrera (Casa Milà), El Palau de la Música, and La Sagrada Família attaining the status of symbolic markers of identity. To this was added post-Olympic games Barcelona, with Richard Meier's Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art (MACBA) in the old Raval neighbourhood in the centre of town, Arata Isozaki's Palau Sant Jordi indoor stadium on Montjuïc, and Sir Norman Foster's telecommunications tower on the Collserola hills near Tibidabo.

This development has produced a particular reading of the city's past and future. On the one hand there is an emphasis on novelty and innovation: *modernisme* – the avant-garde of the early twentieth century – has been blended with post-modernist *fin de siècle* architectural styles. This image has been reinforced

as the city has de-industrialized over the past twenty years to become a major service entrepôt, and has been given a fillip by the intelligent policies pursued by the local administration – widespread pedestrianization in the centre accompanied by the construction of hard squares in which sculptors have been given free rein. A thriving design industry has emerged. And a result of the general ideological context has been a rabid search for the new, be this in the field of bars and discotheques or cuisine and fashion.

Yet this has been intertwined with a rather different reading of the city: Barcelona as a focal point of the Catalan nation. This is not a new phenomenon. With the growth of Catalan regionalism and subsequently nationalism amongst the city's middle classes, an attempt was made from the late nineteenth century to order the city's toponymic landscape in patriotic terms. An antecedent was the decision, in 1863, to put the naming of the streets of the new Eixample (Extension) in the hands of the Romantic Renaixença poet, Víctor Balaguer, with the result that its names commemorated the great men (there were no women) and glorious deeds which were beginning to be incorporated into regionalist Catalan currents. The process which Balaguer had begun was rapidly reversed by the harsh, Spanish nationalist, dictatorship of General Franco. However, it was resumed again with the transition to democracy in the late 1970s, and it is now the case that a high percentage of street names, plaques and statues recall the myths and aspirations of Catalan nationhood.

Catalanist symbolism was also more subtly incorporated into the *modernista* architectural works of the early twentieth century, and anyone wishing to fathom their meaning need go no further than consult Robert Hughes's best seller, *Barcelona*.[2] This is of no little importance. If toponymic reference points are like 'public documents' which help to structure group loyalties, to create a sense of identity and to interpret new events, then the lens through which the Barcelona citizen views the world is that of the Catalan nation. Moreover, this is not incompatible with the new post-Olympic Barcelona. From the early twentieth century Catalan nationalism incorporated modernity into its ideological arsenal (as against the supposed 'backwardness' of Spain and Spaniards), and so the Catalanist narrative attempts to paint past and future harmoniously onto a single canvas. Indeed, the toponymic universe is reinforced by exhibitions, articles and Catalan television programmes in which nationhood is a central feature. As a result, it is probably true to say that, both for the citizens of Barcelona and the cultured tourist, the unfolding of the Catalan nation is the dominant historical narrative. Thus, for example, despite its title, the central theme of Robert Hughes's excellent work is the cultural – and in particular architectural – underpinnings of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Catalan nationalism.[3] And, more crudely, brochures and guides draw our attention to: 'Barcelona… the capital of a one thousand year old nation… united by a distinctive collective consciousness.'[4]

The dominance of this narrative must be put in the context of politics and culture at the end of the Franco regime. Under Franco's rule the granting of Catalan political autonomy was increasingly seen as consubstantial with the

attainment of democracy, and democratic Catalan nationalism contrasted with reactionary, authoritarian, right-wing Spanish nationalism. The major opposition parties – which after the death of Franco would take over control of the institutions of Catalan political life – took on this mantle and saw themselves as following in the footsteps of early twentieth-century Catalanism. In the centre was to be found Jordi Pujol and his Convergència i Unió coalition, which dovetailed with more ruralist and historicist currents, while the major left-wing parties, the Socialist PSC-PSOE and Communist PSUC (Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya, Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia), inherited the tradition of left-wing and Marxist-influenced Catalanism, which had grown up between 1914 and 1939.

For these different groups Catalanism could provide a workable and flexible cultural and ideological paradigm, which encompassed both recourse to tradition and modernity. The powerful labour movement which had emerged from the 1960s (see Chapter Ten) could, to an important degree, be incorporated into this framework, for it did not threaten the stability of the transition to democracy (a primary consideration of all the major opposition parties) and, under the guidance of the PSUC and, later, PSC-PSOE, integrated Catalan autonomy into its political demands.

This was not, however, the case of much of the labour movement of the years 1898 to 1939. As the chapters in this book make abundantly clear, these years had been marked by at times virulent social conflict, punctuated by general strikes and church burnings, and capped, after the onset of civil war in July 1936, by the most far ranging social revolution in twentieth-century western Europe. Moreover, the most powerful grouping within the labour movement for much of the period were the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, who were later very much eclipsed during the Franco regime. As a result, there is a dichotomy between the dominant historical representation of Barcelona today and the vision of Barcelona within Catalonia, Spain and abroad in the first half of the twentieth century.

From the early nineteenth century, Spain was idealized by Romantic writers in Europe as a land of strong passions, brave men and fiery women. Yet it was also backward and 'African', the home of cruel and inquisitorial governments. As Pere Gabriel has noted, from the first decade of the twentieth century some writers began increasingly to portray Barcelona as anomalous within the Spanish context (see Chapter Three). It was an industrial city which in cultural terms strove to be 'European', with its sights very much set on Paris.[5] But with the onset of anarchist bomb outrages in the 1890s, followed by the growth of an anarcho-syndicalist labour movement from the following decade, it was also depicted as Red Barcelona: 'the city of bombs' or 'rose of fire'.

In the late 1970s and 1980s this 'red' or 'red and black' heritage was awkward. The reason should be seen in more broadly Spanish, rather than solely Catalan terms. For the transition to democracy to succeed it was believed that a compromise between the various social strata and political groupings within society was necessary. The new democracy was a democracy

for all and therefore events which brought up memories of bitter social strife were not dwelt on. Nevertheless, it was particularly problematic in Catalonia, where the key role of the anarchists and 'priest hating' republicans between 1900 and 1939 induced painful and difficult memories of severe internal conflict.

Early twentieth-century Barcelona was a city riven by social tensions. At the time few in the city had any sympathy for the Spanish state, which was seen by Catalanists as the agent of Castilian imperialism and by leftists as a tool of social elites to repress the working class. Yet it would be difficult to argue that Catalonia was a model of social harmony. As we shall see in Chapters Two and Three, from the turn of the century anarcho-syndicalists began to grow in strength. In 1910 they founded the CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo/the National Labour Confederation), which in the immediate aftermath of the First World War would integrate much of the city's industrial working class into its fold. Concomitantly, at a political level, under the captaincy of Alejandro Lerroux, the 'Emperor of the Paral·lel',[6] a demagogic far-left republican movement came to the fore. Both these organizations inherited and further propagated the fiercely anti-clerical and insurrectionary tradition of Barcelona left-wing politics. This was accompanied by the rise of an equally strident middle-class Catalanist movement, which rejected Spanish claims to nationhood and demanded political autonomy. These political divisions were matched by widening social cleavages. Faced with severe labour protest, much of the industrial elite rejected liberal democracy and independent labour unions (see Chapters Two and Nine). Within the Catalanist movement there were left and right wings, but in the early years of the century a conservative current predominated, with close links with employers. This produced a negative reaction in leftist republican and anarchist circles, where Catalanism was often seen as synonymous with bourgeois interests.[7]

From a Catalanist perspective, the image of Barcelona, the fulcrum of the Catalan nation, rent violently by conflicts between its sons and daughters, was an unpalatable one, and has fuelled interpretations of the city's history, current throughout the twentieth century, which have tended to turn social tension outwards, and focus attention on the struggle between 'Catalans' and the Spanish state. In the 1970s this was accompanied by the rise of a 'popular frontist' theoretical schema which has, mistakenly in my view, posited that a high degree of unity could be seen within Catalonia's so-called 'popular classes', and that 'progressive' Catalanism provided an umbrella ideology.[8] A similar framework can also been seen in some recent English-speaking scholars' attempts to blend the seductive turn-of-the-century worlds of *modernisme*, the bohemian cultural elite and the anarchist groups. Thus the title of a book by Temma Kaplan, *Red City, Blue Period: Social Movements in Picasso's Barcelona*, evokes both the general strikes and barricades of the anarchists and republicans, and the artistic circle of the young Pablo Picasso.

In her book Kaplan argues that the *modernista* artists of the famous Els Quatre Gats café combined Parisian-inspired avant-garde art with popular artistic tradi-

tions, especially shadow and puppet theatre. The implication is that they reached out to a wide audience.[9] One must, however, be very careful in trying to establish links between the Art Nouveau world and anarchist and working-class milieux. In Barcelona there would be no real equivalent to the permeable frontier between the avant-garde and anarchism in 1890s Paris. In part this needs relating to the violent repression suffered by Barcelona anarchism in the 1890s: fear no doubt was a factor in distancing the artistic fraternity. Furthermore, the leading figures of artistic *modernisme*, Ramon Casas and Santiago Rusiñol, came from rich Barcelona families and (perhaps because of the Parisian example) were, in fact, able to connect quite rapidly with their potential bourgeois clientele. Casas on occasion chose social subjects for his paintings – most notably the cavalry charge by the Civil Guard during the 1902 general strike (*La Carga/ The Charge*) – but this was above all for dramatic effect. Rather than a centre of popular culture Els Quatre Gats itself was a rather elitist establishment in which 'the well-off of Barcelona filled the restaurant and their children filled the puppet theatre'.[10] This was reflected in politics. Artists like Casas were above all concerned with Spanish 'backwardness' and this led them to sympathize with the Catalanist movement, which grew rapidly from the turn of the century. Only a small group of intellectual anarchists – grouped around the magazine *L'Avenir* – tried to come to terms with *modernisme* and Catalan nationalism. Majority currents in Lerrouxist republicanism and anarchism, as we have noted, saw Catalanism as bourgeois and so were critical of *modernisme* itself.[11]

Younger cash-strapped painters, like Pablo Picasso and Isidre Nonell, visited cafes and risqué music halls (*cafés cantantes*) in the popular and working-class Fifth District and the Paral·lel, across the Rambles from the Quatre Gats.[12] They also painted the marginalized in society – prostitutes, beggars, gypsies and the like. Yet this does not seem to have been matched by any political commitment. Hence there were no contacts, as far as I am aware, established between the *modernista* artistic community and the foremost attempt to develop an intellectual anarchist movement, Francisco Ferrer's Modern School. Certainly, Picasso himself had little interest in politics.[13]

Anarchists were even less likely to fraternize with the architectural representatives of *modernisme*. In fact, two of the leading figures in the movement, Antoni Gaudí and Josep Puig i Cadafalch, were staunch conservatives who were critical of the paganism of artistic *modernisme*, and found inspiration in Catalonia's Catholic Romanesque and Gothic past. Gaudí's principal patron was Eusebi Güell, a man at the very pinnacle of Barcelona's 'good families', and therefore seen in working-class circles as one of the 'big fish' who was keeping the workers enslaved (despite the fact that he himself was a responsible paternalist employer).[14] Güell had, furthermore, married the sister of Claudi López Bru, the second Marquis of Comillas, well known as the pious anti-liberal who was behind the creation of a movement of Catholic workers' associations (seen by the Left as yellow unions). The Marquis of Comillas also had extensive colonial business interests. After Spain's bloody defeat in the 1898 Spanish-American War, in working-class and left-wing circles colonial

adventures became massively unpopular, with the result that both Güell and Comillas also came to be viewed as representatives of scheming clerical-colonial interests, who sacrificed the workers who had to fight the wars for their own financial gain. In July 1909, during protests against the government decision to send reservists to Morocco, shouts of 'Death to Güell and Comillas!' were to be heard (Chapter Two).

Antoni Gaudí could not, of course, escape this association. His now world-renowned Sagrada Família church, which he had been commissioned to build in the 1880s by the arch-conservative Spiritual Association for Devotion to Saint Joseph, was in particular seen on the Left as an attempt to maintain the symbols of outmoded clerical dominance into the twentieth century. It is perhaps not surprising then that two days after the outbreak of the Civil War a mob broke into the church's crypt, desecrated the tombs and set fire to the archive and studio workshop.[15] This was, however, only part of a wider assault on the Church. The danger had first become apparent in July 1909 when, during so-called Tragic Week, the anti-Moroccan war protests had been followed by several days of anti-clerical rioting and church burning. However, the denouement was to come during the Civil War, for while leftist and particularly anarchist squads rounded up and executed priests and right-wingers, and collectivized Barcelona industry, the haute bourgeoisie abjured their Catalan nationalist past and frantically poured funds into General Franco's war effort.

The attempt to externalize social conflict has also produced a strong political and historiographical current which claimed that leftist republicans and anarchists were an outside 'Spanish' phenomenon, imposed on Catalan political life. This line was first developed by early twentieth-century Catalanists, who maintained that Lerroux had been sent to Barcelona by the Spanish authorities in order to suffocate the growth of Catalan nationalism, and that his followers were a rabble of Aragonese and Valencian immigrant workers, non-Catalan Spanish bureaucrats and military personnel. From the 1920s this accusation was used to discredit the CNT's working-class base, who were portrayed as ignorant, illiterate southern Spanish Murcians (*murcianos*). The picture lived on in academic studies in the 1970s. Thus the historian Santiago Albertí still maintained in 1972 that Lerroux was able to succeed in Barcelona during the first decade of the twentieth century in part because of support from non-Catalan immigrants.[16] And Jaume Vicens Vives – in many respects a great modernizer of Catalan historiography – argued that the radicalizing influence on Catalan labour was, from the mid-nineteenth century, the *patuleia*, a floating, semi-employed *classe dangereuse* of rural origin, who, from the turn of the century, were increasingly of non-Catalan, Spanish extraction.[17] Recent studies have, however, stressed the importance of artisanal and skilled workers in early twentieth-century union organization and radical politics, and confirmed that in the 1900s the social base of republican and anarchists movements was to a large extent made up of Catalan workers (see Chapter Two). From 1918 migration grew massively and the CNT's rank-and-file included an increasing number of non-Catalan, Spanish workers. Yet as Nick Rider and

Chris Ealham convincingly argue in Chapters Four and Five, they were radicalized by their experience in Barcelona rather than bringing any kind of anarchistic predisposition with them from their homeland.

As noted, Barcelona's reputation as a centre of radical politics was first gained during a number of anarchist bomb outrages in the 1890s. It was during these years that the city first attracted European-wide attention. The most horrific spectacle was provided by the anarchist terrorist who dropped two bombs (one of which exploded) onto the bourgeois audience of the Liceo Opera House in November 1893. The result was carnage, with 22 dead and at least 35 seriously injured. Hundreds of arrests followed, torture was used to extract false confessions of guilt and seven anarchists were finally executed (six for a previous bomb attack). Even more dramatic in its consequences was the 1896 Canvis Nous bombing, in which a bomb was dropped on the Corpus Christi procession on Easter Sunday. The police reacted by rounding up several hundred anarchists, labour activists and even left-wing intellectual sympathizers. Torture was again used and five men were finally executed by *garrote vil*.

The torture and executions were carried out in the military castle on Montjuïc. As we have seen, the mountain was the focus of the 1992 Olympic Games. Gardens and attractions were built on its slopes from the second decade of the century and the castle was finally handed over to the local authorities in 1960. But throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was a potent reminder of Castilian power over Catalonia (the city was in fact bombed into submission from the castle after a revolt in 1842). And for the Left and the anarchists in particular, from the 1870s onward 'the accursed castle (*castillo maldito*)' came to symbolize the oppression to which they were subject by the Spanish authorities.

Indeed, in 1897 after news of the latest atrocities emerged, anarchists and then left-wing republicans launched the so-called 'Montjuïc Campaign', demanding a judicial review of the trials and the release of the remaining prisoners. It was taken up by sympathizers abroad, especially in France. Quite large demonstrations were held in major European capitals, including Paris and London, in which the 'inquisitors' of the 'Black Spain' were denounced. This was to be followed by similar if less intense campaigns between 1901 and 1903 for the release of prisoners held from the late nineteenth century (the Mano Negra and Jérez trials), and in protest at the imprisonment and torture of workers from the Andalusian town of Alcalá del Valle in 1903. Part of these campaigns' relative success can no doubt be put down to stereotypical images of Spain in Europe as the bastion of Torquemada and the Inquisition. But they must also be seen in the context of a wider European struggle between conservative, increasingly authoritarian, currents – represented in Latin countries most clearly by the Catholic Church – and the secular Left. The first pan-European manifestation of this kind was the French Dreyfus Affair, and the initiators of the Montjuïc campaign very much saw their struggle as its continuation.[18] Indeed, the Spanish Civil War of 1936–9 can, in some respects, be viewed as the final episode of this confrontation.

The image of Red Barcelona was consolidated over the next four decades of the twentieth century. The years 1906–8 saw a large number of less spectacular bombings, at least some of which can be attributed to an ex-anarchist police informer named Joan Rull. It was during this time that, in one of the most comic examples of life imitating art, Barcelona's elites, impressed it seems by the exploits of Sherlock Holmes, paid for Inspector Charles Arrow of Scotland Yard to come over and try and solve the crimes. The fact that he had never been to Spain and spoke no Castilian, let alone Catalan, no doubt hindered his activities, and the supposed head of the anarchist bombers was never caught.[19] But most anarchists in fact rejected terrorism, or at least indiscriminate bombings, after 1898 and, as has been noted, from the first decade of the century were to collaborate in the building of a syndicalist labour movement. Contacts were established between Barcelona unions and the powerful French syndicalist confederation, the Confédération General du Travail (CGT), and some attempt was made to launch joint campaigns. Following the recommendations of the CGT's Bourges Conference, a number of Catalan trade unions tried to proclaim an eight-hour day on 1 May 1906, and in the spring of 1909 there was again wide support in French leftist circles for another campaign launched by Francisco Ferrer, an anarchist intellectual and founder of the Modern School, and a new Catalan labour confederation, Solidaridad Obrera (the forerunner of the CNT), in favour of the release of the Alcalá del Valle prisoners.[20]

More dramatic were events which followed Tragic Week in July 1909. Once again the Government reacted with repression. Hundreds were arrested, and on this occasion five men were executed in Montjuïc, including Ferrer. Ferrer had certainly been involved in conspiratorial activities. He believed that only violence would bring about the overthrow of the monarchy, and it is likely that he had been involved in the plot to blow up King Alfonso XIII on the day of his wedding to Victoria Eugenia of Battenberg (Queen Victoria's granddaughter) in May 1906, a charge for which he was acquitted.[21]

Ferrer had already built an international reputation for himself as Spain's leading rationalist educator. He had been based in France between 1885 and 1901, where he had established contacts with leading masonic, left-republican and anarchist figures. On arriving in Barcelona in 1901 (with a small fortune he had inherited from a well-do-do Parisian spinster, Jeanne Ernestine Meunié, to whom he had given Spanish classes) he established the Modern School, which was meant to provide an alternative to the Catholic Church's private schools. For a couple of years, before it was closed in the wake of the 1906 attack on the King, the school became a point of attraction for left-wing intellectuals.

The arrest and trial of Ferrer after Tragic Week became something of a *cause célèbre*. His international contacts on the European Left were mobilized and a new campaign launched against the 'Spanish inquisitors'.[22] The Left could adopt the moral high ground because Ferrer had nothing to do with the riots, and because he had been tried by a military court and given little opportunity to prove his innocence. In the press and, soon after, in numerous books and pamphlets, the events of Barcelona were discussed throughout Europe. On the

Left he was presented as a lay saint, whose educational work on behalf of the poor was brutally suppressed by Catholic reaction. Large demonstrations were held in the major European capitals. Most dramatic were events in Paris; when news of the execution reached the city on 13 October, great crowds semi-spontaneously converged on the Spanish embassy. The police had to block off surroundings streets and there followed several hours of rioting. The following day an official demonstration was held, led by Jean Jaurès, which, according to Victor Serge, attracted the no doubt exaggerated figure of half a million people.[23] Finally, in the face of these protests King Alfonso XIII decided it would be prudent for the Prime Minister, Antonio Maura, to step down.

Red Barcelona's reputation was consolidated during the First World War, during which the city lived through one of the most dramatic periods of its history. War-time neutrality brought rapid economic development. This was accompanied by the rise of a new nouveau-riche class of industrialists who, reputedly, enjoyed to the full the new French-style cabarets springing up on and around the Paral·lel. The period also saw the rapid growth of the CNT, and a dramatic upsurge in labour protest. At the same time there was an influx of German spies and agents provocateurs, attracted by the fact that Barcelona was a neutral port which supplied the Allies with clothing and war matériel. Five years of gun battles on the streets of Barcelona between CNT 'action squads' and military and employer-backed hitmen ended with a military coup (led by the Captain General of Barcelona, Miguel Primo de Rivera) in September 1923. All-out repression of the CNT between 1920–2, and the murder of over a hundred of its activists, again led to protests in France. As Pere Gabriel points out (Chapter Three), it was during these years that in western Europe Barcelona became a favoured scenario for the new genre of the police novel.

However, if between 1914 and 1923 Barcelona took on the appearance of 'the Mediterranean Chicago' *avant la lettre*,[24] by the 1930s it had become one of the symbols of Spanish resistance against international fascism. In 1931 a broad coalition of democratic and leftist forces made King Alfonso XIII flee the country and proclaimed the Second Republic. But after five turbulent years, in July 1936 sections of the military rose against the regime, plunging Spain into a fearful three-year-long civil war. This at a time when fascism was on the advance in Europe and international tensions appeared increasingly likely to lead to war. In this context Spain would, for the first time since the seventeenth century, become the focus of European attention. For left-liberal and socialist intellectuals, and for broad sections of the labour movement, the Spanish Republic symbolized the fight for democracy and freedom against the fascist threat. Almost immediately after the fighting began the Comintern started to recruit volunteers – most, but not all, Communists – and formed the International Brigades, who first saw action on the Madrid front in November.

Over the previous decade and a half the anarchists' fortunes had been somewhat on the wane. Over much of western Europe syndicalist currents became increasingly marginal after the post-war years. Even the CGT broke with its syndicalist past. Furthermore, by the mid-1930s European Socialist and

Communist Parties were calling not for revolution but for broad democratic alliances or popular fronts against fascism. Within Catalonia itself the anarcho-syndicalists also lost some ground. The CNT had been repressed by the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–30). Between 1931 and 1932 it rapidly re-emerged as the strongest force in Barcelona labour politics. Nevertheless, over the next five years its position weakened. In part this can be explained by the fact that it became dominated by hard-liners, integrated within the FAI (the Federación Anarquista Ibérica/Anarchist Iberian Federation). Under their leadership the CNT carried out a number of insurrections against the Republic, causing a group of workers – the so-called *treintistas* – to split with the union. Other more moderate groups of workers also looked to negotiate with the Republic, with the overall result that by 1936, though the CNT was still the city's single most powerful union, Marxists, most of whom would unite to form the PSUC shortly after the war began, had attained significant backing (see Chapters Four, Five and Six).

These developments were at the heart of many of the misunderstandings of events in Barcelona during the Civil War amongst European commentators. The military uprising sparked a working-class revolution in the city and throughout urban Catalonia, which can be seen in many respects as the culmination of the anarchist tradition. When anti-Republican troops came onto the streets on the morning of 19 July 1936 they were confronted by armed, largely CNT workers, together with Assault and Civil Guards who had remained loyal to the Republic. Two days of virulent street fighting followed; the troops were finally defeated and many of those who had survived were killed on the spot. In the wake of the fighting, both the physiognomy of, and power relations within, the city were dramatically recast. Armed workers sped backwards and forwards, the initials CNT-FAI were painted on requisitioned cars, the bourgeois hat, collar and tie were replaced by proletarian overalls, men and women used the anarchist greeting of *salud*, and the flower sellers on the Rambles began making wreaths for CNT-FAI militiamen with red roses and red and black ribbons. Barricades were strewn throughout the city, and churches were ransacked and gutted. The state imploded, much of industry was collectivized (see Chapter Seven), and power fell into the hands of a plethora of workers' committees. More ominously, in the first months of the revolution anarchist patrol cars cruised through the silent night streets picking up and killing known or suspected right-wingers.[25] Revolutionary Barcelona was sharply characterized by the left-wing British journalist, John Langdon-Davies: 'the Fifth District, the Parallelo [sic], the suburbs, had broken through to the inner magic circle and made themselves masters of the Ramblas, Paseo de Gracia'.[26] Over the next six months this reordering of power relations was inevitably followed by seemingly more permanent efforts to reconfigure both historical memory and toponymic identity. The Vía Layetana, which cut through the centre of town, was renamed Vía Durruti, after the anarchist gunman turned militia leader, and the Plaça dels Angels, just by the central Plaça Catalunya, became the Plaça Francesc Ferrer (the Catalan spelling for Francisco Ferrer).

However, the revolutionary events in Barcelona received little sympathy abroad. The European right-wing press presented the war as a struggle between Christianity and red bolshevism. At the same time, on the Left, as has already been stressed, the emphasis was on the defence of Spanish democracy. Furthermore, within the republican camp there were powerful forces which wished to roll back the revolutionary tide. On the one hand, the more middle-class republicans and Catalanists feared the consequences of social revolution; on the other, Communists fell into line with Stalin's demand that they form a broad front with 'bourgeois democrats' in order not to alienate the democratic western powers from the Soviet Union. Indeed, the new Catalanist Communist Party, the PSUC, was close to the Catalanist camp and had been forged in conflict with the CNT (see Chapter 6). All these different groups also believed that to win the war and build the new society, state power had to be reconstructed. Some anarchist leaders, indeed, reluctantly agreed with this stance. They were, however, opposed by many rank-and-file militants, tension exploding in Barcelona during the so-called May Days of 1937: several days of street fighting in which anarchist militias, the smaller dissident communist party, the POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista/Unified Workers' Marxist Party), and their allies fought against the forces of the Republican state apparatus, backed up by the PSUC and Catalanist republicans, the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya.

Again the anarchists had the greatest support in the working-class suburbs. However, faced with the growing power of the reconstituted Republican state – and the lack of support from their own leadership, fearful of undermining the war effort – they had no choice but to desist. This was to be the anarchists' swan song. After the May Days the central state quickly took control of the war effort, and workers' committees were replaced by organs of state power. The changing balance of power was again reflected in the physiognomy and symbolism in the city. George Orwell (see below) has described how, when he returned to Barcelona in April 1937, after five months on the Aragonese front, the city had already taken on a more respectable, bourgeois air. The tensions were exteriorized in the use of flags, with the anarchist red and black countered by the Catalan 'four bars', flown by both the Catalan authorities and the PSUC. Each side tried to impose its own identity markers. This was, for example, reflected in the anarchists' decision to paint all the trams and taxis red and black, and to paint over the Catalan colours on all the city's tram stops. It was, therefore, of significant symbolic importance that after the May Days at the telephone exchange – where fighting had started – the anarchist colours were lowered and in their place was hoisted the Catalan flag.[27]

Abroad, in majority Left and liberal circles, the May events were seen as an attempted putsch against the democratic state, which could only aid the Francoists. The Communists effectively spread the lie that it had represented a fascist-inspired insurrection by the 'Trotskyist' POUM.[28] Indeed Barcelona would over the next weeks and months see a state offensive against the POUM for attempting to overthrow the state. It was declared illegal, its activists rounded

up and leadership tried, and its leader, Andreu Nin, secretly murdered by Soviet secret agents with the connivance of the Spanish Communist Party, the PCE (Partido Communista de España/Spanish Communist Party), and the PSUC. The Republican state came out with little credit. It did nothing to protect Nin, though at least it refused to countenance Communist plans for a reprise of the Moscow show trials.[29] In fact, direct news from Barcelona was scant. The International Brigaders were fighting on the Madrid front at that time, and in any case were likely to accept the Communist line. Only a relatively few foreign combatants, largely belonging to anti-Stalinist organizations, were to be found in Barcelona. Luckily, for both historical and literary reasons, among them was George Orwell. Orwell had arrived in Barcelona as a result of his contacts with the British Independent Labour Party, which can be regarded as a sister party of the POUM, determined to fight fascism. He was on leave in Barcelona in May and his account of the events provided both a sympathetic portrayal of the anarchist revolution and a powerful indictment of Stalinist communism. Indeed, first-hand experience of Stalinism in action – he had to flee the country because of involvement with the POUM – was a key formative experience without which the writing of both *Animal Farm* and *1984* would be difficult to imagine.[30]

The question of 'War versus Revolution' was probably the key polemic amongst republican exiles following defeat. However, it was only from the late 1960s that a more academic debate was initiated and the Spanish revolution came to wider attention. During the Franco regime the anarchists all but disappeared as a major opposition force. In the 1940s they had tried to reorganize and launch an urban guerrilla campaign against the authorities but were virtually annihilated. Yet from the 1960s new voices were raised in their defence, with a changed international political scene. On the one hand, destalinization, followed after a brief interlude by the seeming consolidation of the sclerotic Brezhnev regime, could leave few with many illusions regarding orthodox communism. At the same time, in the West the decade was to see the radicalization of sections of the youth and intelligentsia. Meanwhile in Spain itself, from the late 1960s the Franco regime began to weaken, and revolutionary ideologies briefly took root amongst the university population and the most militant sections of labour. This was an atmosphere in which more radical visions of the Civil War could emerge, which built on the anarchist-POUM belief that a deepening of the revolution would have made it possible to maintain the morale of the Republican forces, and, if the war had been lost, to conduct a guerrilla campaign against the Francoists. This, for example, was the position taken by Noam Chomsky in the United States and Pierre Broué and Emile Terminé in France.[31]

However, from the late 1970s the atmosphere became less favourable. We have already noted how in Spain and Catalonia the climate turned against radical leftist politics. To this may be added the general perception in western academic circles that class lines were becoming increasingly blurred, and that the importance of class in past societies may have been exaggerated.

This no doubt helps explain what may without exaggeration be described as the scandal with which Ken Loach's recent film, *Land and Freedom* (based to some

extent on the experience of George Orwell) was received by several Spanish academics. However, the popular success of the film also attests to the continuing attraction of the anarchists' idealistic, determined, but also bloody struggle for a stateless, classless, egalitarian society.[32]

In the meantime, during the gruelling post-war years, Spain, Catalonia and Barcelona fell off the international agenda, and, for most Europeans, the country was reinvented in the 1960s as a destination not for adventurers in search of the exotic or for revolutionary romantics, but as a mass tourist location, offering the down-market enticements of 'sand, sex and sangria'. Yet in the 1970s the Spain of democratic aspiration re-emerged. As the Franco regime weakened, images filtered onto the world's television screens of brutal police beating protesters, and mass demonstrations for democracy and autonomy. Perhaps the terrorist struggle of ETA for Basque independence caught most of the headlines. But in Catalonia several movements converged with the object of overthrowing Francoism. First, under the aegis of the Communist-dominated trade union, CC OO (Comisiones Obreras/Workers' Commissions), a powerful labour opposition emerged, which was to a large extent behind the increasingly serious labour unrest. Yet, following the great economic boom of the 1960s, this relatively affluent class had little in common with the working class of the early twentieth century. The insurrectionary tradition was at an end, and objectives were now pursued through largely peaceful strikes and demonstrations, except in cases of police provocation and intervention. Linked to its economic demands, the movement made increasingly vociferous calls for free elections and a pluralistic party system. This was accompanied by a more middle-class Catalanist agitation for autonomy. Both these anti-Franco forces were able to link up, putting autonomy and democracy at the heart of their demands. As a result, I think it fair to say, for the first time the Catalan flag was able to unite the majority of Barcelona and Catalonia's citizens. This Catalanist resurgence was accompanied by a remarkable surge in support for the Barcelona football team, to such an extent that the team's claret and blue strip and the Catalan flag now seem inextricably intertwined. In a context of dictatorship, this support became a surrogate political statement for democratization and home rule, and opposition to Francoist centralism (identified with the 'regime team' Real Madrid).[33] In the new democratic Spain tensions over the extent of home rule have helped keep this sentiment alive.

It was this broad anti-Francoist front – reproduced over much of Spain – which was to make the relatively smooth transition from dictatorship to democracy possible. In Barcelona itself the great labour conflicts of these years in retrospect can be seen to have represented the high water mark of organized blue-collar labour. As Faustino Miguélez points out in Chapter Twelve, from the mid-1970s the number of industrial workers in the active population began to decline, and in the 1980s in particular industry was forced out of the city proper into the surrounding towns. At the same time, parts of the Raval, in which the blue-collar workers and the marginalized had intermingled, in a process reminiscent of Soho and Notting Hill in London, started to become gentrified. Even the

Barrio Chino itself lost its raw edge, and, as the older generation of prostitutes retired, slid into anonymity. New marginalized groups are, to be sure, growing up in the same neighbourhood. They are made up of the increasing numbers of north African workers drawn to Spain, and especially Barcelona and Madrid, for work. However, the social and cultural relations and identities of this new set of hosts represent an almost total break with the past.

These social and cultural changes are at the root of the disjuncture of present-day Barcelona and its history. 'Red and black' Barcelona – that mixture of union militants, bohemians, dreamers and men of action – is no more. Even the industrial city, still alive in the 1970s, has faded. The world has moved on and the elegant Olympic Village restaurants have largely replaced the taverns of the port and cabarets of the Paral·lel. Yet under anarchist dominance workers were able to develop a vibrant democratic culture, which allowed them to struggle for a better life for themselves and their community. And their successor, the Communist-dominated CC OO, would play a key role in laying the foundations of democracy in the 1970s. But as Miguélez also explains, though industrial labour may have declined, within the Barcelona Metropolitan Area and beyond, salaried workers still face a whole host of difficulties. And in future, unions and other associations will have to try and represent a heterogeneous collection of salaried employees to ensure stable contracts, decent working conditions, equal rights, access to welfare and a healthy environment.

Notes

1 Red and black are the colours of the anarchist flag; claret and blue (*blaugrana*), those of the Barcelona football team.
2 R. Hughes, *Barcelona*, London, 1992.
3 Hughes does state in the preface that the book's 'main concentration is on the city in the second half of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth century', and that 'I have made no attempt to deal with the Republic and civil war at all', Hughes, *Barcelona*, p. x. However, despite its focus on *modernisme*, the book is baldly titled *Barcelona*.
4 Quoted in J. Auladaell et al., *Catalonia '92. A European Nation*, Barcelona, 1992, p. 7.
5 Though this probably only slowly filtered through to a wider public. At the turn of the century Catalan *modernista* painters sojourning in Paris were – ironically, given that most considered themselves Catalanists – regaled with demands to paint 'typical' Spanish scenes. See J. Richardson, *A Life of Picasso*, vol. 1, 1881–1906, London, 1991, p. 153.
6 The Paral·lel (official name Marqués del Duero) was the main artery through the popular and working-class quarters to the east of the Rambles, now usually referred to as El Raval.
7 These issues are explored in J-L. Marfany, 'Catalanistes i lerrouxistes', *Reçerques*, no. 29, 1994, pp. 41–60; A. Smith, 'Sardana, Zarzuela or Cake Walk? Nationalism and internationalism in the discourse, practice and culture of the early twentieth-century Barcelona labour movement', in C. Mar-Molinero and A. Smith (eds), *Nationalism and the Nation in the Iberian Peninsula. Conflicting and Competing Identities*, Oxford, 1996, pp. 171–90.
8 This concept is most closely associated with Josep Termes. On the 'popular frontism' of 1970s Catalan historiography see M. Barceló, B. de Riquer and E. Ucelay Da Cal, 'Sobre l'historiografia catalana', *L'Avenç*, no. 50, 1982, pp. 68–73.

9 T. Kaplan, *Red City, Blue Period. Social Movements in Picasso's Barcelona*, Berkeley, 1992. The notion that Picasso built on an anarchist Barcelona past is pursued in P. Leighten, *Re-ordering the Universe: Picasso and Anarchism, 1897–1914,* Princeton, 1989.

10 R. Benet, *El escultor Manolo*, Barcelona, 1942, p. 53, quoted in Richardson, *Picasso*, p. 132.

11 A. Smith, 'Sardana', in Mar-Molinero and Smith, *Nationalism*, p. 178; J-L. Marfany, *La cultura del catalanisme*, Barcelona, 1995, pp. 353–78.

12 What was from the 1920s referred to as El Barrio Chino (Chinatown) is often included as part of this scene. This was an area at the bottom of the Fifth District by the port. Here, I think, there has been a tendency to over-glamorize. It was, in fact, an area of extreme poverty, a focus for petty criminals and housed the most wretched prostitutes. An astonishing view from the inside for the 1930s is in J. Genet, *The Thief's Journal*, London, 1965.

13 Richardson, *Picasso*, p. 153.

14 G. McDonogh, *Good Families of Barcelona: A Social History of Power in the Industrial Era*, Princeton, 1986.

15 Hughes, *Barcelona*, pp. 464–541. La Sagrada Família – unlike most of the city's churches – was not destroyed during the war. George Orwell was informed by local people when he visited it in 1937 that this was because of its 'artistic value'. It was Orwell's opinion that 'the Anarchists had shown bad taste in not blowing it up when they had the chance'. G. Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, Harmondsworth, 1978 (1938), p. 305. In a similar vein, an Englishman closely linked to Catalonia, John Langdon-Davies, stated in 1936: 'In the Paseo de Gracia there are gingerbread horrors of architecture which cannot be equaled anywhere in the world.' He said of the Sagrada Família: 'No human being who has not seen it can possibly hope to imagine the full horror of this piece of human folly.' J. Langdon-Davies, *Behind Spanish Barricades*, London, 1936, p. 32 and p. 216. The 1913 *Baedeker* guide to Spain and Portugal – compulsory for the cultured tourist at least through to the 1930s – made only one, disparaging, comment on *modernista* architecture. It was emphatically not in fashion.

16 S. Albertí, *El republicanisme català i la Restauració monàrquica*, Barcelona, 1972. Normally people who move territory within a particular state are referred to as migrants. However, Catalans usually refer to non-Catalan Spaniards who settle in Catalonia as immigrants. In this book we have used both terms interchangeably throughout.

17 J. Vicens Vives, *Industrials i polítics del segle XIX*, Barcelona, 1983, pp. 142–5, 165–6; *idem*, 'El moviment obrerista català (1901–1939)', *Reçerques*, no. 7, Barcelona, 1978, pp. 9–31.

18 J. Alvarez Junco, *El emperador del Paralelo. Lerroux y la demagogia populista*, Madrid, 1990, pp. 133–58. This image was, of course, used by Catalan anarchists. After release from Montjuïc in 1896 the intellectual anarchist, Fernando Tárrida de Mármol, exiled in France, played a key role in whipping up indignation. Significantly, the book he wrote on his experiences was entitled, *Les inquisiteurs d'Espagne*.

19 J. Connelly Ullman, *La Semana Trágica*, Barcelona, 1972, pp. 178–81.

20 The impact of these campaigns abroad can be seen in the comments of the young Belgian revolutionary of Russian origins, Victor Serge. During a day of street fighting between workers and police in Brussels in 1908 he recalls: 'We felt ourselves close to all the victims and rebels of the world; we would have fought joyfully for the men executed in the prisons of Montjuich or Alcala del Valle, whose sufferings we recalled each day.' V. Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901–1941*, London, 1963, p. 15.

21 J. Romero Maura, 'Terrorism in Barcelona and its impact on Spanish politics, 1904–1909', *Past and Present*, vol. 41, 1968, pp. 130–83; Alvarez Junco, *El emperador*, pp. 288–9.

22 Hilaire Belloc, the Conservative Catholic MP, stated that: 'Of a sudden, within two days, that name [Ferrer] was talked and shouted about in Paris, London, Rome, and in one or other great cities where secret organization can be prompt', H. Belloc, MP,

The Ferrer Case, London, n. d. (1909?). The reference to secret societies must be taken with a pinch of salt, coming from Belloc's belief that the whole campaign had been promoted by a leftist-Jewish-masonic underground.

23 Ullman, *Semana Trágica*, pp. 171–4, 551–3; Serge, *Memoirs*, pp. 27–8.

24 The quotation is from C. M. Winston, *Workers and the Right in Spain, 1900–1939*, Princeton, 1985, p. 105.

25 A vivid description is to be found in J. Llarch, *Los días rojinegros*, Barcelona, 1975. George Orwell, who arrived in December, was enthralled to find a city in which 'the working class was in the saddle'. *Homage*, p. 3.

26 Langdon-Davies, *Barricades*, p. 137.

27 Orwell, *Homage*, pp. 146–54 and 190; J. Langdon-Davies, *La Setmana Tràgica de 1937. Els fets de maig*, Barcelona, 1987, p. 116.

28 See the comments by Orwell in *Homage*, pp. 201–42.

29 Andrés Suárez, *El proceso contra el POUM*, Paris, 1974; *El proceso del POUM. Documentos judiciales y policiales*, Barcelona, 1989.

30 See B. Crick, *George Orwell: A Life*, new ed., London, 1992, especially pp. 313–52.

31 N. Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, Harmondsworth, 1969; P. Broué and E. Terminé, *The Revolution and Civil War in Spain*, London, 1972. An analysis of the War and Revolution Debate is to be found in C. Ealham, 'The Spanish revolution: 60 years on', *Tesserae*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1996), pp. 209–34. In Spain the 1970s were, more generally, to see a proliferation of studies on the labour movement.

32 It should, however, be noted that Loach's film ignored the fact that on the Aragonese front – where the action took place – coercion was used by the anarchist militias, at least in some villages, to ensure the land was collectivized.

33 D. Shaw, *Fútbol y franquismo*, Madrid, 1987.

2 From subordination to contestation

The rise of labour in Barcelona, 1898–1918

Angel Smith

Between 1898 and 1918 the position of labour within Barcelona was to undergo a remarkable transformation. In the mid-1890s, in both the socio-economic and political spheres, workers found themselves to a large extent subordinated to employers and the state. The two decades which followed were to see a great flowering of labour organization and protest. A key measure of this transformation was the ability to forge a modern union-based labour movement.

In 1898 Barcelona unions were weak and localized. In Spain in general and Barcelona in particular, labour organization had not experienced any significant growth in the 1890s, unlike in most of western Europe. On the contrary, as a result of wide-ranging repression (especially in Catalonia and Andalusia) the brief expansion of trade unionism between 1890 and 1893 was crushed. Matters were most dramatic in Barcelona itself where, after an initial onslaught on union organization in 1892–3, the unions and other workers' associations became the chief victims of a spiral of anarchist bomb outrages and indiscriminate government counter-repression, which culminated in the 1896 Montjuïc trial (see Chapter One). To cap labour's woes this was followed by a deep economic recession.

Over the next eighteen years the situation rapidly improved. First, from 1899 the unions began to stir. Growth over the next decade and a half was uneven, but by June 1918 over one third of the city's industrial labour force was unionized. At the same time, working- and lower-middle-class institutions, such as co-operatives and mutual-aid societies, strengthened. This was accompanied by the rise of Socialist and particularly anarcho-syndicalist unions, and by the development of an, albeit relatively weak, anarchist/syndicalist subculture in the city. Moreover, these years also saw, sometimes in tandem with union organization and strikes, the proliferation of consumer-based protests. At the same time, overtly political general strikes were also called, during which protestors built barricades and vented their anger on the state and Catholic Church.

In 1898 matters seemed little better in the arena of formal politics. The general election results of 1896 and 1898 indicated that the official monarchist parties (the Conservatives and Liberals) were still able to manipulate the elections in order to control the city's political life. However, after defeat at the hands of the United States in 1898, the political climate became more intense and opposition

grew rapidly. The monarchists were forced out of Barcelona from 1901, and real electoral contests could take place in which Catalanists and republicans fought for political hegemony. Both left-wing Catalanists and, to a far greater degree, the virulently anti-clerical, demagogic republicanism of Alejandro Lerroux attracted working-class support.

It is on this transformation that the chapter will focus. It will first centre attention on the causes behind the growth of union agitation and working-class and popular protest, before going on to analyse the forms these movements took. There are several elements in particular on which I will concentrate. First, the growth of class-based movements and discourses, and also their limitations, and the extent to which skill, ethnic and gender divisions cut across them. Second, and related, the relationship between class and popular movements, and between the various component parts of left-wing ideology. Finally, I will endeavour to explain why the 'repertoire of collective action'[1] in Barcelona was centred on street-level, often violent protest, and the effects this had on labour politics. The aim is to avoid the pitfalls of a certain kind of postmodernist approach which tends to see discoursal strategies as a self-enclosed reference system without contact with the outside world.[2] Indeed it will be one of the key contentions of this chapter that new social realities forcefully made themselves felt within the cultural, political and ideological spheres. At the same time, however, I wish to avoid social determinism, concentrating instead on the interplay between social change and ideological and cultural construction.

Workers and the city: the making of an industrial metropolis

Labour protest needs to be placed within a broad economic and social context. At the turn of the century Catalonia was Spain's most industrialized territory and its capital, Barcelona, its leading manufacturing centre. The city and its industrial base did not grow at the same pace as the principal northern European economic centres, but it was to become the major supplier of the Spanish home market. This was reflected in the growth of its population. Between 1861 and 1914 its population had, according to the official figures, risen from 249,590 to 607,170 (including those districts incorporated into the city between 1897 and 1903) and, following the rapid economic development of the war years, it stood at 710,335 in 1920. Given that death rates were higher than birth rates throughout most of this period, the city in fact grew only as a result of immigration. About 200,000 migrants arrived in Barcelona between 1890 and 1901, and a further 151,000 between 1901 and 1917. This migratory flow was to intensify as the economic effects of the First World War worked through, with over 100,000 people flooding into the city between 1918 and 1920.[3]

Catalonia's industrial development had, from the early nineteenth century, to a large extent been based on the cotton textile industry. However, from the 1860s, given the high cost of both Spanish and imported coal, much of the

industry migrated to the river banks of north-eastern Catalonia in order to take advantage of relatively cheap water power. With the other textile industries and the textile finishing trades, in the 1900s it still remained Barcelona's greatest employer of industrial labour, but was by no means totally dominant (see Table 2.1). The clothing industry, which produced garments from the cloth provided by textile manufacturers, as well as the docks, transport, construction and metallurgy and a whole host of smaller trades, also employed large numbers of workers. Furthermore, outside the industrial sector, in the same years there were over 30,000 shop workers and clerks, about 20,000 domestic servants, and several thousand waiters and cooks.[4] This diversity reflected the fact that Barcelona was not only a large industrial conurbation but also Spain's second largest port and a great centre of consumption.

The weight of Barcelona within the Spanish economy grew further during the First World War. During the war years the rapid expansion of electricity production freed industry from the limits of high-cost steam power. Moreover, much of Spanish industry experienced a golden age as it was able to take advantage of the country's neutrality to export to the warring countries, and to substitute their products both in internal and foreign markets. The textile industries experienced a short boom, supplying the competing armies with clothing, blankets and such like. Metallurgy and chemicals in particular grew rapidly to supply the expanding economy and replace foreign produced goods. In addition, house building accelerated, especially from 1920, to cope with the rapid influx of migrant workers. This in turn was to have a powerful knock on effect on the cement, metallurgy, ceramics and the furniture industries.[5]

As a result of this diverse industrial structure, workers were to be found in a myriad of workshops, factories, construction sites and yards, and also worked from home on a putting-out basis. Several basic categories can, nevertheless, be observed. As in the rest of Europe, a clear gender division was apparent with only men aspiring to 'having a craft' and working in the more highly paid trades, while women's work centred on more poorly paid sectors such as textiles, domestic service, and, especially after getting married, outwork (see Chapter Eight). Within the male sphere, on the borderline between middle-class and working-class life were to be found white-collar and shop workers. Amongst industrial workers, there was a small elite of foremen and overseers drawn from the shop floor. Below them, it was still general practice for boys to undertake an on-the-job apprenticeship and go on to become journeymen (*fadrins*). Skilled apprenticed labour was still common in early twentieth-century Europe. However, it was probably more widespread in Barcelona than in the major industrial centres of northern Europe – where the semi-skilled factory worker was taking on increasing importance – because of the diverse nature of much of the industry and the relatively slow adoption of new technologies which made possible a radical restructuring of divisions of labour. The skilled sector was by no means homogeneous. At the top were to be found a number of exclusive trades, such as glassblowing, coopering and plastering; skilled workers in areas such as metallurgy, bricklaying and carpentry enjoyed far lower status. Finally,

Table 2.1 Numbers of industrial workers in the principal Barcelona industries in 1905 and 1920

Industry	*1905*		*1920*		*% Change (1905=100)*
	Number	*%*	*Number*	*%*	
Textiles	26,999	18.7	47,872	24.9	138.1
Textile finishing trades	7,678	5.3			
Sailors, dockers and transport workers	22,327	15.4	14,317	7.4	64.1
Clothing	20,479	14.1	14,402	7.5	70.3
Construction	15,229	10.5	20,727	10.8	136.1
Metallurgy	8,943	6.2	27,131	14.1	303.4
Food Processing	8,129	5.6	7,268	3.8	89.4
Graphic arts	7,495	5.2	8,191	4.3	109.3
Woodworking	3,858	2.7	11,116	5.8	288.1
Chemical industries	3,336	2.3	7,662	4.0	229.7
Glass and ceramics	3,069	2.1	5,112	2.7	166.6
Paper industries	2,784	1.9	3,120	1.6	112.1
Furniture trades	2,686	4.1	4,571	2.4	170.2
Leather trades	1,628	1.1	4,132	2.1	253.8
Electricity generation	1,266	0.9	4,279	2.2	338.0
Others	5,997	4.1	12,376	6.4	206.4
Total	*144,788*	*100.2*	*192,276*	*100.0*	

Source: 'Censo obrero de 1905', in *Anuario estadístico de la ciudad de Barcelona, 1905*, Barcelona, 1907, pp. 599–606; *Censo de población de España, 1920*, vol V, Madrid, 1929, pp. 250–1.

adult male migrants who brought no trade with them worked as unskilled labourers. This was especially common on the city's construction sites and docks, but workers for heavy and menial tasks were needed in a whole range of industries.

Workers' status was often related to their birthplace. The most exclusive and well-paid trades were the preserve of long-standing Barcelona families. More broadly, large factories, especially in textiles, tended to be dominated by Barcelona families from the surrounding neighbourhood. In the second half of the nineteenth century, migrants who came from smaller industrial towns in Catalonia, or from more rural areas in which textile factories had set up, found it relatively easy to integrate into the skilled trades and textiles. However, by the late nineteenth century the pull of Barcelona brought increasing number of workers in from farther afield. Up until the First World War, most non-Catalan immigrants came from generally poorer areas of Valencia and Aragon, and by the turn of the century a significant community of at least 113,000 non-Catalans had established itself in the city. The trend was vastly accelerated from 1918, when a large number of workers migrated to Barcelona from farther south, and especially from Murcia. By 1920 non-Catalans made up at least 30 per cent of the total population.[6] Non-Catalan adult males were much more likely to work as unskilled labourers than the native Catalan workforce.

The first generations of Valencians and Aragonese could have difficulty integrating into their host community. There is evidence to suggest that they faced some hostility because of a belief that they were robbing Catalan workers of jobs and undercutting wage rates. Aragonese and Valencian communities grew up, whose members kept together at work and frequented the same eating houses and taverns. Yet the fact that some Valencians spoke a dialect of Catalan (which remained the dominant language in working-class circles), that migrants were not spatially segregated in separate neighbourhoods (as was to a degree to be the case after 1918), and that they were a minority within the larger working community, helped limit the growth of ethno-skill cleavages. Thus young workers and the children of immigrants could be relatively easily assimilated in many sectors of industry.[7] Nevertheless, as Cristina Borderías indicates in Chapter Eight, non-Catalan families found it difficult to break into the more established trades and larger factories, dominated by the locals.

One common denominator of work patterns was that most workers were employed in plants which were relatively small by European standards. In 1907 the average number of workers per employer was, according to an official survey, excluding commerce, only about 13.6:1 (and this probably overlooked a large number of marginal workshops), whilst there was only a scattering of larger factories employing over 500 workers.[8] This was the result of the city's dependence on a relatively limited and unstable home market, which made it difficult for enterprises to benefit from economies of scale, to specialize and to adopt production line techniques. Even in an industry like cotton textiles, in which employers had been able to produce a relatively cheap standardized product, the Barcelona factories (which employed at most an average of seventy-one workers each in 1919), were small by international standards.[9]

Yet it would be mistaken to conclude that Barcelona's industrial structure was composed of a cotton textile industry surrounded by a host of diminutive pre-industrial workshops. As elsewhere in western Europe the advance of capitalist relations of production had bitten deep. This could be seen in the push to transform production techniques and divisions of labour in order to increase productivity. The most spectacular results were in the new factory-based industries like cotton textiles. Here, on the weaving side of the industry which was predominant in Barcelona, from the 1880s, in order to reduce costs in a context of fierce competition, men were to a large extent replaced by women on the power looms.[10] However, capitalist development also produced a slow transformation of more artisanal trades. Though Catalan manufacturers were often slower to innovate than many of their western European colleagues, in a whole range of trades under the impact of intensifying competition they looked to reduce the power of skilled labour within the labour process by such means as more detailed divisions of labour, wresting the control of apprentices out of the hands of journeymen, increasing supervision at the point of production, introducing piece rates and adopting new technological advances. On occasion, indeed, there were attempts to replace the artisans by cheaper unskilled male or even female labour. This process could be seen in a number of the city's key

industries. In construction, for example, in the second half of the nineteenth century the rise of the contractor, and the practice of bidding for contracts, led to intensified competition and, as a result, to both pressure on costs and the practice of subcontracting work out. In metallurgy, while it was not in general possible to replace skilled workers by a new semi-skilled workforce – as in, say, the German Ruhr – in a context of fierce foreign and internal competition great efforts were made to increase the workers' productivity.[11]

Taken over all then, the industrial structure of the city was extremely complex and subject to a clear hierarchy. A capitalist sector had grown up with, at its peak, the powerful families in the textile and metallurgical sectors of the economy, who ran a number of large companies such as La España Industrial in cotton textiles and La Maquinista Terrestre y Marítima in metallurgy (both with around a thousand workers in the first decade of the century). In construction a number of larger building contractors also stood out. The wealth and influence of these groups was further enhanced by intermarriage between elite industrial families and the landowning nobility.[12] Below this level were to be found several hundred workshops with between some thirty and sixty workers, which were very much integrated into the capitalist sector of the economy. Further down the manufacturing pyramid there were still a plethora of marginal concerns which survived on odd jobs and repairs. An extreme division was also to be found in commerce, where, even in 1920, an average of only just over two assistants was employed in each shop.[13]

This juxtaposition of capitalist expansion combined with the survival of marginal units of production and a lilliputian commercial structure was reflected in the development of the city. The mid-nineteenth century saw the medieval walls come down, and in the following decades manufacturing grew up rapidly in the old centre and on the surrounding plain. This was accompanied by the growth of spatial class divisions as the city's bourgeois moved out of the Gothic Quarter into the newly built Eixample, whilst workers congregated around the new workshops and factories in the centre and in rapidly growing neighbourhoods on the periphery such as Poble Nou and El Clot (within the district of Sant Martí), Sants and Hostafrancs, which were integrated into Barcelona proper in 1897. In the first decade of the century in the port neighbourhood of Barceloneta, where dockers and sailors predominated, and over much of the periphery, industrial workers made up over 70 per cent of the active population. The more working-class areas of the centre (of which the Fifth District to the east of the main thoroughfare, the Rambles, stands out), were more mixed, but industrial workers were concentrated in the poorer backstreets (see Figure 2.1).[14]

The rise of labour organization and protest

As in other western European cities, activists articulated working-class organizations and a working-class associational milieu on a number of fronts. Co-operatives and mutual aid societies, educational associations, unions and recreational clubs (with choirs being especially popular) had all sprung up since

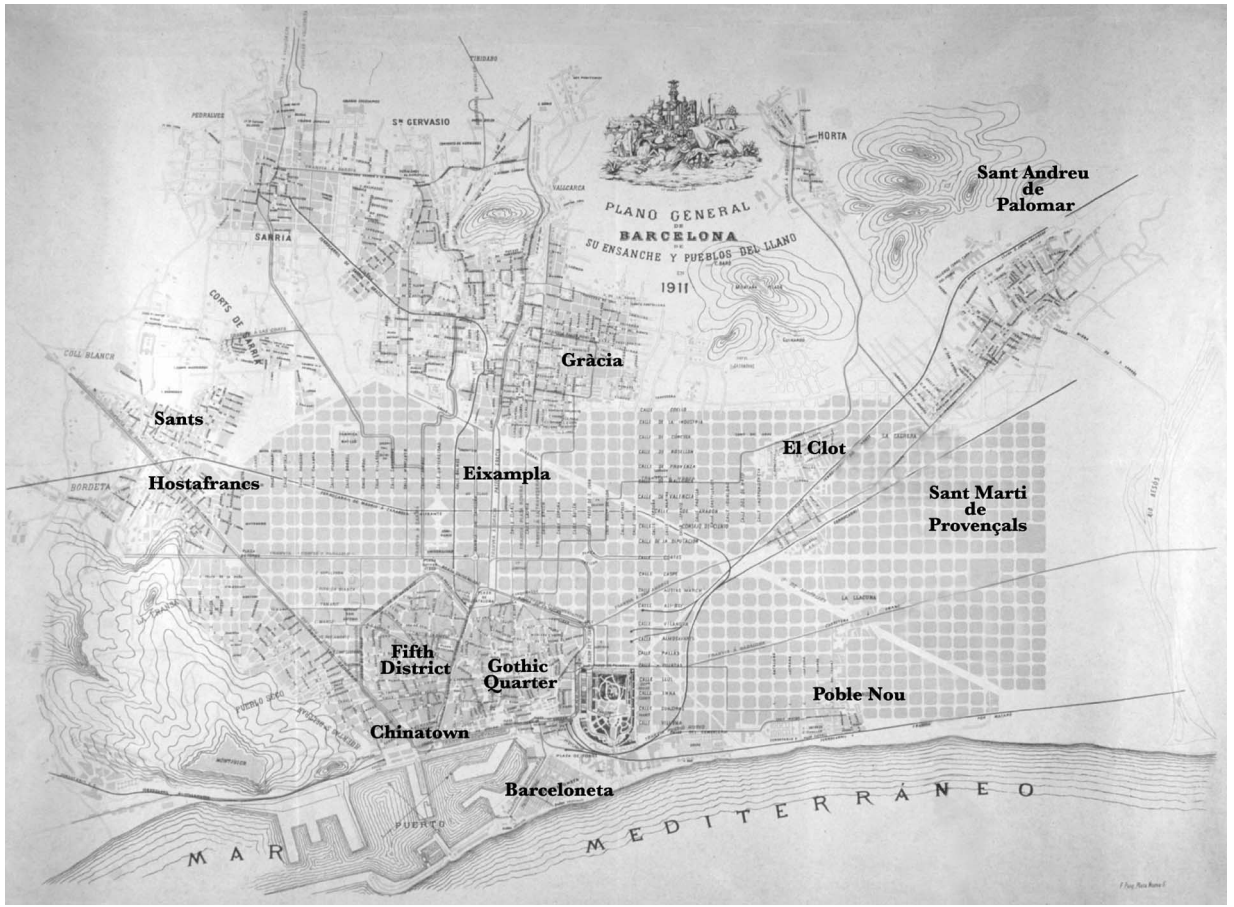

Figure 2.1
The neighbourhoods of Barcelona in 1911

the 1840s. They had been forged by a mix of independent labour leaders, republicans and, from the 1870s, Socialist and anarchist militants. However, a particular feature of Barcelona and the surrounding industrial towns, in comparison with the major western European industrial centres, was the enormous instability of union organization. We have already noted the difficulties faced in the nineteenth century. Yet in the aftermath of Spain's defeat in the war against the United States in 1898 unions began to expand significantly over time. Given the crucial importance of this issue for understanding the social and political development of the city over the next two decades the causes and consequences are worth considering in some detail.

In the first instance labour profited from the fact that in the aftermath of the defeat of 1898 the Restoration regime was wrong-footed by the intensity of public criticism, and in consequence loosened its grip. Subsequently the official parties would, to a degree, try and pursue a more conciliatory policy towards labour. This was reflected in the approval of the first social laws during the first decade of the new century. Furthermore, the years 1899 to 1903 were to witness a short-lived boom in the Catalan economy, stimulated by the repatriation of capital from the ex-colonies combined with two years of particularly good harvests. Both these factors encouraged a rapid expansion of union organization along with an escalation of strike action (see Table 2.2). Thus, while only about 15,000 Barcelona workers were affiliated to trade unions in 1900, at the height of the strike wave in the summer of 1903 the figure had reached 42,000. This pattern was repeated when, after unions were seriously undermined by a new economic recession between 1904 and 1909, they rapidly strengthened in a more buoyant economic climate from 1910.[15]

As Table 2.2 demonstrates, from this date Barcelona became the motor of labour protest in Spain. Indeed, after a brief down-turn provoked by the economic uncertainty at the beginning of the First World War, union organization grew further in the boom conditions that followed, with the result that by June 1918 about 88,000 workers in the city were unionized.[16]

Not all workers had the same opportunities to organize. The first to mobilize at the turn of the century and again from 1910 tended to be male skilled workers within medium-sized firms and on construction sites in the capitalist sector of the economy. Journeymen in metallurgy and construction, and in trades such as printing and textile finishing, were particularly prominent. These workers were supported by the close friendship networks established during their apprenticeships, they limited the supply of labour by 'regulating' apprenticeships, and were often more difficult to replace than unskilled labourers. Employers within the medium-sized factories also lacked the resources to set up the paternalist-authoritarian internal regimes necessary to establish social control. These skilled men also had serious grievances. As noted, they were under pressure from the advance of capitalist relations of production, which they saw as undermining their crafts, and responded by calling for reductions in working hours in order to combat what they perceived as growing unemployment in their trades provoked by the advance of mechanization. At the same time, they tried to bolster their

Table 2.2 Comparison of strikes, strikers and working days lost in Barcelona city and the rest of Spain, 1899–1923

	Barcelona			*Percentage of Spanish Total*		
Year	*Strikes*	*Strikers*	*Working Days Lost*	*Strikes*	*Strikers*	*Working Days Lost*
1899	8	2,403	169,760	n/a	n/a	n/a
1900	21	9,555	149,317	n/a	n/a	n/a
1901	11	16,723	215,931	n/a	n/a	n/a
1902	9	17,689	379,145	n/a	n/a	n/a
1903	74	52,015	1,589,853	n/a	n/a	n/a
1904	25	11,047	358,510	n/a	n/a	n/a
1905	24	1,676	36,042	15.7	8.3	n/a
1906	24	2,491	25,508	16.6	10.2	n/a
1907	21	1,837	54,590	13.8	9.0	n/a
1908	22	2,330	31,517	12.1	5.9	n/a
1909	11	987	3,472	7.5	15.1	n/a
1910	43	15,256	854,692	17.5	67.1	83.8
1911	31	13,065	451,118	10.0	44.2	65.6
1912	47	13,985	266,490	16.8	31.2	23.3
1913	68	43,701	1,886,265	23.9	65.5	67.2
1914	49	18,040	469,910	21.7	34.5	42,2
1915	36	14,191	191,125	20.4	43.8	42.1
1916	51	61,058	1,976,920	20.6	59.6	80.4
1917	55	12,912	941,380	17.2	17.2	47.0
1918	84	55,002	1,197,850,	17.0	33.5	37.4
1919	70	156,000	3,250,000	7.4	46.8	45.5
1920	166	73,563	1,251,090	14.3	28.6	16.2
1921	26	3,589	101,950	7.0	4.2	3.6
1922	82	18,388	192,650	16.3	14.7	7.2
1923	62	23,587	981,480	14.4	18.6	29.3

Source: *La Publicidad*, 1899–1902; Miguel Sastre, *Las huelgas en Barcelona y sus resultados, 1903–1914*, 8 vols, Barcelona, 1904–1916; Instituto de Reformas Sociales, *Estadística de Huelgas. Memoria de 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923*, Madrid, 1923–1926; Josep Lluís Martín Ramos, 'Anàlisi del movíment vaguístic a Barcelona (1914–1923)', in *Reçerques*, no. 20, 1988, p. 110.

position within the labour process through the tightening of apprenticeship restrictions.[17]

Moreover, most were unable to earn a 'family wage'. Despite receiving significantly higher wages than the unskilled, it was still the case that a skilled worker's wife and children generally had to work in order to make ends meet (see Chapter Eight). Apart from the impact of the historical weakness of trade unionism, this reflected the fact that while the long drawn out industrialization process slowed the transformation of artisanal structures, it also made it difficult for the industrial base to support significant increases in real incomes. Matters were made worse by high tariffs and the state's heavy dependency on indirect taxes, which resulted in the high price of basic necessities, and by the onset of a significant inflationary process from the mid-1890s, following a rapid growth in the money supply to finance the colonial war. This provoked an increase of about 15 per

cent in the price of basic consumer goods between 1898 and 1914. An impoverished and inefficient state combined with low real incomes was also at the root of the poor quality of housing and high death rates – which actually worsened as immigration accelerated between 1910 and 1920 – in the insalubrious working-class quarters.[18]

The typology of industrial conflict in this sector helps explain an apparent paradox which concerned some middle-class observers at the time and has more recently taxed historians: the existence of high levels of industrial strife in a context in which much of industry was still small scale and hence, presumably, relations between master and men should have been cordial. In fact such a perspective ignores the importance of the city's industrial hierarchy, outlined previously, in conditioning industrial conflict. While, as has been stressed, until 1914 at least, conflict centred on medium-sized capitalist enterprises, there also functioned a large number of tiny workshops located on the margins of the world of unions and strikes.

Amongst the lesser skilled, amongst women, and in the city's largest factories, on the other hand, industrialists were in a considerably stronger position, and until the war years were able to a large extent to keep the unions at bay. In the big factories the operation of authoritarian-paternalist regimes was a key aspect. This is illustrated by the case of metallurgy where, from the 1870s through to 1918–9, unions were largely unable to penetrate the city's dozen largest factories, several of which were situated in the port neighbourhoods of La Barceloneta and Poble Nou. The focus of the union militants' ire was 'that feudal fortress' La Maquinista Terrestre y Marítima, whose policy it was to sack all union militants while also operating a friendly society.[19] More sophisticated was the paternalist system set up in the cotton textile factory, La España Industrial, which provided its workers with loans when necessary, and continued to employ them on menial tasks in their old age.[20] The attempt to pre-empt independent unions through the operation of compulsory friendly societies was, indeed, widespread. The system was operated in both the Barcelona docks and on the trams with a good deal of success. Even employers who ran smaller factories sometimes attempted to club together to operate similar systems.

Nevertheless, as the labour movement became more buoyant and the climate optimistic it also proved possible for workers in non-apprenticed trades to organize. This was the case, for example, of the dockers and carters between 1901–3 and 1910–11, and from 1912 of the largely female textile labour force. These workers overall had less industrial muscle than their journeyman counterparts and their unions could more easily be destroyed in employer counter-attacks. Yet the difference between apprenticed and non-apprenticed labour in this respect should not be exaggerated; in the major industrial sectors of the economy larger employers were almost invariably hostile to trade unions. And in the economically depressed climate of 1903–9 the result was that trade unionism was virtually wiped out not only in transport, the docks and textiles, but also in metallurgy, whilst construction workers' unions were also seriously weakened.

The situation was, however, to change markedly from about 1917. Union

organization was given a great boost by the impact of the First World War on the Catalan economy. In addition, labour protest acquired a bitter edge because of spiralling inflation, the result of the neglect of the home market as manufacturers looked to claim highly profitable export markets. In Barcelona the price of basic necessities rose by between 70 and 75 per cent between 1912 and 1919, plunging workers into a desperate race just to maintain their purchasing power.[21] In part, union organization was strengthened in sectors in which labour had already been active between 1899 and 1914. However, as the union movement blossomed it started to include, through persuasion or force if necessary, workers in both larger factories and more marginal concerns. Moreover, it also penetrated sectors in which it had been historically very weak, such as gas and electricity production and the trams, while consolidating its position in textiles.

This did not diminish employer hostility to trade unionism. Their reluctance to enter into collective bargaining can be put down to several factors. First, it should be stressed that in continental European terms their attitude was not that exceptional. In general, at least before 1914, European employers only slowly began to negotiate with their workers, and the state had to play a positive role in encouraging this process. In Spain, as we have seen, in the late nineteenth century the state had largely been absent from the field of labour relations, and thereafter played a rather contradictory role. Governments – especially when the Conservatives were in power – on occasion reverted to their previous repressive functions, and initiatives to promote conciliation were still weak. Hence, there was little pressure put on industrialists to modify their stance.

Second, the economic difficulties under which sectors of Catalan industry laboured further hardened employer attitudes. It was almost impossible to compete abroad and industries had to rely on the weak and fluctuating internal Spanish market. The significance of economic factors can be seen in the cotton textile industry when, during a slump in the mid-1880s, employers launched an assault on the TCV (Tres Classes de Vapor/Three Classes of Steam), a powerful but moderate union federation which had grown up from the late 1860s.[22] Similarly, from the turn of the century the employers' intransigence was encouraged by the overproduction crisis which stalked the industry after the loss of the key Cuban market in 1898. Despite ever higher tariff barriers, sectors of Barcelona industry also faced serious competition within the home market from more efficient foreign enterprises. This was particularly the case in metallurgy, where industrialists argued that foreign competition made it impossible for them to accept workers' demands for a reduction in the long ten-hour day in the industry.[23] Finally, the growing importance of anarcho-syndicalism in the labour movement would in itself would lead industrialists to seek repressive strategies (see also Chapters Three and Nine).

This combination of union instability and employer hostility very much set the tone of Barcelona trade unionism. After having suffered in silence for years, booms in union organization would be accompanied by an almost frenzied desire to see perceived grievances righted. Hence workers often presented their demands little after the unions had been founded, and when they were rejected

rapidly went on strike. Indeed, between 1900 and 1918 there would be generalized strikes in all the major sectors of Barcelona industry. Thus, while employers remained deeply hostile to unions, their strategies of social control and paternalism failed to halt their growth. This would be at the root of the increasingly explosive class conflict which gripped post-war Barcelona.

Industrial strife also led to a slow growth in industrial and general workers' federations. At first, as unions emerged from the long night of repression during 1898–9 they were enormously divided, both on craft lines and by particular neighbourhoods. The need to form broader fronts in the face of employer resistance in the heat of labour disputes was slowly to break these inter-trade barriers down. This was reflected in the formation of Barcelona-wide federations in the metallurgical, construction and woodworking industries, and in the port of Barcelona, between 1901 and 1914. This occurred within a context in which various attempts were made to organize more broadly-based general workers' confederations. Most successful would be the anarcho-syndicalist CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo/National Labour Confederation), which was founded in 1910 and which, by the end of 1918, was rapidly integrating much of the city's workforce into its ranks.

Overall, the development of union organization and strikes revealed a complex juxtaposition of, on the one hand, skill, family and gender hierarchies, and, on the other, solidaristic practices. This was visible both in the world of work and in the more working-class neighbourhoods. Skilled men, and above all white-collar and shop workers, could see themselves as superior to the unskilled and migrant labour. The major dividing line was between white- and blue-collar workers, many of the former believing themselves to be closer to the world of the middle classes and little inclined to participate in labour agitation. As a result, the major white-collar and shopworkers association, the CADCI (Confederació Autònoma de Dependents de Comerç i de la Indústria de Catalunya/Autonomous Confederation of White-collar and Shop Workers), was little involved in trade-union life and certainly wished to have no truck with general workers' federations. Significantly, only at the end of 1918 did the CNT start to make significant inroads amongst office workers.[24]

Similarly, workers in more elite trades tended to remain aloof from industrial unions and anarcho-syndicalist labour confederations, at least until 1918–19 when they had no choice but to join. Such corporate identity could be reinforced through the concentration of trades in particular neighbourhoods, and the tradition of passing jobs on from father to son. Yet skilled workers in the more conflict-ridden trades within the capitalist sector of the economy, such as metalworkers, bricklayers and carpenters, were often the first to structure industrial federations and back anarcho-syndicalist general confederations. This required the integration of the less skilled and women into the labour movement. Moves along these lines were not totally altruistic: skilled men could see such a strategy as indirectly bolstering their own position; they were keen to maintain their wage differentials and still generally expounded dominant patriarchal values. Nevertheless, their actions did help introduce wider sections of the working

community into union life. This, of course, occurred within the context of discourses of class propounded by anarchists, Socialists, and indeed, as we shall see in the following section, to an important degree by republicans.

It was not only through industrial conflict that workers were mobilized. Another key forum for protest was, as indicated previously, the price of basic consumer goods. Modernization theorists have argued that the industrial revolution of the early nineteenth century saw a passage from the consumer-based protests of the 'crowd' or 'mob' to disputes over wages and working conditions within the new capitalist industrial structures.[25] However, this ignores the extent to which the former could remain very much alive. This may well have been especially important in Barcelona because of the perceived futility of simply petitioning government, combined with high food prices and low real wages. It was these factors which stimulated the integration of direct, street-level, consumer and neighbourhood-based protest into the repertoire of working-class dissent. One form this took was the attacks on customs posts (*fielatos*) which ringed the city, and which served to increase substantially the price of necessities. Such attacks were an accompaniment to most major insurrections in the city and surrounding industrial towns. In addition, from 1916 Socialists and anarcho-syndicalists organized a campaign against rising prices. In Barcelona in January 1918 women carried out protest marches and attacked coal merchants and shops in order to pressurize the local authorities into enforcing price reductions.[26] In this climate other attempts to foment working-class consumer-based dissent were undertaken from within the labour unions. Thus, in 1918, under the aegis of the CNT, a Tenants' Union was formed to protest against the rising cost of rented accommodation. It did not succeed at the time, but can be seen as an antecedent of the great rent strikes of the early 1930s and movements launched in the peripheral working-class neighbourhoods in the late 1960s aimed at providing them with a modern infrastructure (see Chapters Four and Eleven).

It has been argued by Temma Kaplan that within these protest movements a division in gender roles could be discerned. Women were above all concerned with their position as provider of the family, and were therefore at the forefront of food riots and other smaller-scale protest actions, whose aim was the defence of family and children.[27] There is certainly something in this. The 1918 riots were almost wholly composed of women. They were fiercely independent and, indeed, there was opposition to men joining the demonstrations.[28] However, this should not be taken too far. Women were also involved in strikes and union organization, and indeed showed themselves to be every bit as militant as men during a general strike in the textile industry in 1913.

Both strikes and consumer-based protests, along with overt insurrections, drew in broad sections of the working-class community. Thus, for example, in 1902 a general strike in support of striking metalworkers was able to paralyse Barcelona for a week. It was called in defence of an almost wholly male industry, yet in the first morning of the strike a key role in ensuring a total shutdown was played by groups of women (some wearing red armbands) and young lads, who gustily stoned the trams until they returned to the depot, and put pressure on

anyone going into work to return home. Comparably, the 1918 food riots were backed by the CNT's mouthpiece, the newspaper *Solidaridad Obrera*, and many male workers clearly sympathized.

Working-class neighbourhoods could help nurture such solidaristic practices and attitudes. Working-class sociability began at an early age, when young boys played in the street together and, from the age of ten, began to look for an apprenticeship, unlike the children of while-collar workers and the petty bourgeoisie, who tended to stay on at school until they were fourteen. Male solidarities were maintained in the café, and in forums such as union headquarters, co-operatives and republican clubs. A sense of identity of interests was reinforced by common concerns regarding questions relating to the world of work, such as technological advance, de-skilling and unemployment. These worries were widely voiced in the working-class press, which maintained that untrammelled competition only favoured the manufacturer at the expense of his workforce, while the public was short-changed with sub-standard merchandise. The most lucid argued that it was not technological advance itself that was a problem, but the fact that the current system only benefited the minority.[29] In such lines of argument one can see an aspect of workers' alternative 'moral economy',[30] which questioned liberal political economy. Meanwhile, working-class women's networks focused above all on the local market (though for female textile workers the place of work would also have been important), where discussion would often revolve around the price of food. And in the riots of 1918 one could see another aspect of workers' moral economy, a continued belief in fair and reasonable prices, which it is probably not fanciful to trace back to the Early-Modern concept of the 'just price' (a term in fact used in 1918). The link between the two worlds was provided by family structures and friendship networks, with male skilled workers the brothers and husbands of the female cotton textile and outworkers.

Anarcho-syndicalism, labour protest and labour culture

As we have already noted, it was the CNT which after 1910 was to emerge as the most powerful force in the labour movement. The organization was not totally united. Since the early years of the century significant differences could be seen between the various elements close to the anarchist camp. This should come as no surprise given that there was no equivalent to the discipline imposed by the European Socialist parties. Some anarchists remained aloof from the trade unions claiming that they were agents of reformism. Nevertheless, from the 1870s Catalan anarchism had, in international terms, been particularly closely connected with organized labour. All anarchists, of course, rejected political parties and those linked to the unions came to see them as key agents of social revolution. From the turn of the century the influence of French revolutionary syndicalism began to be felt with the result that the general strike was adopted as the key revolutionary tool. There was still

room for disputes. Some, who became syndicalists, argued that workers would be radicalized by the experience of the class struggle, and that the need for working-class unity meant that no group (even the anarchists) should try and impose themselves. Others, who continued to refer to themselves as anarchists, maintained that a committed minority should lead the workers to revolution. Debates also focused on the society of the future, with syndicalists arguing that the union confederation would organize the libertarian economy while anarchists retorted that the future society would be based on a system of decentralized communes. These debates were not merely theoretical. The first group made more of an effort to build a unified labour movement, while the second was more interested in sparking off the revolution. Between 1910 and 1923 CNT theoreticians reached a synthesis. Many, like the leading union organizer of the period 1917–23, Salvador Seguí, affirmed that they were both syndicalists and anarchists. They were syndicalists because within the unions they respected pluralism, and because they believed that the union confederation would both lead the revolution and provide the economic underpinnings of the new libertarian society, but they were also anarchists in that they recognized that anarchist ideology would guide their strategy. This synthesis was subsequently to be referred to as anarcho-syndicalism. [31]

As we shall see in subsequent chapters, divisions would by no means disappear. Indeed, during the Second Republic they would lead to schism. However, for our period it is worth stressing those elements which the whole movement had in common. First, despite the differences outlined above, all sections of the CNT aimed to articulate an aggressive, non-bureaucratic union movement, which would use the general strike as the key weapon both to achieve specific industrial demands and to carry out the social revolution. Second, given their rejection of state intervention, they laid great emphasis on the need to develop autonomous educational and cultural institutions. Finally, though less central, they also supported other forms of action against employers, rentiers and the state. Hence, as we have seen, after 1914 they would begin to overlay their primary focus on industrial conflict with concern for consumer-based protest.

It was in the trade-union sphere that the CNT had most success. It grew up in the context of the need felt by workers in the capitalist sector of the economy, where labour disputes were harsh and frequently violent, to forge broader working-class fronts. The anarcho-syndicalists would frequently be at the forefront of these moves. In this sense they acted as a bridge between skilled workers and the unskilled, combating Catalan chauvinism and craft segregation and promoting industrial unionism. Yet it would be a long road. In September 1911 the CNT had 7,776 members. This represented less than half the unionized workers in the city and only around 5 per cent of active industrial workers. Over the next six years it was heavily battered by state repression. However, from 1916 it began to grow rapidly. By the summer of 1918 its membership stood at around 44,000, about half the city's unionized workforce and 20 per cent of the active industrial working class. It should also be pointed out that from the turn of the century anarcho-syndicalists were able to mobilize far more workers than those

they actually unionized, and played a vital role in the calling of general strikes in all the key industrial sectors.

This relationship between union militancy and activism was only briefly overturned in late 1918 and early 1919, during which time the Barcelona organization grew at astonishing speed. By the end of September 1918 the CNT had 67,000 Barcelona affiliates, and was incorporating much of the union movement into its ranks.[32] This can be put down to two related factors. First, from 1916 the Catalan CNT leadership decided to push for the organization of local, industry-wide unions, which they called Sindicats Unics. This led to the dissolution of neighbourhood unions and gave the union committee far more leeway to develop an effective strategy of union organization. Sindicats Unics were officially approved in the Sants Congress held between 29 June and 1 July 1918. Second, by the autumn of 1918 CNT unions were growing so strong that it was increasingly difficult for independent unions or non-unionized workers to remain aloof. By early 1919 almost the entire Barcelona industrial working class was to be found within the CNT unions (see also Chapter Three).[33]

In comparison with this success on the union front, the attempt to articulate an anarchist and syndicalist working class sub-culture remained underdeveloped. When Francisco Ferrer returned to Barcelona from France in 1901 his inheritance allowed him, in collaboration with the republicans, to set up about forty schools in urban Catalonia.[34] However, these schools entered into crisis after he was arrested in 1906 and, primarily because of a lack of resources, the anarcho-syndicalists subsequently found the going much tougher. Even in 1918 all that was offered was evening classes in the city's three or four most significant syndicalist centres.

Nevertheless, such centres did provide a focal point for both union meetings and cultural activities. Most important after the formation of the local federation, Solidaridad Obrera (Worker Solidarity/SO) – the forerunner of the CNT – in 1907, was the headquarters of both the confederation and the weekly newspaper of the same name. After 1910 several anarchist/anarcho-syndicalist cultural athenaeums were set up. They typically had a café, organized meetings and soirées – typically held on a Saturday evening – at which anarchist theatre groups would perform and bands were hired. Other clubs and associations, often operating from these centres, developed a particular niche within the broad range of anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist cultural and ideological pursuits. Thus, there were Esperanto associations and evening classes, inspired by anarchist internationalism and hopes for the establishment of a single world language. Between 1914 and 1918 an *antiflamenquista* society operated, which attacked what were seen as typical Spanish vices, such as bullfighting, music halls and brothels, and an association was formed to visit new technological wonders. It was after all upon technological and scientific progress that the new world was to be forged.

Yet it is important not to exaggerate the impact of this subculture. At most a few thousand workers regularly attended the centres, and it was probably no more than a few hundred that were intensively integrated within the anarcho-

syndicalist union and cultural milieux. Even at its high point in the summer of 1918 the confederation's daily, *Solidaridad Obrera*, sold no more than 32,000 copies a day. The militants formed a relatively small core, who were, however, able to mobilize far more widely than the organization's base. In addition, many within this core did not subscribe to every aspect of anarchist culture. The most committed anarchists tended to oppose alcohol, tobacco, gambling and other *flamenquista* practices. No centre would be complete without inscriptions warning workers of the evils of drink, along with paintings drawn from the pantheon of anarchist heroes. Some anarchists had also taken up vegetarianism. Yet anarcho-syndicalists who were primarily union activists might be somewhat removed from such concerns. Salvador Seguí, for example, earned the wrath of 'puritanical' anarchists because of his lifestyle, which included – when he could get it – a slap-up meal in a restaurant followed by a cigar and coffee.[35]

At a trade-union level, anarchist emphasis on union militancy, direct action, and insurrection could gain support in a climate of employer hostility, and a lack of effective state-sponsored mechanisms of collective bargaining and conciliation. Thus it was that between 1901 and 1903, and again between 1907 and 1918, anarcho-syndicalist union militants were able to able to dominate the most conflict-ridden trades on the back of aggressive union demands and strike action. Furthermore, they were quick to link up with other forms of direct action, be they planned rent strikes or riots over rising prices.

The difficulties faced by the Barcelona branches of the Spanish Socialist Party and its union organization – the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español/Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) and the UGT (Unión General de Trabajadores/General Workers' Union) – were in many respects a mirror image of anarcho-syndicalist success. In the 1880s Socialist strength had to an important degree centred on textiles, where they worked closely with the powerful and moderate TCV. As we have seen, this federation was undermined at the close of the decade, though it continued to operate until 1913. Nevertheless, as unions revived after 1898 the Socialists appeared well placed to take advantage. However, as strikes grew from 1900 the Socialists tended to be increasingly marginalized by the anarcho-syndicalists. This was a pattern which would be repeated after 1910. In 1907 they were able to play a leading role in the foundation of the local confederation, SO. In its origins this confederation took in workers of all political persuasions. But as strike action grew from 1910 the Socialists were again eclipsed. The anarcho-syndicalists took over SO, and when in September 1910 it was turned into a national confederation the Socialists refused to participate. Then, as the CNT grew rapidly from 1917, the Socialists were driven to the margins of union life. In early 1919 in the Catalan capital they had only four moribund centres and 'half a dozen miserable craft unions' under their control.[36]

The result was that the political and ideological composition of the labour movement would be very different in Catalonia from many other parts of Spain. In Madrid, the Basque Country and Asturias the Socialists emerged as

the major working-class organization. On the other hand, the anarchists became dominant not only in Catalonia, but also in Aragon, while in areas like Andalusia and Valencia membership was more evenly matched. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, though these two labour confederations were occasionally able to collaborate, divisions could also frequently be bitter. This schism would significantly weaken the overall strength of organized labour in Spain.

In Catalonia, a key reason for the Socialists' failure is to be found in the strategy developed by the Madrid-based leadership, which stressed the need for unions to make only limited demands, negotiate compromises with employers and come out on strike in the last resort. This position was accentuated by the Catalan Socialists because of their association with the TCV, a reformist labour federation which tried to imitate the policies of the British New Model unions. This made it impossible for the Socialists to captain most Barcelona unions as social conflict escalated from 1901. The result was – ironically given that they were meant to be organizing a class-based movement – that Socialist influence was largely limited to a number of craft and, to a lesser degree, white-collar unions on the margins of the major industrial disputes.[37] Furthermore, without a solid trade-union base they were unable to build a party capable of challenging republicanism.

Yet despite the fact that the anarchists became dominant in the trade-union sphere, they did not integrate other forums for working-class and popular socialization and organization. Of particular importance was that, given their emphasis on mobilization they rejected the affiliation of co-operatives and mutual aid societies to their movement. Such a move, they argued, would only serve to dampen workers' revolutionary ardour. This, together with the fact that they shunned parliamentary politics, led to organizational fragmentation. There would be no equivalent of the social-democratic ideal – approximated to in Germany under the Social Democratic Party (SPD) – of a single body taking all aspects of labour organization and associationism under its wing.[38] Some unions within the anarcho-syndicalist camp took no notice and operated some form of friendly society. This was possible because until the formation of the Sindicats Unics they enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. However, for many workers this differentiation could be beneficial, because they could undertake hard-fought labour disputes while, whatever happened, their independent co-operative or mutual-aid society would remain intact. This is an issue to which we shall return in the following section.

Labour and the state

Labour protest cannot fully be understood without discussing antagonism towards the central state. Indeed, such antagonism was widely felt within a broad range of social groups in Barcelona and Catalonia. As the republican Catalanist, Claudi Ametlla, informs us in his memoirs, at the end of the nineteenth century: 'Hostility towards the government … was generalized in Catalonia. The idea

that the government was necessarily an enemy was one of the few political notions strongly held by these primary citizens....'[39]

This enmity must be placed within the broad context of nineteenth-century state construction. After the defeat of absolutism in the 1830s the dominant liberal tradition evolved in a conservative direction, combining centralization, strict limits of freedom of speech and the franchise, and ready recourse to military force. This was the main current within the Cánovas Restoration (1875–1923), and though civil liberties were, at least on paper, extended in the 1880s, and universal manhood suffrage conceded in 1890, it was still to a significant degree the case that political and social control was maintained through a combination of ballot rigging and repression. Hence it was axiomatic in left-wing circles that the Restoration had to be overthrown rather than reformed. This opposition to the central state, it is important to stress, was at first captained by radical liberals who were to evolve towards republicanism. In the tradition of French republicanism, the Spanish stressed at a political level the rights of the people (*pueblo*) as against the oligarchy, and in social terms they championed the producer against the idle rich. In the positivistic and Romantic republican world view the people – the embodiment of freedom, liberty and progress – were seen as engaged in a life and death struggle against the forces of reaction and obscurantism, chief amongst which was the Catholic Church. This vision, though manichaean, could to an important degree embody the frustration of much of urban society at being excluded from the levers of political power while footing much of the bill for the running of the state machine.

Nowhere was this discontent greater than in Barcelona. In the 1890s the apparent stability of the political system generated scepticism and cynicism, and in this context only about 30 per cent of the electorate voted. Nevertheless, republicanism did remain the main repository of working and lower-middle-class votes.[40] However, opposition was sharpened by the heavy military defeat at the hands of the United States in 1898 after a three-year colonial war in Cuba. In working-class circles the horrendous toll of dead and sick amongst the Spanish troops caused outrage, especially as the rich could buy their way out of military service or pay for a substitute.[41] Subsequent years were to see growing criticism of the regime and a remarkable politicization of urban society. On the Left, under the energetic leadership of Alejandro Lerroux, republicans were able to seize the opportunity, reorganize their outdated party structures and massively increase both party membership and electoral support. Furthermore, the middle classes and industrialists revolted against government attempts to impose higher taxes to pay for the massive public deficit. The electoral consequences were dramatic. Until 1898 the Monarchists had to an important degree been able to control Barcelona politics, but in 1901 they were routed by republicans and Catalanists. For the republicans the high point was reached in the April 1903 general elections, when the new Republican Union received about 35,000 votes in the city (67 per cent of the voters and 30 per cent of the electoral roll).[42] Thus one of the major features of Barcelona labour politics, visible through to the 1930s, was consolidated: on the one hand a union movement in which anarcho-syndicalism

maintained a powerful influence, on the other a strong republican political tradition. The corollary of this was that any potential working-class party would be squeezed between the syndicalist unions and republicanism. As we shall see, this would be a key issue during the Second Republic, when the need for a strong class party would be more keenly felt than ever before.

Yet despite the fact that Catalanist and republican ideologies were not specifically rooted in class, class-based tensions and conflicts impacted strongly on the new political climate. In the first place, it should be stressed that with the demise of the monarchist parties a new two-party electoral system emerged in Barcelona. The Catalanist or Catalan nationalist movement was a broad organization in which both traditional Catholics and republicans could be found, but throughout our period the heart of the movement was on the Right. The dominant Catalanist party, the Lliga Regionalista, was strongly supported by industrial interests, it integrated corporatist elements into its ideology, and it was vociferously anti-union. Not surprisingly then, its power base was to be found in the city's upper and middle-class neighbourhoods. In contrast, backing for Lerroux's republicans centred on more popular and working-class areas.

Furthermore, republicanism itself was affected by new social realities. Pre-established ideologies both condition the way in which the changing world is perceived and are in turn stretched and torn by that world. This could be seen within the republican movement. From the 1870s republicanism was increasingly divided between a free-market Right and a socially minded Left. During the 1890s, within the republican Left specifically labourist currents were to emerge. Lerroux both hailed from this left-wing tradition and further radicalized it. On the far Left of the movement in the 1890s, he specifically transferred from his base in Madrid to Barcelona in 1901 because he believed that the future for republicanism lay in mobilizing the working class. Henceforth Lerrouxism would represent a somewhat contradictory mix of old and new. He elaborated a radical populist, demagogic rhetoric, which was aimed at retaining broad popular support while connecting with anarchism. Thus, he praised *el pueblo* while damning the Church and Catalanist bourgeoisie. And when invited to union centres he defended anarchist direct-action tactics and the general strike, and maintained that though a republican he had, 'never forgotten the ideal of perfect justice and equality'.[43]

In this respect we can say that left-wing republicanism was becoming 'classed'.[44] This could also be seen in the sphere of organizational reform. In the proliferating republican centres, or *Casas del Pueblo*, Lerroux built a labour-dominated subculture centred on co-operatives, mutual-aid societies and educational establishments. Indeed, the large number of these centres and associations meant that – outside the trade-union sphere – the Lerrouxists formally integrated more workers into their subculture than the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists ever could. Yet Lerroux would always shy away from trying to structure a purely working-class party. There were very few workers in the leadership (though, unlike the Catalanist republicans, Lerrouxist leaders tended to be outsiders on the fringes of respectable middle-class society), and little

attempt was made to structure a trade-union base. It was his decision to ally with labour through the sphere of consumption rather than production which, above all, indicated Lerroux had no intention of building a class-based movement.

Lerroux was able to collaborate with prominent anarchists between 1900 and 1906. The emphasis on anti-authoritarian education within both traditions in particular provided a fruitful terrain for co-operation. However, his dominance of the left-wing scene was not assured. As unions began slowly to revive, especially following the formation of SO in 1907, anarcho-syndicalists and Socialists linked to the organization became increasingly critical of Lerroux, using the language of class to chastise him as a bourgeois fraud whose aim was to divert workers from the true path of revolution (see also Chapter Three). This does not mean that all the movements' activists unproblematically assimilated the bourgeoisie/proletariat dichotomy. Culturally and ideologically there was a good deal of overlap between both movements. While sectors of republicanism were being classed, it was also the case that many union militants could still retain a place in their worldview for the struggle by 'the people' against 'the oligarchy', and within working-class circles there was a widely held belief in the liberating potential of a republic. Indeed, many workers formed part of syndicalist unions while voting republican at election time. Nevertheless, it was the class warriors who were in control and felt the need to undermine Lerrouxism to fortify their position. This was not a serious problem for Lerroux while organized labour remained in the doldrums, but as trade unionism strengthened from 1910 the threat became more pronounced. The CNT was resolutely anti-Lerrouxist and combined its drive to integrate workers into its unions with a continuous campaign against Lerrouxist republicanism. And it is no doubt this atmosphere which, at least in part, helps explain Lerroux's decision, from 1910, to re-invent his party as a centrist national force rather than a city-based formation of the extreme Left. The result in Barcelona was a slow decline in working-class support, which accelerated from 1914.

Anti-statism and growing social conflict were the furnaces with which working-class ideologies were fired. However, it would be mistaken to see workers as somehow uniformly revolutionary, at all times enthusiastic proponents of insurrection and the general strike. Continuous migration from more conservative rural areas maintained the arch-Catholic and reactionary, but also non-elitist and populist Carlist tradition. As we shall see in the next chapter, this would be at the root of the challenge faced from 1920 by the CNT and by the Sindicats Lliures.[45] Within working-class circles there was also what may be referred to as a liberal reformist strata. This was made up of workers attracted to moderate republican and Catalanist currents. They could be drawn to notions of hard work, thrift and social advancement found in nineteenth-century republican thought (and, indeed, the idea of the sober, hard-working and practical Catalan would be incorporated into Catalan nationalist ideology). White-collar and shop workers were particularly attracted to this milieu. The major white-collar and shopworkers' association, the CADCI, was indeed a leading player in Catalanist politics.

Nevertheless, the dominant left-wing discourse was made up on the one hand of the republican tradition of anti-state and anti-clerical insurrectionary politics, overlaid – especially in the aftermath of 1898 – by growing anti-colonial and anti-military sentiment, and on the other hand, of hatred of the so-called 'big fish', the large metal, textile and construction industrialists believed to be behind capital's intransigence towards the labour unions. These sentiments were shared by left-wing republicans, anarchists and Socialists, and struck a deep chord in wide sections of the working class. Moreover, they should not be seen as discrete. On the Left the state was generally depicted as a plutocracy of rich Vaticanists and Catalan bourgeois, who governed solely in their own interests. This ruling plutocracy was seen as both championing clericalism and, from the turn of the century, profiting from expansion in Morocco. Several individuals were seen as epitomizing this group. As we saw in Chapter One, central in this respect was the second Marquis of Comillas, who played a leading role in setting up Catholic unions and had extensive colonial interests. Comillas owned the Transatlantic Shipping Company, which was reputed to have made a handsome profit transporting troops to Cuba in 1895–8, and which would ferry soldiers across to Morocco in 1909, while also – along with other leading industrialists and regime figures – investing in mines in Morocco. Indeed, the whole Moroccan adventure was widely seen in left-wing and working-class circles as a giant fraud whereby the cynical clerical elites profited at the cost of the lives of the poor. Thus, despite the organizational fragmentation referred to previously, within majority working-class circles, language and ideology were in many respects quite homogeneous.

This was reflected in the repertoire of labour protest. Over the period 1898–1918 worker-dominated protest struck at what were perceived as the major symbols of oppression. Moreover, workers used what they saw as the three weapons they had at their disposal: industrial muscle, violent insurrection and pressure on consumption. This was visible in the three major disturbances of the period: in 1902, 1909 and 1917. All of these movements began with a syndicalist-led general strike, thereby emphasizing the growing role played by organized labour within Barcelona. The motives were, on the surface, rather different. As we have noted, the 1902 general strike was called in solidarity with the striking metalworkers. The 1909 general strike, which would subsequently be baptized as Tragic Week, was called to protest at the flare-up in the colonial war in Morocco, and especially at the sending of reservists. Finally, the 1917 strike was part of a Socialist-led initiative to bring down the entire Restoration system (see Chapter Three). Yet they also had much in common. In each case on day one groups of lads and women would come onto the streets stoning trams to try and force them back into to the depot.[46] Subsequently, in more working-class areas barricades went up and there followed clashes with the security forces. In each case the death toll was significant, though not overwhelming. In the 1902 general strike about thirty workers were killed in street fighting in Barcelona, during Tragic Week the figure was 104 throughout Catalonia, and in 1917 it was reported as being 37 in Barcelona Province. It was also the case that strikers put

pressure on the authorities by forcing shops to close and preventing the entry into the city of fresh produce and the distribution of meat. As a result, in both 1902 and 1909 the city slaughterhouse became the focus of some of the most violent clashes. This was invariably accompanied, in Barcelona and the surrounding industrial towns, by attacks on the consumer tax booths.

1909 was also marked by a savage attack on religious institutions. However, it should be stressed that this was by no means the first example of anti-clerical violence in Barcelona. In 1835 there had been similar attacks on Church property. In July 1899, after a fiery republican-led anti-clerical meeting, there were clashes between protestors and Civil Guards outside the Jesuit convent in Caspe Street, followed by three days of riots during which working-class youth stoned shop windows and smashed street lamps.[47] And during the general strike of 1902 a failed attempt was made to set alight a convent.[48] Indeed, it may be that the principal reason church burning took off in 1909 was the slowness of the authorities in taking control of the streets. These events did not indicate a total irreligiosity amongst workers (though inevitably the rise of the Left was accompanied, amongst labour activists, by a growth in atheism). Rather, workers attacked what they saw as the unwarranted wealth of the Church as an institution, gained though its befriending of social elites. This is indicated by the nature of the attacks. Although the religious were, in general, not harmed, before the buildings were set ablaze everything found in the interior was ceremoniously piled on great bonfires. There were a few robberies, but very often money, shares, and silver religious utensils were thrown onto the fires. There was a strong sense among the crowds that they were on a mission to cleanse the city of clerical decadence by fire, and were not to be seen as mere thieves.

What all of these disturbances had in common was that they showed the total alienation of very significant sectors of the working-class populace from the state and social elites. Whatever the stated aims of the initiators, they were seen as an opportunity to attack the hated plutocracy. In this the demonstrators, in part at least, harked back to the nineteenth-century uprisings against conservative liberalism. Moreover, in line with radical liberal thought, the Church was targeted as the bastion of reaction, while in both in 1909 and more concretely in 1917, the goal was very clearly a republic. Yet these uprisings also showed that the nineteenth-century heritage was being overlaid by new unambiguously class-based elements. As we have stressed, the weapon of the general strike was incorporated into the repertoire of protest. Moreover, the industrialists were seen as a key part of the 'plutocracy'. Finally, the 1917 general strike also demonstrated the growing co-ordination of the working-class Left at a national level.

Overall, therefore, the first eighteen years of the twentieth century saw labour rise to become a major protagonist on the political stage. This should not be seen in over-simplistic terms. There was no iron curtain separating industrial workers from other social groups. As we have seen, the republican tradition was still strong, anti-clerical riots no doubt attracted men from the lower-middle and even middle class, and food riots were not necessarily restricted to women who

worked or whose husbands worked in an industrial occupation (though evidence certainly points to them being a great majority). We have also indicated that there could be strong ties between smaller employers and their workers.

Yet it has been shown that the dividing line between the petty bourgeoisie and white-collar workers on the one hand, and industrial workers on the other, was socially and culturally a significant one. Above this line there was little sympathy for the CNT, and as one reaches the established middle classes clerical influence began to make itself strongly felt. Certainly, there was room for political alliances between wide sectors of Catalan society against the central state. This was seen in agitation against the Restoration in 1917. But social divisions would also on occasions be both deep and bitter.

It is difficult to assess whether during these years amongst industrial workers there was a heightened sense of forming a distinct group within society. There was already a long history of working-class agitation in Barcelona. What seems clear is that the period saw the consolidation of a new assertiveness amongst industrial workers: a strong belief among many that they had goals in common and needed to take often violent action for them to be realized. However, it should immediately be stressed that this was predicated upon the specific historical conjuncture of these years. Class identity was subject to challenge from identities based on hierarchies of skill, ethnicity and gender. As we have seen, in the years between 1899 and 1918 many skilled and unskilled workers could largely be incorporated into the same labour federations, and antagonism between local workers and those from outside Catalonia could be contained. In the 1930s, as subsequent chapters will make clear (Chapters Five, Six and Seven), this would not be so easy. I would also argue that in an era in which feminist ideas had not penetrated working-class circles, though women were subject to patriarchal authority, gender-based divisions of labour and social roles were to an important degree accepted. As a result, working-class men and women viewed their protests as complementary.

At a trade-union level at least, the major repository of working-class agitation became the anarcho-syndicalist CNT. Forty years ago now, in a study of rural Andalusia, Eric Hobsbawm argued that anarchism was an ideology appropriate to millenarian peasants rather than industrial workers.[49] Whether we agree with Hobsbawm's description of rural Andalusian anarchism or not, his thesis ignores the extent to which anarchism could adapt to city-based movements. This could occur, as in the case of Barcelona, in a context in which collective bargaining relations were not institutionalized, and in which protest retained a raw violent edge, the consequence of alienation from the state and harsh living and working conditions. In these circumstances a repertoire of protest in which direct action remained central could appear very much appropriate to the social and cultural environment in which workers moved. The CNT championed tough general strike movements, and it was also quick to support food riots, rent strikes and insurrectionary activity. In a very different context Hobsbawm noted that, given the lack of trade unions in the eighteenth century, workers engaged in 'collective bargaining by riot'.[50] Yet the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not see

a smooth transition to formalized labour relations. In Barcelona, workers employed industrial muscle, riot and insurrection.

However, the position of the CNT was by no means impregnable. At a trade-union level its stress on mobilization and the generalization of strike action could alienate some groups of workers and invite repression. This, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, would open it up to challenges from other labour confederations. Moreover, anarchism's rejection of parliamentary politics and class parties could be problematic. It certainly helped attract working-class autodidacts, disgusted by a political system marked by fraud and corruption, to the movement. However, as we have seen, this left a gap populist republican movements would continue to occupy. The CNT was to an important degree able to undermine Lerrouxism from 1910. But the electoral space was never one it could fill. During the Primo de Rivera dictatorship of the 1920s this did not matter. But in the context of the reforming liberal-democratic regime of the 1930s, the CNT's refusal to enter the parliamentary arena would be increasingly difficult to justify. These, as we shall see, would be the central dilemmas of labour in 1930s Barcelona.

Notes

1 The concept is taken from C. Tilly. See, for example, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Reading, Massachusetts, 1978, pp. 151–66. In the Spanish case it has been successfully applied in Pamela Radcliffe, *From Mobilization to Civil War. The Politics of Polarization in the Spanish City of Gijón, 1900–1937*, Cambridge, 1996.

2 For a critique of such approaches see N. Kirk, 'History, language, ideas and postmodernism: a materialist view', *Social History*, no. 19, 1994, pp. 231–8.

3 Data on migration into Barcelona is to be found in the *Anuario Estadístico de la Ciudad de Barcelona* (AECB), 1902–1921, Barcelona, 1903–1923.

4 'Censo obrero de 1905' in AECB, 1905, Barcelona, 1907, pp. 599–632; *Censo de población de España*, 1900, vol. III, Madrid, 1907, pp. 124–5.

5 Table 2.1: given that between 1905 and 1920 the population of Barcelona increased by 148,580, it is difficult to believe that the active industrial working class grew by only 47,488. One of the problems is that overall the 1905 census was more accurate than any subsequent studies. It is no doubt also the case that the 1920 census missed large numbers of outworkers and labourers. In 1918 the Catalan demographer Josep María Tallada suggested that there might have been up to 50,000 unskilled casual workers in the city who did not appear on the census returns. See J. M. Tallada, *Demografía de Catalunya*, Barcelona, 1918, p. 55.

6 A. Smith, 'Anarchism, the General Strike and the Barcelona labour movement, 1899–1914', *European History Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1997, p. 8.

7 J. Valdour, *L'Ouvrier espagnol. Observations vécues. Tome 1-Catalogne*, Lille/Paris, 1919, pp. 78, 228–52, 289–92, 321.

8 Ministerio de Fomento, *Memoria acerca del estado de la industria en la provincia de Barcelona en el año 1907*, Madrid, 1910, p. viii.

9 Cámara Oficial de Barcelona, *Memoria reglamentaria del año 1919*, Barcelona, 1920, pp. 137–63; E. Escarra, *El desarrollo industrial de Cataluña*, Barcelona, 1970 [1908], p. 68; J. Playá, *Estado y estadística de las industrias mecánicas y eléctricas de la provincia de Barcelona en el año 1913*, Barcelona, n. d. (1913?).

10 A. Smith, 'Social conflict and trade union organisation in the Catalan cotton textile industry, 1890–1914', *International Review of Social History*, vol. XXXVI, no. 3, 1991, pp. 337–8. By the 1900s men made up only about 20 per cent of the labour force.

11 I have undertaken a detailed survey of the recasting of labour processes in Barcelona industry in 'Trabajadores "dignos" en profesiones "honradas": los oficios y la formación de la clase obrera barcelonesa (1899–1914)', *Hispania*, vol. LVI/2, 1996, pp. 655–87.
12 On the importance of intermarriage in the emergence of this new elite see, G. W. McDonogh, *Good Families of Barcelona. A Social History of Power in the Industrial Era*, Princeton University Press, 1986.
13 Smith, 'Trabajadores', p. 679.
14 These percentages have been calculated from data in the AECB, 1902, Barcelona, 1903, pp. 152–61. Further considerations on urban development from 1914 are to be found in Chapters Three and Four.
15 Table 2.2: given the lack of any statistics, data for the years 1899–1902 for Barcelona is based on a close examination of the local press. For the years 1903–13 for Barcelona I have preferred figures from the local study by Miguel Sastre over the official figures by the Instituto de Reformas Sociales (which began to publish its yearly reports in 1905). From 1913–-23 I have used the detailed data elaborated by Josep Lluis Martín Ramos. In undertaking the comparison with the rest of Spain, I have used the official data elaborated by the IRS but, of course, substituted the IRS statistics for Barcelona with those of Sastre and Martín Ramos.
16 Smith, 'Anarchism', p. 12; P. Gabriel, 'Classe obrera i sindicats a Catalunya, 1903–1920', unpublished PhD, Barcelona Central University, 1981, pp. 683–6.
17 When considering the power of journeymen within the labour process, the imposition of formal apprenticeship restrictions was as – if not more – important than intrinsic levels of skill. As Cristina Borderías points out in Chapter Eight, women could also, on occasion, undertake highly skilled work. The problem was that this was not recognized through formal apprenticeships.
18 Tallada, *Demografía*, pp. 51–66; M. Escudé, 'Monografía estadística de las clases trabajadoras en la ciudad de Barcelona', in AECB 1917, Barcelona, 1918, pp. 581–91; J. Nadal and C. Sudrià, *Història de la caixa de pensions*, Barcelona, 1979, pp. 17–24; P. Gabriel, 'Sous i cost de la vida a Catalunya a l'entorn dels anys de la primera guerra mundial', *Reçerques*, no. 20, 1988, p. 62.
19 Smith, 'Trabajadores', pp. 674–5.
20 Smith, 'Social conflict', pp. 362–3.
21 Gabriel, 'Sous i cost de la vida', p. 83.
22 Smith 'Social conflict', pp. 347–50.
23 Smith, 'Trabajadores', p. 666. A broader consideration of employers' organizations and ideology is to be found in Chapter Nine.
24 M. Sans Orenga, *Els treballadors mercantils dins el moviment obrer català*, Barcelona, 1975; M. Lladonosa, *Catalanisme i moviment obrer: el CADCI entre 1903 i 1923*, Barcelona, 1988.
25 The classic study is, G. Rudé, *The Crowd in History, 1730–1848*, New York, 1964.
26 L. Golden, 'El rebombori del pa del gener de 1918', *L'Avenç*, no. 44, 1981, pp. 45–50. For the period between 1907 and 1918 I have also read the CNT newspaper, *Solidaridad Obrera*.
27 T. Kaplan, 'Female consciousness and collective action: the case of Barcelona, 1900–1918', *Signs*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1973, pp. 545–66.
28 *Solidaridad Obrera*, 13 January 1918.
29 Smith, 'Social conflict', pp. 667–8.
30 The term is taken from E. P. Thompson. See, in particular, 'The moral economy of the crowd in the eighteenth century', *Past and Present*, no. 50 (1971), pp. 76–136.
31 For Seguí's ideas see, for example, Antonio Elorza (ed.), *Artículos madrileños de Salvador Seguí*, Madrid, 1976.
32 *Solidaridad Obrera*, 30 September 1918.
33 For the calculation of CNT membership I have used, above all, the anarcho-syndicalist press. For overall union membership during the war see also Gabriel,

'Classe obrera', pp. 684–6. The Sindicats Unics are dealt with in more detail in the following chapter.

34 For Ferrer see also Chapter One, pp. 5, 8–9.

35 For this section I have used *Solidaridad Obrera* along with the following accounts by anarchist and syndicalist veterans, H. Plaja, 'Salvador Seguí, hombre de la CNT', in *Salvador Seguí. Su vida, su obra*, Paris, 1960, p. 62; P. Foix, *Apòstols i mercaders*, 2nd edn, Barcelona, 1976, pp. 25–6, 89; B. Porcel, *La revuelta permanente*, Barcelona, 1978, p. 95; J. García Oliver, *El eco de los pasos*, Barcelona, 1978, pp. 120–1.

36 See the portrait in Albert Pérez Baró, *Els feliços anys vint. Memòries d'un militant obrer, 1918–1936*, Palma de Mallorca, 1974, pp. 21–9, 65–9.

37 For more details on anarchists and Socialists between 1898 and 1914 see Smith, 'Anarchism'. It should be emphasized that the fact that anarchist militancy and contempt for bureaucratized bargaining structures fitted well with the actual practice of labour protest in Barcelona does not mean that Barcelona workers had to be influenced by anarchism. There is never such a simple one-to-one relationship between practice and ideology. Anarchism had entered the world of Catalan labour politics in the early 1870s and was well positioned to dominate the union movement, but in other contexts a similar militant unionist role could be played by left socialists or communists.

38 For which see, for example, V. Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany*, New York/Oxford, 1985.

39 C. Ametlla, *Memòries polítiques, 1890–1917*, Barcelona, 1963, p. 54.

40 A. Duarte, *El republicanisme català a la fi del segle XX*, Vic, 1987.

41 See, N. Sales, 'Servicio militar y sociedad en la España del siglo XIX' in *Sobre esclavos, reclutas y mercaderes de quintas*, Barcelona, 1974, pp. 209–46.

42 A detailed analysis of electoral results in Barcelona is to be found in A. Balcells, J. B. Culla and C. Mir, *Les eleccions generals a Catalunya de 1901 a 1923*, Barcelona, 1982. The major studies of the Barcelona Lerrouxist movement are, J. Romero Maura, *La Rosa del Fuego*, Barcelona, 1975; J. B. Culla i Clarà, *El republicanisme lerrouxista a Catalunya, 1901–1923*, Barcelona, 1986; J. Alvarez Junco, *El emperador del paralelo. Lerroux y la demagogia populista*, Madrid, 1990.

43 *La Publicidad*, 8 September 1901.

44 A similar phenomenon has been detected in the United States and France as established republican parties had to cope with the rise of labour conflict. See, for example, S. Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1859*, New York, 1986.

45 See C. M. Winston, *Workers and the Right in Spain, 1900–1936*, Princeton, 1985.

46 Meanwhile, in quieter interludes, working-class youth had to be satisfied with the ritualistic pelting of the Sarrià steam train, which took the haute bourgeoisie to their weekend retreats. J. M. de Nadal, *Aquella Barcelona*, Barcelona, 1933, p. 22.

47 *La Publicidad*, 2, 3, 4, 5 July 1899.

48 *El Diluvio*, 20 February 1902.

49 E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, Manchester, 1959, pp. 74–92.

50 E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The Machine Breakers', *Past and Present*, vol. 1, 1952, pp. 57–70.

3 Red Barcelona in the Europe of war and revolution, 1914–30

Pere Gabriel

A European and Mediterranean capital

Barcelona was one of the few European cities in 1930 which had reached the figure of one million inhabitants without being a capital city. The only others were Birmingham, Glasgow, Hamburg and Milan, and of these only Milan was in the Mediterranean region. These were all industrial and commercial centres, and attracted large numbers of both manual and professional middle-class migrants. Milan and Barcelona were, however, exceptional in that they were approximately the same size as the capital (Rome and Madrid), and in both cases they could contrast their own industrial and economic modernity with the capital's bureaucratic parasitism.

This was very much to condition Barcelona's development. It was, as this book makes abundantly clear, a city of strikes, barricades and revolutionary uprisings, a city of unions and gunmen, a city in which class conflict at times reached levels of extreme violence. Yet it should not be forgotten that there was also a growing desire to become the capital city of the European Mediterranean. As a result, within the Catalan labour and popular movement there was to be tension between class-based discourses and interclass projects of civic reform, combined with a desire for Mediterranean and European incorporation.

The labour leadership and activists: between new syndicalism and the old guard

In the years preceding the First World War a new generation began to take over the Spanish and especially Catalan labour movement. These new leaders distanced themselves from the nineteenth-century parameters of the labour movement, which had been based on a trade-unionist and collectivist reading of the First International, combined with an uncritical acceptance of the liberal free-thinking tradition and of positivist evolutionism. That is – despite the occasional dispute – a world in which labour operated within the boundaries of radical democratic and federal republican culture.

By the first years of the twentieth century this model appeared to be the work of old men who had run out of steam. In the words of the first declaration of

SO (Solidaridad Obrera), the new Barcelona-wide labour federation formed in 1907: 'The youth are taking over from those who are tired out, defeated, or who have sold out.'[1] In reality the main criticism of the 'old and tired out' generation was their acceptance of marginalization and social invisibility. This was rather unfair in that it did not take into account the political importance of the failure of the radical experience of the Democratic Six Years between 1868 and 1874, and the impact of the political success of the conservative bourgeois Restoration from 1875. It also underestimated the importance and strength of labour-movement culture during the difficult years of the late nineteenth century. Nevertheless, in their rhetoric the new leaders continually emphasized the need for the labour movement to rediscover a visible and heroic place within society.

This new generation can possibly be considered less of a native Barcelona-based grouping than their predecessors, not because fewer of them were born in Barcelona but because the impact of growing geographical mobility meant they had greater Catalan-wide contacts. An important part of this generation also turned their hand to journalism and propaganda, and looked to integrate into the discussion circles and gatherings (*tertúlies*) within which a new political and intellectual elite was taking shape.

These changes were also combined with a shift in the socio-professional profile of the leading figures within the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movement. Those of the first generation of the 1880s and 1890s, such as Rafael Farga Pellicer, Josep Llunas i Pujals and Anselmo Lorenzo, tended to be teachers and typographers, professions which most involved cultural and intellectual activity. This contrasted with the greater presence of the supervisory elite – especially visible in textiles – amongst the more reformist and Socialist wings of the Catalan labour movement. The second generation of anarcho-syndicalist leaders, who came to the fore between 1906 and 1914, first with the formation of SO and then, in 1910, with the structuring of a new Spanish-wide labour federation, the CNT, came from a wider range of trades. The number of those linked to typography did not decline, but they were joined by a growing number of leaders from other trades, particularly within metallurgy and construction. On the other hand, white-collar and shop workers played an important role in the articulation of Catalan Socialism. Textile workers, for their part, remained absent from the anarchist leadership. These workers were still represented by reformist supervisory workers, who dominated the old textile union, the TCV.

These years were also to see the emergence of a group of teachers and propagandists who acted as theoreticians and intellectuals parallel to the labour movement. The number of such figures was small and this explains the excitement produced by the creation by Francisco Ferrer of the Modern School in 1901, the setting up of the production co-operative La Niotipia and of Alejandro Lerroux's republican daily, *El Progreso*, in 1908.[2] Both the Modern School and the co-operative were spaces in which such intellectuals could work. The Modern School founded its own publishing house and in it anarchists such as the veteran leader of the Spanish First International, Anselmo Lorenzo, worked alongside republicans, federalists and freemasons, such as Joan

Colominas Maseres and Cristòfol Litran. At the same time, the School's teachers staffed and ran the Union of Rationalist Teachers. Thus Ferrer's Modern School saw a close collaboration between old nineteenth-century republican revolutionaries, the orthodox and defensive anarchism of Anselmo Lorenzo and his family, and the new syndicalist currents which would be represented by SO and, soon after, the CNT. This would, however, lead to tensions, which came to the fore in La Niotipia. It had been founded by a group of veteran anarchists and called itself a 'communist workshop'. However, the sacking of one of its leading figures, Tomàs Herreros, led to serious conflict between 1908 and 1910, and was used by the syndicalist supporters of Herreros to differentiate the anarcho-syndicalism of SO and the CNT from Lerroux's republicanism (see also Chapter Two). The syndicalist press painted a picture of the dispute as being between 'yesterday's' anarchists (who had gone over to the Lerrouxist camp), and those 'of today' (like Herreros himself for example).

Older figures had contacts with republicanism, but new, rival organizations had no such links, and set up their own organizations. The anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists behind SO were soon to dominate the Syndicalist Athenaeum, founded on 3 July 1909, in the headquarters of SO. For their part, the Barcelona Socialists were able to publish a new weekly from November 1909 entitled *La International*. It was directed by Antoni Fabra Ribas, one of the few Spanish working-class leaders who maintained close relations with the Second International.

During the First World War the leadership of the Catalan labour movement was once again to be renewed with the influx of a new generation of youngsters who had only just arrived in the city, and who were subsequently to dominate labour politics until the 1920s and 1930s. This coincided with an end to the preponderance of the typographers, with the new labour leaders being drawn from a wide range of trades. However, the most important phenomenon of these years was the configuration of an active and extensive nucleus of speakers and propagandists. Indeed, a part of this leadership would abandon their trade to become professionals, especially rationalist teachers in schools funded by the unions, and attempt to live as journalists within the precarious and loss-making militant press. These figures would be seen as 'the men of the CNT' even by affiliated union militants.

Doctrinally, the predominance of these figures was not based on the assimilation of the revolutionary syndicalist doctrines which informed the French CGT. Before 1918–19 the impact of French syndicalist thought was limited to a number of translations of texts by the CGT on the general strike, by Emile Pouget on syndicalism, and a few pamphlets by Georges Sorel, edited by Ferrer's Modern School. On the other hand, there was a superabundance of translations and a widespread dissemination of theoretical works on anarchism, both by the major anarchist authors, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Reclus and Malatesta, and French figures such as Jean Grave, Charles Malato, Agustin Hamon, Sébastian Faure and Paraf-Javel. Indeed, Barcelona anarchist circles were reticent in the face of the new French revolutionary doctrines. This is reflected in the fact that the

correspondents of the Spanish and Barcelona press in France were anarchist militants, and were systematically critical of the strategy employed by the CGT. They were still influenced by the Bakuninist tradition of violence and insurrection and worried that unions might stifle the workers' revolutionary spirit. Anarchists like Leopoldo Bonafulla maintained that they should be willing to work within the labour unions to provoke general strikes and revolutionary upheaval, but made it clear that the role of the labour organization should end with the triumph of the revolution.[3]

However, there was certainly an overlap between Catalan labour movement culture, which drew on a trade-unionist and collectivist reading of the First International, and French revolutionary syndicalist doctrine. In Catalonia the resolutions and organizational impetus of the First International remained a key reference point. This culture was based on a number of nineteenth-century ideas and concepts. Unions were seen as acting on behalf of the working class without any outside paternalist aid. In addition, co-operatives and mutual aid societies, which were meant to ensure the stability and continuity of the movement, along with independent workers' schools (the latter in turn should be related to the wider republican and freethinking cultural tradition), were linked to the unions. Most important, in both cases unions were envisaged not as simple instruments to defend the workers but as the central plank in a revolutionary, anti-capitalist strategy.

The creation of the CNT in 1910 and its subsequent consolidation needs relating to this tradition. But the new leadership's anarcho-syndicalist ascription had little to do with theoretical elaboration. It was based on their experiences within the trade-union movement at a time in which the Restoration regime was entering an acute crisis and the working class undergoing major structural changes (see Chapter Two). It was very much the product of a context in which, in the absence of alternative political instruments, the unions became the central force around which the working class was articulated.

War and new times: cosmopolitanism, factories and working-class neighbourhoods

A series of personal testimonies by travellers, labour militants and writers allow us an insight into the heart of Barcelona during the war years. There were a number of themes. First, Barcelona was a modern city, its spaces occupied by a colourful mix of people speaking a varied range of languages. It was also a city of spies and informers, of easy money and of contraband. Simultaneously, it remained a city of anarchists and bombs, of unions and strikes. It was this atmosphere of intrigue and vitality which began to inspire detective novels such as *Confidential Message* by Alfred Edward Woodley Mason (1920), or *Inspector French's Greatest Case* by Freeman Wills Croft (1925). It was also a city which entered into the French Mediterranean literary circuit, with authors such as Paul Morand, René Bizet, Claude Farrère, Francis Carco and Henry de Montherland writing narratives based in Barcelona. Though perhaps with less force, Barcelona

also appeared in English-language travel literature through the writings of the British novelists G. K. Chesterton, Evelyn Waugh and Helen Cameron Gordon, and the North Americans John Dos Passos and Waldo Frank.

During the war years a great contrast was perceived between the city of wealth and gaiety on the one hand, and that of workers and industry on the other. This was proclaimed by the leaders of the international labour movement who visited Barcelona. For Leon Trotsky, in December 1916, Barcelona was like, 'Nice in a hell of factories. Smoke and flames on the one hand, flowers and fruit on the other.'[4] Victor Serge proclaimed:[5]

> Barcelona was in fiesta, the Ramblas illuminated at night and sumptuously bathed in sunlight by day, full of birds and women. Here too, the war was also the fountain of wealth. The factories worked flat out, and foundries produced for either the Allies or the Central Empires. Joy of life on all the faces, in all the shops, banks and in the people's wallets. It could make you go mad…. In the Espanyol Cafe in Parallel street – that popular avenue fierily lit up at night, very close to the terrible China Town – … I found activists arming themselves for the coming battle. They spoke with excitement of those who would fall, shared their Browning pistols, and showed no fear of the nervous police informers on the next table.

Barcelona had found it difficult to become accepted as a great European city. Indeed, it was virtually ignored until the first years of the twentieth century, when, along with its industrial character, emphasis was laid on the industrial crisis and bourgeois transformation it was undergoing, along with the fact that it was a European alternative to Madrid. Furthermore, Barcelona in certain circles began to be seen as a capital of European anarchism, and a city in which the workers and the people had a more direct impact than in London and Paris, the classic centres for cosmopolitan anarchist exiles. It was then that writers such as Angel Marvaud and Jacques Valdour took an interest in the social reality of Barcelona. This interest was no doubt further stimulated by the impact on European consciousness of the events of Tragic Week and the subsequent execution of Francisco Ferrer, which (like the tortures and executions of labour activists which followed the Montjuïc trial in 1896) provoked a European-wide campaign of protest (see Chapters One and Two). Yet Barcelona was not fully integrated into the European circuit of great cities until the First World War and the 1920s, when she was codified as both cosmopolitan and revolutionary. And as has been indicated, Mediterranean travellers played a key role in this process, establishing the paradigm of Barcelona as a city which tried to base itself on the Parisian model.[6]

Indeed, Barcelona had undergone a series of important changes during the war years. It was then that the city became a more articulated whole, new unifying spatial relationships established, and the neighbourhoods structured along lines which were to remain unchanged until the 1960s. It was also during the war years and 1920s that the growth in population accelerated spectacularly,

to reach 1,000,000 inhabitants by 1930. The structure of the new city focused on the interaction between a politically and socially stable core, based on the old city, the central Eixample and perhaps the centre of Gràcia, and a number of more popular, unstable, quarters centred on the Raval (within which was the famous Fifth District) and on the peripheral neighbourhoods (see also Figure 2.1).

As a result, popular and working-class life maintained a decidedly local character. Yet these years were also to see a decisive shift towards the creation of new Barcelona-wide identities. In this the workers would play an important role and this both helped to integrate the growing migrant population and was reflected in the establishment of the CNT as a city-wide force. Of key significance in this respect was the appearance of new central spaces of informal sociability (cafés, bars, theatres, popular entertainments) around the famous Paral·lel street. During the war and post-war years the Paral·lel emerged as a popular, interclass, alternative to the more respectable leisure activities based in the Plaça Catalunya. It was also during these years that it became Europeanized, and promoted its half-Parisian, half-American version of modernity through dance halls, tangos and bands, and, from 1917, jazz and cabarets. This was combined with new illuminated advertizing hoardings and drinks such as gin, whisky, brandy-cold, cherry-flip and cocktails. This was the moment in which the Paral·lel became closely associated with a new epicurean breed of tango dancers and gamblers, and attracted writers, musicians and intellectuals, sportsmen and courtesans. It was a meeting place for the young industrialist, boss's son, aspiring writer or journalist, white-collar, shop and skilled worker, and newly arrived immigrant. It was in this way that the Paral·lel became a place in which a worker from Sant Martí or Gràcia could feel at ease. It was also a forum where the popular classes could meet up; the Paral·lel, along with a large part of the adjacent old neighbourhood of the Raval and China Town, were points of informal – and even formal – sociability of an important part of the working-class leadership. To use the felicitous phase of an old labour militant, these central spaces were 'revolutionary seed beds'.[7]

However, this unifying central space was complemented by the vitality of a whole series of neighbourhood associations and neighbourhood-based social networks, within which much of the city's trade-union base was integrated. The typology of these associations was extensive, ranging from cultural centres, co-operatives, choral societies and hiking clubs. These were 'open' associations, which distanced themselves from party politics, and which were little concerned with the ideological and political affiliation of the membership. But it was precisely these characteristics which in moments of crisis for the labour movement allowed labour to retain a cultural presence in city life.

The multi-faceted CNT

Except in some specific conjunctures (1873, 1882–3, perhaps 1890–3) Barcelona and Catalan trade unionism had to a far greater extent been based on trade and

craft federations than on labour confederations. It was these federations which insured organizational continuity and which formulated union demands. They maintained a primary trade unionism, which was 'a-politic' (in the sense that the unity of the workers was placed above ideological differences), and they therefore distanced themselves from the Socialists and anarchists. It is important to note that this left anarchist and Socialist activists in a difficult position, for the union confederations they captained could only grow stronger by imposing themselves on the trade federations.

The construction of the CNT cannot be understood without reference to the tense relations established with the trade federations. By the years 1919–20 the victory of the CNT over these federations was clear. But when the process of union reorganization began in 1912–13 the trade federation played a central role. These federations, centred on textiles, construction, woodworking and the metallurgical industry, were of fundamental importance in the growth of the unions at a time when the CNT remained extremely weak. The new anarcho-syndicalism would, however, little by little be able to impose itself and finally present itself as the embodiment of the entire union movement.

The reasons behind the triumph of the anarcho-syndicalist confederation cannot only be seen in terms of the internal dynamic of the union movement. One also needs to look at the political context, marked by the growing crisis of the Restoration system (dramatically illustrated during 1917 when, as we shall see, the various opposition forces briefly allied to try and overthrow it), the economic repercussion of the war, the impact of the massive influx of migrant workers, especially after 1914, and technological innovation and changes in the organization of the labour process in Barcelona industry. The crisis of the Restoration and its inability to open up channels which could allow a reformist solution to labour conflicts helps explain why Catalan Socialism entered into clear crisis during these years. The fact that Catalan industry was still highly dispersed also made it difficult for the trade federations to obtain lasting improvements in working conditions and, in the highly charged political atmosphere set in motion by the events of 1917, the horizontal and local integration of union structures proposed by the CNT gained support. However, it should also be noted that the revolutionary activism of many CNT leaders rested on a union movement in which professional and, one might say, 'labourist' elements continued to play an important part.

A good example of the tensions which could exist between the trade federations and the CNT is provided by the great textile strike of 1913. March 1912 saw the legalization of the Union of Textile and Similar Arts (soon to be known as La Constància), to be followed by the organization in June 1913 of a new regional textile federation. A major strike, which spread throughout Catalonia, was called at the end of the following month. During the strike a dispute broke out between the strike committee (made up of both Socialists and syndicalists), which was looking to reach a negotiated solution to the dispute, and the leadership of the Catalan branch of the CNT (CRT), which aimed to take over the leadership of the movement and call a general strike in order to strengthen its

position. This brought it into conflict with the men of the textile union. On this occasion it was the textile federation which emerged strengthened. After the strike they were able to stabilize the membership of La Constància at around 18,000 affiliates and hold a further regional congress in Barcelona in December 1913 at which the anarcho-syndicalist leadership of La Constància took over the regional federation.

Moreover, the CNT itself cannot be seen as an ideologically unified body. Without wishing to draw over-linear distinctions, one could see in the anarchist and libertarian milieu of these years a number of different sectors between whom there could be tensions. On the one hand were to be found the more doctrinal and theoretical anarchists (who often acted as a bridge with the previous generation), such as Tomàs Herreros and Josep Prat. They were influential in bodies like the Syndicalist Athenaeum and the publishers Germinal, and in the face of the rise of syndicalism were keen to maintain the anarchist and Kropotkinist heritage. There was also a group of self-taught propagandists and journalists with links to broader Catalan intellectual currents. Also emerging were young union leaders, who served to connect the new CNT unions in the process of construction with the anarchist movement. At their side were to be found a conglomerate of trade-union militants, who made up the committees of the local unions. Finally, we find activists and revolutionaries, who were not shy of committing violent acts, and also some bohemian anarchists.

A certain differentiation could be seen in the role these groups were to play within the CNT. The Confederation's leading figures were to be found in the local, regional and national committees, amongst the editorial staff of the major newspapers, *Solidaridad Obrera* and *Tierra y Libertad*, and within the Syndicalist Athenaem. Rather than the men most closely linked to the unions, it was the revolutionary propagandists and bohemians who were at the forefront of the reorganization of the national committee of the CNT and who dominated the anarchist press. And it was in this context that a number of men newly arrived in Barcelona were catapulted into leading positions within the organization. A few examples serve to illustrate this tendency. The Uruguayan of Galician origin, Antonio Loredo, who was already active in the labour movement during Tragic Week, was one of the organizers of the 1915 El Ferrol conference, at which the CNT was reconstituted, and he introduced the young activists who were arriving in Barcelona into the movement. He was to die suddenly of a heart attack while on a propaganda trip in 1916. Most significantly, it was Loredo who lent a hand to a young worker, originally from the town of León, Angel Pestaña. Pestaña arrived in Barcelona from Algeria at the age of 28 in August 1914, and within several months he had formed part of the delegation of Barcelona unions at the El Ferrol conference, collaborated in *Tierra y Libertad*, and had become a well-known speaker. In 1916 he accompanied Salvador Seguí in the negotiations which preceded the signing of a pact with the Socialist UGT, and in 1917 he became the director of *Solidaridad Obrera*, the mouthpiece of the CNT. Manuel Buenacasa arrived in Barcelona in 1913 and became the secretary general of the CNT's National Committee in 1918. Finally, Evilio Boal, originally from

Valladolid, formed part of the National Committee of the CNT alongside Buenacasa not long after having arrived in Barcelona. He became its Secretary General in 1919, a post he retained until his assassination in 1921. Loredo made his living as a propagandist and journalist. Pestaña had undertaken numerous jobs and when he arrived in Barcelona he mended watches. Buenacasa was a carpenter and unlike the other men mentioned had a certain experience as a union organizer. Boal was a typographer, but whenever he could he worked in the theatre, had a Bohemian life-style and a drink problem. All of them could be considered more strictly anarchists rather than syndicalists.

There was a certain divorce between these generic leaders of the CNT, in general not linked to a specific trade and with little real experience of trade unionism, and the leading figures within the Barcelona unions. They were less well known than the CNT leaders, but it was they who were in reality behind the trade-union reorganization in Barcelona, and who dominated the CRT's Sants Congress in July 1918, which opened the doors to the CNT's effective dominance of Catalan unionism. Particularly important in this respect were a group of young men who were able to lead these trade unionists and ensure their confluence with the anarcho-syndicalism of the CNT. This group, which may be referred to as the 'team' of Salvador Seguí, the leading union organizer of the period, ran the regional committee of the CNT (CRT) and the Barcelona local federation until the end of 1919. The 'team' was made up of a number of trade-unionists, amongst whom several stood out as self-taught intellectuals. They had strong roots within the Barcelona working class and were able to act as a bridge between the more traditional trade unionism of the federations and the new revolutionary anarcho-syndicalism of the CNT.

The key elements in their trade-union strategy was their determination to restructure Barcelona trade unionism along the lines of local industrial unions, the so-called Single Trade Unions (Sindicats Unics) (see also Chapter Two), and a related emphasis on the essential unity of the working class, a fact which led them to try and establish relations with the Socialist UGT. They proclaimed the workers' revolutionary aspirations, but simultaneously distanced themselves from revolutionary adventurism and showed themselves willing to establish a dialogue with politicians in order to establish a broader front in opposition to the reactionary Right.

Doctrinally they were close to French revolutionary syndicalism, but as anarcho-syndicalists they saw anarchism as the ideological backdrop and ultimate objective of the movement. They used labour conflicts to construct the Sindicats Unics. This would not be straightforward, given the resistance of the more traditional representatives of craft trade unionism. Nevertheless, they achieved considerable success in the construction, woodworking and typographical industries, and on the Barcelona docks. Moreover, they were able to establish relations with the Socialist UGT. In July 1916 they signed a pact with the UGT with the object of forcing the Government to do something to stop rapidly escalating prices. On 18 December both unions jointly organized a successful one-day protest strike. Behind this pact, however, was a more traditional element

in Spanish trade-union culture: the affirmation of the unity of all workers over and above any political and ideological differences. This allowed the anarcho-syndicalist leaders to proclaim themselves the builders of a new, unitarian, union movement. Furthermore, the disciplined and ordered nature of the strike seemed to mark a shift away from the violent history of Barcelona anarchism.

In the following year the CRT leadership also showed its willingness to reach political compromises. 1917 proved to be a crucial year in Spain (as in other European countries), with the onset of a political crisis which included at least three separate elements: a revolt against the Government by the intermediate grades within the army; a movement in favour of political reform which took in a range of parliamentary groups from the Catalan regionalists to the Spanish republicans captained by Alejandro Lerroux; and a working-class offensive against the Restoration monarchy made possible by the trade-union reorganization of the previous years.[8] The Barcelona anarchist leadership worked themselves into a revolutionary frenzy. A new agreement signed by the CNT and UGT on 27 March 1917 announced the decision, given the ineffectiveness of the Government's Pro-Subsistence Commission, charged with checking rising prices, to call a general strike 'of an unlimited duration'. During the spring of 1917 a number of resignations of government ministers, the extra-constitutional pressure exercised by the minority parties in parliament, and the agitation of the military Defence Juntas, indicated that the fall of the Restoration could be imminent, and in these circumstances, despite the anti-politicism of both anarchists' and anarcho-syndicalists, they had to intervene in the movement. They used the following argument:[9]

> To say that this is going to fall is not right. The consequent thing to do is to say that we have to do it…. The Republic? Does this mean that we are fighting for the Republic? The people will decide. We are not doing and will not do anything else than go with the people as far as they can and want to go. Our understanding is that without any prior accord, without any pacts or agreements, we can all participate in a collective movement in the street, in the open air.

This position soon became a cliché. It would, for example, also be used in 1930–1 to justify collaboration with the republicans and participation in the movement which would bring about the Second Republic. It was, however, paradoxical that the CNT should support a political movement through a pact with the UGT. This pact was reached in order in the first instance to call a general strike to protest at the rise in food prices. Yet it also made the CNT dependent on the republicans and other politicians in order to 'take to the street'. This showed that the CNT was unprepared to launch its own revolutionary movement. Rather, by participating in the assault on the monarchy it hoped simply to achieve a modernization of the country, while demonstrating the strength of syndicalism and that without the mobilization of the workers any transformation would be impossible.

The August strike also brought to the fore the CNT's limitations in Barcelona. Unlike the Socialists who aimed to call a peaceful protest strike, their goal was to launch a movement which would occupy the streets. On Monday 13 August groups of young Socialists and syndicalists were able to stop the trams, while in the peripheral neighbourhoods (Sants, Sant Andreu, Sant Martí) barricades went up. On the Tuesday there were clashes resulting in a number of dead and wounded around the centre of town, but the strike fizzled out between Thursday and Friday. All the eye-witness accounts agree that, rather than a broadly based movement, it was a strike launched by a group of union activists and young militants, who were able to take advantage of the political situation, but who were left alone in the streets. Moreover, the only goal became to last out in the expectation that the politicians would triumph. The strike ended with 37 dead and 70 wounded in Barcelona (according to official figures there were 71 deaths in the whole of Spain). The consequences of the failure were, on the one hand, a cooling of relations with the Socialists and the strengthening of anti-political tendencies within the Confederation and, on the other, especially amongst the 'team' of Salvador Seguí, a determination that the Catalan organization should be strengthened.

This latter goal was achieved with the celebration of the CRT's Sants congress in July 1918, attended by 153 delegates representing 158 associations and nearly 75,000 affiliates. The anarcho-syndicalists rather than the anarchist propagandists took centre stage and were able to attract a high percentage of the organized working class. A sign of the times in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution was the fact that a workers' revolution was now seen as possible and was discussed. However, the conference centred on organizational matters and especially the Sindicats Unics. The aim of the team of Salvador Seguí and those union representatives attracted to it was to build a powerful union movement based on the horizontal Sindicats Unics, along with local and *comarcal* (county-wide) labour federations, in which the Regional Committee – dominated by them – would play a central role.

Opposition to the Sindicats Unics in the name of trade-union autonomy (which could come from both anarchists and corporatist union representatives) was brushed aside. The anarcho-syndicalists were also sensitive to the need to incorporate the unions without unnecessary traumas and therefore opposed the motion to declare yellow any union which did not immediately join a Sindicat Unic. Furthermore, they were anxious that persons with a real base in the unions should represent them at congresses and so maintained that people could only represent a union or local federation if they were actually affiliated to it and came from the locality concerned (rather than any union within the Confederation). This was not surprisingly opposed by the anarchist propagandists, who had less of a base in the unions, and a compromise resolution formulated by Angel Pestaña was finally approved whereby members of local union committees and affiliates attending local conferences had to belong to a union in the town, but at regional level delegates could be drawn from either the unions' locality or the place the conference was being held. In the same pro-

trade-unionist line Seguí also theoretically subordinated a newly created commission of foreign relations and prisoners' commissions to the Regional Committee (though in practice they would never operate in this way). Yet, the congress authorized the establishment of so-called propaganda commissions, and in these the anarchists would often seek refuge.

It was on this basis that the expansion of the CNT between 1918 and 1919 rested. At the Sants Congress there were 55 Barcelona unions present representing 55,000 affiliates. By the time of the CNT's December 1919 congress held in Madrid 433,746 Catalan workers were represented of which 251,987 were from Barcelona. This represented not only almost the entire Barcelona union movement but also practically all of the industrial working class. Furthermore, 97 per cent of unions represented at the Madrid congress (99 per cent of those affiliated) were integrated within Sindicats Unics. This is indicative of the success of the CRT leadership.[10]

Unionization and class struggle: gun wars and the Sindicats Lliures

During 1919–20 practically all the sectors of society within the city became unionized in one form or another. Furthermore, this union building process was aimed specifically at imposing each social group's demands through confrontation and direct action, with the result that the city's political representatives were undermined at the same time as the social climate became highly polarized.

The CNT itself, as we have noted, became the representative of the entire working class. It affiliated workers who had previously had little contact with anarcho-syndicalism, and articulated not only the major industrial sectors of the economy but also white-collar and office workers, factory supervisors and even formed a union of the professional middle classes. Indeed the key industrial conflict of 1919 in the electricity generating company, La Canadenca, began amongst the office staff. In addition, this union drive was not only limited to the workers. Employers also updated their old industrial pressure groups, and formed a federation whose goal was to put a stop to social strife and which adopted a violent, intransigent stance (see Chapter Nine).

The generalized nature of the conflict between workers and employers, its harshness and the wide-ranging consequences, were brought to the fore by the La Canadenca strike and the subsequent employers' lock-out. The strike began at the La Camarasa dam project in Pallars in the province of Lleida in December 1918. However it was only when it was taken up by the Barcelona CNT leadership that it spread and took on decisive importance. During the first phase of the strike in Barcelona between 6 and 21 February it only affected the company's office workers. But the strike was extended to all the companies within the La Canadenca group from 21 February, thereby both leaving the city in the dark and paralysing production. Instantly the strength of the CNT was apparent, and it became clear that levels of labour strife in Catalonia were comparable to those of France or Italy. The strike also showed the success of the

policies pursued by Salvador Seguí and the CRT; it was disciplined, there was little violence, and its impact was huge. Moreover, the arrest of the best known CNT leaders had no impact. The strike committee was able to continue functioning clandestinely because the strike was under the control of the union-based anarcho-syndicalists rather than the better-known anarchist agitators and propagandists. Particularly striking (though, in fact, not in reality of that much importance) was the fact that for the first time the CNT tried to impose 'red censorship'. Most spectacularly, it was able to stop the publication of a proclamation by the Captain General of Barcelona imposing the militarization of the workers on 8 March, and levied fines (which were paid) on right-wing newspapers, such as the *Diari de Barcelona*, which did not follow the unions' orders. These events subsequently formed part of the city's collective memory and were recounted in all the memoirs of the period. Another notable feature of the strike was that it was called without warning and led to the immediate cessation of the city's entire electricity supply, with the result that the trams were left stranded in the street.

What frightened bourgeois opinion was not the violence of the strike (never in a major strike had violence been kept so under control), nor any supposedly revolutionary demands (it was aimed at improving the working conditions of some of the company's office staff), but the ordered and disciplined strength of the trade unions. This indicated that labour was organized as never before and seemed to leave the employers – and more broadly bourgeois values – at the mercy of the trade unions and their leaders. The traditional mechanisms of repression had shown themselves to be obsolete and, indeed, emphasized the power of the unions. Thus the CNT leaders who had been imprisoned on ships anchored in the harbour finally had to be released in order to resolve the conflict. The militarization of transport and services failed to normalize the situation, and the mobilization of the workers ordered by the Captain General did not get them back to work. The decision to put a number of industries under state control proved equally unsuccessful. This simply left the solution of the conflict in the hands of the politicians, some of whom were republicans. However, the end of the strike was to demonstrate both the limits of the CNT's power and see the articulation of a new repressive strategy based on a direct pact between the city's conservative classes and the military, which bypassed the political representatives of the Restoration regime. It was this new reality which was to mark the city's development until at least 1923–4.

On 19 March 1919 in a famous meeting in the La Arenas bull ring with 20,000 present, Salvador Seguí convinced the city's workers to return to work, with the proviso that all jailed workers should be released by 24 March. Otherwise a general strike was to be called. The civil and political authorities had facilitated this solution to the conflict, but the military, with the support of a large part of the employers, refused to accept the compromise, thereby forcing the CRT leaders, very much despite themselves, to call the general strike: they had been incapable of ending the conflict and withstanding the military/

employer provocation. Thereafter, the Captain General of Barcelona, General Joaquín Milans del Bosch, was able to elaborate his own repressive policy, in close collaboration with the representatives of the right-wing Catalan parties, the Lliga Regionalista and Monarchist Union, while at the same time marginalizing the regime's official parties. Thus Milans obliged the Civil Governor, Carles Montañés (who had negotiated with the unions), and the chief of the city's police force, to resign, in turn provoking the fall of the Liberal Government of the Count of Romanones (15 April 1919). The major elements of the military's strategy were clear. They wished to maintain a long strike which would favour the disarticulation of the CNT. Moreover, in order to achieve their goals they needed to militarize civil society. Hence they re-established the Sometent (which functioned as a bourgeois police force under military control) and launched an indiscriminate repression of the labour movement (see also Chapter Nine).

The object was to force the workers back over a period of time thereby making possible a selection of personnel. 'Negotiations' regarding the return to work were to be led by the employers and workers' 'commissions' with no union participation. Meanwhile the city's streets were to be occupied by the army and Sometent. The strategy began to pay off. The union leadership tried to call a return to work on 7 April (obviously renouncing the demand for the release of prisoners), but because of employer provocations strikes continued in many industries over which the unions had increasingly little control. In some sectors such as construction, in which the most intransigent employers' federation was to be found, a lock-out was declared in order to be able to sack union militants.

The situation was paradoxical. Suddenly a significant part of the regime politicians and union leaders found themselves on the same side of the fence, trying to find a negotiated and reformist solution to the Barcelona conflict. This had first been attempted by the Romanones Government in the negotiations to end the Canadenca strike in March 1919, and a similar effort was made by the Conservative Government of Sánchez Toca between July and December 1919. Government and unions set up an industrial tribunal (*Comissió Mixta del Treball*) in Barcelona, with both employer and worker representatives, in order to discuss workers' demands. This implied the recognition of the CNT and a political solution to the conflict with the marginalization of the military and of the Sometent. It is very important to take into account the great impact of the photograph of the first, and very nearly only, session of the tribunal. To see seated at the same table representatives of the unions and employers, with the mayor in the chair, was to turn upside down right-wing and bourgeois culture, undermining the social position of the dominant elements in society.

It is clear that the military, employers, the more conservative wing of Catalanist regionalists and Catalan representatives of the dynastic parties, were vehemently opposed to the tribunal. Opinion was not unanimous, but differences were to be found between those who would have been willing to deal with another kind of trade-union movement and those who wished repression of labour pure and simple. No one was willing to negotiate with the CNT. As it was the hard-liners came out on top. Thus the establishment of the tribunal was

followed by the declaration of a general employer lock-out which, between 3 November 1919 and 20 March 1920, once again brought the city to a halt. The object was to return the direction of policy to Milans del Bosch, who could then carry on the work initiated in March/April and deepen his understanding with Barcelona's 'respectable society' (who gave him a massive ovation at a meeting held in the Novetats Theatre on the night of 22 December 1919). The Government proffered Milans del Bosch absolute power on 9 January 1920. Three days later he dissolved the CRT and had over a hundred leaders detained and deported. The militarization of the city was complete. After Milans del Bosch stood aside, in October/November 1920 the repressive policy was continued by the new Barcelona civil governor, General Severiano Martínez Anido. This was accompanied by calls in employer circles for the formation of professional unions and debates on whether it was necessary to set up obligatory trade unions which would 'really' (i.e., in the employers' interests) represent the working class (see also Chapter Nine).

However, this debate, and, more broadly, the reasons behind the employers' unwillingness to accept a powerful trade-union movement, and the causes of the crisis of the liberal state in Catalonia, can only be understood if one takes into account the general recourse to violence within the city during these years. As in many other European cities, a degree of violence had always been associated with trade unionism. The instability of the unions and lack of official recognition meant that in order to make an impact some violence was used (see also Chapter Two). Such violence (which should not be confused with anarchist terrorism) accompanied the trade-union reorganization of the years 1916–17. Blacklegs were attacked, there were threats against employers, and improvements in working conditions were achieved in part as a result of these threats. However, matters became more complicated because of the impact of the European war on Barcelona. This favoured an active commerce in guns (the famous Browning pistols) and led to the growth of an underworld of persons with neither stable employment nor a family life. As a result, there was a sharp escalation in levels of violence accompanying union struggles. The trade-union leaders themselves – starting with Seguí and Pestaña – showed themselves to be worried at this growth in the number of professional gunmen, seen as a cancer which could eat away at the trade unions' legitimacy.

It was a question of the utmost importance. The union leadership saw nothing wrong with 'traditional' union violence, and the Sants Congress had itself approved the organization of union 'action and propaganda committees'. These could be seen as necessary to defend the union in a context of police repression. But it could lead the unions to become immersed in a world of violence in which it was difficult to keep one's distance from the life styles and influence of the 'men of action', who were willing to risk their lives for the cause. It was in this context that a number of sensational assassination attempts reverberated around the city. The first was the murder of a well-known textile industrialist on 7 October 1917, followed by that of the leading figure within the employers' metal union, Josep Albert Barret, on 8 January 1918. This latter case

also has to be related to the underworld of German spies who had descended on Barcelona during the war and their involvement in commercial wars and sabotage.

The situation was to change radically from 1919 with the establishment of contacts between the employers and the military. The 'Milans solution' signified not only the militarization of the city's 'men of order'. Milans also showed himself more than willing to recruit anti-CNT gunmen in the city's twilight world. Most notable was the formation between May and July 1919 of the so-called Baron de Konig gang, recruited from the underworld by Bravo Portillo, the head of the police, with money from the employers. The gang carried out numerous extortions and assassinations of union leaders, such as that of Josep Sabater ('Tero'), president of the dyers' section of the textile Sindicat Unic on 19 July 1919.

The dynamic of official repression accompanied by attacks by armed gangs inevitably strengthened the position of the action groups within the unions and resulted in a spiral of attacks and counter-acts which above all affected the labour and employer leaders, police, and members of the gangs themselves. The police chief, Bravo Portillo, was assassinated on 5 September 1919. This was followed by an attack which left the president of the Barcelona Employers' Federation, Fèlix Graupera, injured on 5 January 1920. Next, on 12 September of the same year a bomb went off in the café-concert Pompeia, leaving six dead and twelve injured. In 1921 a well known police inspector was killed, and the mayor badly wounded, while in October 1922 Martínez Anido himself narrowly escaped assassination. In general, attacks on the police increased greatly during these years. Between 1910 and 1917 eighteen policemen were attacked, of which one was killed and eight wounded. However, between 1918 and 1923 135 were attacked, of which eleven were killed and seventeen wounded. There were also a number of spectacular assassinations outside Barcelona which were closely linked to the gun wars in the city; most notably the ex-civil governor of the city, the Count of Salvatierra, and the President of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister), Eduardo Dato, on 8 March 1921.

It was the CNT union leaders who suffered most. Between 1919 and 1923 ninety-eight CNT activists were killed and thirty-three badly wounded. Labour lawyers linked to the CNT were also targets, and the best known of them, Francesc Leyret, was assassinated. Furthermore, from 1920 thirty-nine members of the so-called Sindicats Lliures (Free Trades Unions), as we shall see, set up by the Right in October 1919 to put a break on the growth of the CNT, were killed and twelve badly injured.

Table 3.1 indicates the overall picture. It is difficult to be totally precise in this respect. Official statistics and eye witness accounts do not always coincide. I have included the maximums and mininums given in the various sets of statistics. Figures for 1917 are particularly diverse given the problem of whether to include the injured and dead from the revolutionary movement in August. Table 3.2 shows that a high percentage of these attacks can be analysed according to whether they affected workers, supervisors or employers.[11]

Table 3.1 Violence during Barcelona labour disputes, 1910–23

Year	*Dead*	*Injured*	*Total persons attacked*
1910	3	65	162
1911	2	29	65
1912	3	12	41
1913	1	16–19	32–55
1914	4	35–36	58–69
1915	2	7–9	12
1916	2–3	27–29	38–44
1917	6–37	25–88	32–128
alternative figures 1917	*23–55*	*216–287*	*440–576*
1918	13–15	39–50	80–82
1919	20–22	46–60	74–87
1920	48–53	147–195	253–291
1921	95–106	112–170	284–311
1922	19	20–30	40–61
1923	44–59	53–55	101–117
Total	239–274	417–560	840–949

Table 3.2 Workers, supervisors and employers injured and killed during Barcelona labour disputes, 1910–23

Year	*Dead*			*Injured*			*Total attacked*		
	workers	*supervisors*	*employers*	*workers*	*supervisors*	*employers*	*workers*	*supervisors*	*employers*
1910	1	1	0	46	4	1	137	5	5
1911	1	0	0	27	0	1	59	0	4
1912	1	0	1	12	0	0	35	0	5
1913	1	0	0	14	0	1	52	0	2
1914	4	0	0	31	0	3	58	0	9
1915	2	0	0	7	0	0	12	0	0
1916	1	1	0	16	2	4	27	5	8
1917	3	0	2	13	6	3	22	7	5
alternative figures 1917	*14*	*2*	*3*	*166*	*12*	*13*	*402*	*17*	*38*
1918	6	3	4	25	2	4	58	6	14
1919	7	3	4	21	1	2	41	8	15
1920	26	4	8	77	7	12	127	13	35
1921	81	9	5	63	4	9	191	13	25
1922	17	1	0	15	2	2	54	3	2
1923	34	4	4	42	2	6	92	6	10
Total	171	24	25	245	18	35	563	49	101

The gun wars had become generalized from 1918 and especially 1919, but it was after the start of the employer lock-out at the beginning of 1920 that they reached their peak. From November 1920 the Barcelona civil governor,

Martínez Anido, took the policy initiated by Milans del Bosch to its ultimate consequences without any scruples. Thus he began by arresting sixty-five union leaders and deporting thirty-six of them, together with many left-wing political figures (including the future president of the Catalan autonomous government, Lluis Companys), to the castle of La Mola on the island of Menorca. This was followed by the introduction of what came to be known as the *ley de fugas*, through which CNT prisoners were murdered while 'escaping'.

These new modes of repression decisively weakened the CNT. Furthermore, they were accompanied by an emergence of the Sindicats Lliures, which grew out of the Carlist tradition and which responded to CNT violence with violence of their own. Carlism was in its origins a rural movement which for almost one hundred years had been a major reference point for traditionalists and Catholic integrists. However, in the early twentieth century for the first time it began to penetrate the urban world. Between 1915 and 1920 the Carlists had more than twenty centres in Barcelona, mostly in the peripheral neighbourhoods. Quantitatively their support was limited. There were about ten thousand sympathizers, only about a third of whom could be considered blue- or white-collar workers. However, young militants were well represented, and they led criticism by radical Carlists of the moderation and 'embourgeoisement' of the leadership, while engaging in the street battles against the Lerrouxist youth movement, the 'young barbarians'.

These radicals, who were linked to the weekly *La Trinchera*, dominated the peripheral neighbourhood centres, and opposed the attempt to set up Catholic unions by the Jesuit Gabriel Palau, which had been supported by leading Carlists. As against the confessionalism of Palau's unions, they championed a movement which was purely working class and clearly defended workers' interests, while at the same time emphasizing their 'virility' and undertaking paramilitary training. They conducted shooting practice, sword fighting, boxing, combat techniques, and raffled Browning pistols and Winchester rifles. It was in this milieu that the Legitimist Workers' Athenaeum and the Regional Free Trade Union was formed on 10 October 1919.

As a result, a number of leaders emerged with some experience of trade-union affairs, most notably their foremost leader, the office worker Ramon Sales. Nevertheless, at first the Lliures had little success and by mid-1920 they were about to be wound up. The situation was to change radically with the appointment of Martínez Anido. He built up a friendship with Sales and the ex-Valencian Jesuit, Laguía, and had no scruples about using the Lliures in order to combat the CNT, seeing the possibility of substituting for the CNT in a context in which the majority of its leaders were imprisoned, deported or assassinated.

One of the objectives, proclaimed by the Lliures in 1919, had been the 'liberation of the workers from the tyranny of the anarchists and the Sindicats Unics'. With Anido's help this policy was reinforced, and included gun attacks on leading figures of the CNT. Hence began the war between gunmen of the Lliures and the Sindicats Unics, in which the former had the clear advantage of

the support of the political and military authorities. It was in this way that the Lliures were able to gain an important union presence in the city. In October 1921 they claimed to have 100,000 affiliates and by July 1922 they had reached a high point of 130,000.

However, with this massive affiliation a contradiction (or at least differentiation) emerged between a Carlist-dominated leadership and a mass of workers who had joined for a variety of motives. Some leaders, as we have seen, had trade-union experience, and many more trade unionists who had been brought up in the traditions of the CNT now joined. Other workers had affiliated because of the threat of violence, or because in a generally repressive context the Lliures provided a safe haven. Some more craft-based or more elite unions had only participated in the Sindicats Unics because they saw no other choice, but they now joined the Lliures for equally opportunistic reasons. The overall result was that the Lliures became a heterogeneous mix of gunmen, radical Carlist leaders, union organizers, opportunists, with a mass membership an important part of which had felt obliged to affiliate. Thus when Martínez Anido left Barcelona and the CNT returned to semi-legality in 1923, a large part of the Lliure membership returned to it. Nevertheless, the Lliures retained some important unions and at least in part represented those workers alienated from the CNT.

The reorganization of the CNT and the new attitude of the authorities, who also began to control the activities of the Lliures, goes further to explain the intensification of the gun wars on the streets of Barcelona. Between December 1922 and May 1923 thirty-three men were killed and seventy-four injured in gun attacks, including the assassination of Salvador Seguí at the hands of the Lliures in March 1923. According to their own figures the Lliures lost 25,000 affiliates in that spring. Large numbers returned to the CNT, including most of their affiliates in the textile industry. Nevertheless, they were able to maintain a smaller, but in reality more coherent union organization, centred on waiters and cooks, service-sector workers (such as gas and electricity workers) and bank employees.

Yet the change in the political conjuncture was once again decisively to condition the Lliure's development. With the onset of military dictatorship following General Miguel Primo de Rivera's coup d'état in September 1923, Martínez Anido became Interior Minister and the Lliures once again found themselves in an excellent position to try and replace the CNT. Nevertheless, despite the collapse of the CNT unions the Lliures were never to dominate Barcelona unionism. Rather, they tried to lead its more moderate and reformist wing through the official bodies set up by the Dictatorship to try and find a corporate solution to Spain's social conflict. In 1926, under the influence of Italian fascism, Primo de Rivera launched the National Corporative Organization, which established Parity Committees of worker, employer and state representatives in order to set wages and working conditions. The Lliures looked to dominate worker representation of these committees in Barcelona, though even here they would find it difficult in some sectors.

Catalan anarcho-syndicalism under the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera

The Primo de Rivera dictatorship greatly limited the ability of the anarcho-syndicalists to operate in the open. Following the participation of CNT figures in attacks on the regime – such as the assassination of the executioner of the Barcelona jail – the CNT was formally made illegal. Some union and local federations continued to operate with difficulty, but the situation further worsened after the attempted attack on the barracks in Les Drassanes and the invasion, led by separatist refugees, at Vera de Bidasoa in November 1924.

Within this clandestine environment internal tensions heightened. With the military coup the radicals, who controlled the Barcelona organization, ordered the shift to underground activity, arguing that it was impossible to operate openly. Henceforth, figures on the syndicalist wing of the movement, such as Joan Peiró and Angel Pestaña, tried with limited success to use any legal loopholes they could to maintain a union presence and so not fall into sectarianism.

Inevitably these years also saw a reconsideration of doctrines and practice. Joan Peiró, who was general secretary of the CNT and also played a key role in producing magazines in which CNT ideology and strategy were discussed, attempted to reconstruct a union alliance between leading Barcelona and provincial (*comarcal*) figures. In his magazines a call was made for the 'syndicalization' of the CNT. It would still be inspired by anarchism. However, it was seen as a humanitarian doctrine which provided a long-term aspiration. Anarchists would operate at the side of the unions, but would not be able to interfere with union autonomy.

These years also saw a radicalization of the anarchist groups. There was disagreement over whether they should concentrate on propaganda or violent opposition to the regime. Nevertheless, they all agreed that anarchism should maintain a concrete – even organic – control over the unions. The person who developed this theme most was Manuel Buenacasa, who had established links with cosmopolitan anarchists, the best known of whom was Diego Abad de Santillán, who were in control of the Argentinian anarchist labour confederation, the FORA, and who called for an explicitly anarchist labour movement. This tendency received the backing of an important part of the anarchist exiles in France. They supported the formation of a new anarchist organization, which came to fruition in 1927 under the name of the Anarchist Iberian Federation (FAI). On one level it represented a continuation of the various anarchist federations which had existed in the past, though it was to attain a far higher public profile. Its importance was not that it was able to articulate all the anarchist groups (here indeed it was to prove a considerable failure), but in the fact that it imposed on the CNT an organic relation with the anarchists. This was referred to as the *trabazón*, and meant that the representatives of the anarchist groups and prisoners' committees would be incorporated into the union committees. This enhanced the power of young activists, who often had little experience of union affairs. In a context of clandestinity and revolutionary conspiracies this was

perhaps inevitable, but it would be at the root of many of the internal problems the CNT would experience during the Second Republic.

The opposition to the dictatorship integrated political figures from a wide social base, and had particularly strong support from the intelligentsia. The anarcho-syndicalist and libertarian militants played a leading role. However, here too the divisions between the different tendencies came to the fore. While the more syndicalist wing of the CNT participated in general Spanish-wide movements in the belief that they provided the best guarantee for the re-establishment of civil liberties, more radical anarchist groups, such as Los Solidarios, which included García Oliver and Buenaventura Durruti amongst others, became involved in what they saw as more revolutionary activities, first the attempted uprisings led by the separatist, Francesc Macià, and later, in 1929–30, the conspiracies of low-ranking military officers.

The CNT's clandestinity did not benefit the Socialists, who were unable to take advantage of the tacit accord between the UGT's strongman, Francisco Largo Caballero, and the new regime, which allowed workers to maintain their negotiating rights. Without doubt, in Barcelona and Catalonia the continued importance of the Lliures blocked their way. With the crisis of the dictatorship, which brought the monarchy down with it, to the surprise of many it was not the old political parties which took the advantage. On the one hand, there was a spectacular renaissance of the CNT, based on substitution for the Lliures, and, on the other, there was a rise to prominence of a new, plebian Catalanist force, the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Catalan Republican Left), which was to win the local elections of April 1931 that heralded the new Republic.

Barcelona, then, became both a 'red city' and a city with a European vocation. At the root of this upheaval were working and popular classes subject to a sharp transformation. The pressures to which they were subject were by no means homogeneous. On one hand, there was an increasing number of skilled workers subject to rapid technological change; on the other there was a growth in the number of unskilled labourers, who were precariously employed. In addition, a further key change was the growth and increasing visibility of intermediate social strata, who moved in a world of multiplying small shops and workshops, employment in the administration, in offices and newspapers or as writers, and who shared an imprecise frontier with men from the liberal professions, who could no longer rely on old certainties and were losing social prestige. Self-taught activists wanted to have a project for a new society, a new city and a new Catalan reality. At the very least they felt that they should be able to participate in the discussions and in the exercise of power, if not at an economic and political level, at least in the social sphere.

Barcelona affirmed its place as both a European and a red city in the process of the construction of a new city, which reached one million inhabitants in 1930 and which aspired to enter the circuit of the second tier of European capitals, after Paris, London and Berlin. It was a city in which the working class was, in all its complexity, scandalously visible to the bourgeoisie in a wide range of sectoral

and social contexts. We have noted that the hegemony of anarcho-syndicalism over the labour movement does not explain all the complexity of the varied world of labour. Yet labour's fragmentation would in itself serve to strengthen the CNT's representativeness in what was an explosive city, teeming with projects for the future.

Notes

1 *La Publicidad*, Morning Edition, 3 October 1907.
2 On Ferrer and Tragic Week see also Chapters One and Two, pp. 5–6, 8–9, 38–9.
3 There were also certain links with Italian revolutionary syndicalism, with the translation of large numbers of texts by Arturo Labriola, and one or two by Enrico Leone. However, far more Italian anarchist writers were translated (along with Malatesta, Fabbri, Cafiero, Merlino and Gori). For more details see, P. Gabriel, 'Sindicalismo y huelga. Sindicalismo revolucionario francés e italiano. Su introducción en España', *Ayer*, 4, 1991, pp. 15–45.
4 L. Trotsky, *Escritos sobre España*, Paris, 1971, p. 279.
5 V. Serge, *Mémoires d'un révolutionnaire*, Paris, 1951, p. 64.
6 This was strongly emphasized in L. Bertrand, *Le livre de la méditerranée*, 1923.
7 E. Salut, *Vivers de revolucionaris. Apunts històrics del districte cinqué*, Barcelona, 1938.
8 For a detailed examination of the crisis of 1917 in English see F. J. Romero, *Spain, 1914–1918. Between War and Revolution*, London, 1999. Broad overviews of the organized labour movements in Catalonia and Spain during the war years are to be found in G. Meaker, *The Revolutionary Left in Spain, 1914–1923*, Stanford, 1974, and B. Martin, *The Agony of Modernization. Labour and Industrialization in Spain*, Ithaca, 1990, pp. 171–262.
9 *Solidaridad Obrera*, 12 May 1917.
10 According to the 1920 census the Catalan active working-class population was made up of about 500,000 people. See P. Gabriel, 'La població obrera catalana, ¿una població industrial?', *Estudios de Historia Social*, 32–33 (1985), 191–260. Data for CRT affiliation is taken from *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, Memoria del congreso celebrado en el Teatro de la Comedia de Madrid los días 10 al 18 de diciembre de 1919*, Barcelona, 1932.
11 The major sources for both Tables 3.1 and 3.2 are M. Sastre i Sanna, *La esclavitud moderna. Martirología social*, Barcelona, 1921; J. M. Farré i Morego, *Los atentados sociales en España*, Madrid, 1922; R. Rucabado, *Entorn del sindicalisme*, Barcelona, 1922. See also, A. Balcells, 'Violencia y terrorismo en la lucha de clases en Barcelona de 1913 a 1923', *Estudios de Historia Social*, nos. 42–43, 1987, pp. 37–79.

4 The new city and the anarchist movement in the early 1930s

Nick Rider

In February 1931 the anarchist magazine *El Luchador* published a brief note from a newly formed anarchist group in the Barcelona area, who introduced themselves under the name *Libertad-Germinal* as a 'handful of young libertarians' who had joined together to combat oppression and the 'authoritarian leprosy', and to that purpose wished to make contact with the FAI (Federación Anarquista Ibérica/Anarchist Iberian Federation) 'as soon as possible'. A glance through the anarchist press during the same period – from mid-1930 to the early months of the Second Republic – reveals a string of comparable announcements from other new groups, generally expressed in similar terms. It is clear that many, possibly most, of the members of these groups were very young, too young to have been active in the workers' or anarchist movement before the Primo de Rivera Dictatorship, or indeed to have had much previous real contact with them at all, beyond discussions or reading the press; several declare the same desire to get in touch with the FAI, which they presumably had heard of but did not know where to find. Rarely do they declare a fixed position in the theoretical disputes that had preoccupied the more experienced figures of the movement during the previous decade; however, they commonly express a shared combination of passionate enthusiasm for anarchist ideas and pugnacious activism, as in the case of the group in Granollers who announced that of all the currents within the anarchist movement they felt themselves to be 'supporters of direct action', because they believed the time had come 'to incarnate in realities, to carry into revolutionary practice the good of our ideas'.

It was also around this time that a substantial number of specifically anarchist local clubs and centres, the *ateneos libertarios*, appeared around Barcelona for the first time, centres that would become important bases for the anarchist movement in the following years. Again, this was not due to any proselytizing or organizational impulse from the known figures of the movement; instead, it appears that at this time there was already in large areas of working-class Barcelona an ambience of agitation and combative militancy, a desire for action, that led many to look to anarchist activism for tactics to employ and an ideal to follow.

This seeming surge of support for anarchist practice is indicative of the history of the Catalan anarchist workers' movement, which was given to power-

ful surges of militant enthusiasm, between periods in which much of its mass support became disheartened and fell away. This volatility was not sought or accepted by more organizationally minded members of the CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo/National Labour Confederation) and its predecessor federations, and in fact drove them to near despair, but was an inescapable feature of the movement (see Chapters Two and Three).

In the first great boom-time of the CNT, during and after the First World War, the Confederation, although in straight confrontation with the Catalan employers and the state, was unquestionably the dominant force among the Catalan working class, even when its membership was withered away by repression and the challenge of the right-wing Sindicat Lliure. All anarchist tendencies, and several that were entirely non-anarchist, were still included within the union, which operated with the tacit sympathy of sizeable sectors of the Catalan political Left and liberal opinion (see Chapters Two, Three and Nine).

The second major upsurge in the movement during the Republic took place within a much more complex, fragmented situation. After an initial moment of euphoria in 1931 when the CNT almost regained in full its massive strength of 1919, the organization underwent a steady downturn, losing half its membership over the next five years. It became identified much more closely with a highly combative, overtly anarchist current, while other tendencies were marginalized or expelled. The Confederation also found its position within the workers' movement more strongly contested than ever before by other tendencies in an atmosphere of bitter rivalry. In society as a whole, the CNT became more identified with certain specific, generally more insecure, sectors of the working class, and had far more conflict-ridden relations with the lower-middle class. And, although the liberal Left in the shape of the Catalanist republicans of the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya had taken over power in Catalonia and the city of Barcelona, the CNT nevertheless also rapidly found itself in an essentially confrontational relationship with the new authorities, and the Republican state (see also Chapters Five, Six and Eight).

Each of these periods naturally had its complexities, political processes, individual dramas and unpredictabilities, and one can never draw too mechanistic a link between any specific social or economic change and ideological, political or attitudinal changes. Nevertheless, it is instructive to see them as reflections of different phases in the life of a city then undergoing a sweeping transformation.

Great big hell of a city

Between 1910 and 1930 Barcelona went through one of the most rapid and dramatic periods of change in its history. The First World War, above all, stimulated a near-unprecedented burst of expansion in the local economy (see Chapters Two and Three). This was accompanied by a diversification of the region's industrial base, with major growth in more modern, technologically based sectors such as engineering, chemicals and electrical engineering. Greater industrial diversity was also accompanied by a renovation in business methods,

as witnessed by the tremendous increase in the number of joint-stock companies.[1] Growth continued during the 1920s, but in significantly different circumstances. The central spur to growth in Barcelona was by then the International Exhibition of 1929 and the massive public works projects associated with it. Textiles, still the largest single sector of Catalan industry, fell back into relative inertia, but the situation remained buoyant for engineering, chemicals and, of course, construction, on the strength of these projects and the general expansion of building that accompanied them. These giant projects also helped to draw in significant foreign investment. If the war years had seen a boom in industry, the following decade saw a property and financial boom. The Barcelona Stock Exchange index reached record levels between 1926 and 1930.[2]

These two boom periods were very different in their social repercussions. During the wartime years, the sudden acceleration in an economy inured to sluggishness also set off massive inflation. Wages, however, lagged far behind. Hence, while unprecedented fortunes were being made in industry, the living standards of the majority of the population fell enormously. This situation provided the essential background to the first great wave of expansion of the CNT which, as employers showed intransigent opposition to wage increases, emerged as the primary vehicle for a wave of fierce generalized unrest (see Chapter Three). Moreover, this hardship was felt not only by industrial workers as such but also, to some degree, across the board by all the sectors referred to as the 'popular classes' and often regarded as the core of Catalan society: small traders, white-collar workers and the rest of the lower-middle class, lower-grade professionals and even many formerly relatively comfortable members of the middle class. If the CNT was the most prominent belligerent in the social crisis, the fact that the benefits of the boom were so visibly restricted to a small sector of society while the living standards of all others were under daily threat helped foster a mood of popular unity against the monarchical regime, which in turn encouraged at least a sense of common interest, and sometimes a willingness to collaborate, between the workers' movement and left-wing politicians.

The twenties saw a much more complex situation. Prices levelled off by 1921, and then fell a limited amount during the rest of the decade. Wages, although they had not caught up and would again be held down during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship of 1923–30, had risen in some sectors through the intense agitation of 1917–23.[3] The activity of the Exhibition-led boom created new, ill-paid and insecure work for casual construction workers, but also better-paid jobs for white-collar workers in administration and finance. Most important, there is ample evidence that during the building boom a good part of the new wealth recently accumulated finally did filter down, especially to the lower-middle class. Thus, while savings-bank holdings – the main form of saving for small property owners – had fallen well behind the level of inflation during the wartime years, during the following decade small deposits in savings banks grew rapidly, so that by 1930 the overall balance of savings-bank accounts in Catalonia was 212 per cent greater than in 1920.[4]

This two-phase economic transformation naturally brought with it a tremendous surge in the physical growth of Barcelona. The post-1914 inflation had an immense destabilizing effect across the whole of Spain, propelling large sections of the rural population towards the cities. Between 1920 and 1940 Spain had the third highest rate of urbanization in the world, surpassed only by Japan and the USSR.[5] In Barcelona, between 1910 and 1930, the population increased by 71 per cent, as the city overtook Madrid to become the largest in Spain (see also Chapters Two and Three). Some 40,000 new migrants arrived in 1929 alone.[6] And, if the population was climbing within Barcelona, it was also increasing at truly phenomenal rates in the smaller municipalities around the city boundary such as L'Hospitalet, Santa Coloma and Sant Adrià de Besós, into which urban growth overflowed during the 1920s.

Table 4.1 Population growth in L'Hospitalet, Santa Coloma de Gramanet and Sant Adrià de Besós, 1920–30

Municipality	*Population 1920*	*Population 1930*	*% Increase*
L'Hospitalet	12,360	37,650	204.61
Sta Coloma de Gramanet	2,728	12,930	373.97
St Adrià del Besós	1,073	6,515	507.18

Source: Generalitat de Catalunya, *La població de Catalunya 1936*, Barcelona, 1937.

This vertiginous growth took place in the context of a city in which, despite the efforts made by Catalan politicians of different colours since 1900 to improve the quality of local administration, the effectiveness of planning, legal controls and regulation in housing and urban services was fragmentary at best, and where no real attempt was made to provide social housing for the masses of incomers. Hence, another feature of Barcelona's expansion was an acute housing crisis. In the absence of official initiatives, housing was provided by private landlords and, in particular, by the great many small landlords. The Chamber of Urban Property of Barcelona, membership of which became obligatory for all landlords in 1920, had 97,853 members in the whole province in 1931, out of a total population of around 1,760,000. Of this membership 80 per cent, 78,933, received an annual income from property lower than, at the most, 880 pesetas, and a great many received much less.[7] In value terms, much the greater part of urban property was held by major landlords, but ownership was also extremely fragmented, above all in the outer, more down-at-heel districts of the city. Such landlords generally disposed of little capital with which to build, and the result was the appearance of an enormous amount of unplanned, substandard housing.

During the first boom, before 1923, the pace of building lagged far behind the growth in numbers in the city. Overcrowding had long been chronic in the poorest districts of central Barcelona; in the years after 1910, landlords subdivided flats still further to extract the maximum from their properties, while to aid with their rents ever more families took in sub-tenants. By 1922, 75,000

people were living as sub-tenants, according to the architect Nicolau Maria Rubió i Tudurí.[8] Another aspect of the crisis was the spread of shanty towns. Also in 1922 the then Director of the Municipal Housing Institute, Dr F. Pons Freixa, counted 3,008 shanties (*barràques*) in Barcelona, housing over 15,500 people, although these figures were necessarily provisional since the number of shanties was growing out of all control.[9] Most of them were not built by their inhabitants themselves, nor were they occupied for free; around Barcelona there was very little land without an owner, and rent nearly always had to be paid for shanties, no matter what their condition might be. Pons Freixa denounced the appearance of shanty 'industrialists', who rented plots of land to build shacks and let them out at abusive rents, making an 'almost always usurious profit'. This 'industry' was not a matter of a few speculators as, since massive profits could be made with only limited capital, an 'endless number' of people had entered into it, including many 'of very modest condition'.

The situation changed significantly during the 1920s. These years, as I have indicated, saw a property boom as much of the capital accumulated in the previous decade found its way into land sales and building, and it was to a significant extent through property sales that this new wealth made its way into the hands of small investors. The number of land sales in Barcelona rose sharply in the early twenties, reaching a peak in 1924, as did the number of building permits requested.[10] The Exhibition and its associated projects prompted a general upward revaluation of property, above all in the centre of the city, with enormous opportunities for speculation; major interests and the giant construction companies took care of the large-scale, prestige projects, but smaller, lower-middle-class landlords were also able to take advantage of the climate to join in a wave of new building. Large numbers of multi-apartment blocks appeared in areas such as Sants and the outer edges of the Eixample, many occupied by the lower-middle class, manual workers in relatively secure occupations and white-collar workers. The number of housing units in Barcelona actually grew between 1920 and 1930 by 37 per cent, a figure not far behind the increase in population (41 per cent).[11] By 1931 there was a glut on the market in many districts, and during the thirties the phrase 'housing crisis' was often used by bodies such as the Chamber of Urban Property to refer to the problem of those landlords who had over-reached themselves during the previous decade and were then burdened with flats that they were unable to let.

However, this situation was entirely compatible with the existence of continuing intense pressure, and a further deterioration in conditions, at the bottom end of the housing market, among those groups whose incomes remained too low to meet the minimum rent at which these new flats were let. That such a dual process, a combination of a rapid expansion in good-standard building with an unremitting housing crisis among the urban poor, could – and indeed frequently did – occur has been well documented in other cities, such as, for example, London during the nineteenth century.[12] Yet, in Catalonia during the 1930s this possibility was generally flatly denied by most sectors of established

opinion, from the Chamber of Urban Property to republican intellectuals close to the Esquerra, who rarely questioned the classic liberal doctrine that prices would naturally fall to meet demand.[13] The multi-storey blocks built in the twenties, though, had commonly required a significantly larger investment than had previously been the norm in cheaper-level housing in Barcelona, and most of their landlords were unwilling to let their rents drop to meet the wages of the poorer working class. A survey of vacant housing for rent carried out by the City of Barcelona in August 1934 found that, in effect, there was very little available in the lowest rent categories, and an enquiry undertaken by the Chamber of Property itself in 1932 came to a similar conclusion.[14]

Those with low or insecure incomes remained dependent on a notably more rapacious, partly separate, housing market. In the outer districts of Barcelona and municipalities around the city boundary investors took advantage of the insatiability of demand to build, as Rubió i Tudurí put it, a mass of 'brand-new slums', such as the *pasillos* or 'corridor-houses' of L'Hospitalet, rows of tiny two- to three-room houses on either side of a narrow *pasillo* or alleyway.[15] In many cases when a landlord or developer 'urbanized' a plot of land this meant only that they officially re-registered it for tax purposes, without providing any kind of drainage or other basic services, or even a minimal street plan; complaints by Municipal officials and in the press about the failure of developers to fulfil their (already limited) legal obligations were a recurring feature of the period.

At the same time, the number of out-and-out shanties continued to grow, so that by 1927, according to Jaume Aiguader, later first republican Mayor of Barcelona, there were some 6,000 *barràques* within the city boundary, housing 30,000 people, and there were still more in the surrounding towns.[16] Within the city, in the older districts, virtual shanties were built on roofs, and the practice of sub-letting was taken, as Rubió i Tudurí put it, 'to the limits of its elasticity'. By 1932, the sheer amount of new building at the end of the twenties does seem to have permitted a reduction in the numbers living in such degraded forms of housing as shanties and sub-lets within Barcelona. However, in many cases this was simply a matter of exchanging an overcrowded *barraca* for conditions that were not much improved in L'Hospitalet or Santa Coloma, and often at a higher rent. Also, when clearance of shanty-districts was carried out, even under the Republic, this was generally done above all for 'aesthetic' or general public health considerations. Hence, with the exception of the groups of 'Cheap Houses' erected in 1929, no attempt was made to rehouse their inhabitants, who were simply given an order to leave, and thus thrown back on the mercies of the most voracious sector of the private housing market.

With this pressure on housing, and the lack of effective legal controls under the Dictatorship, an increase in the price of housing was inevitable, even within the limits imposed by the incomes of the poorer working class. As we have seen, after the rapid inflation of the wartime period, working-class wage levels were relatively stable during the remainder of the 1920s, oscillating at around, or for unskilled workers slightly under, ten pesetas per day. Similarly, the prices of most basic commodities, having fallen back from their peak of 1920, also remained

fairly stable, although inflation began to increase towards 1930. Rents, however, registered an increase of between 50 and 150 per cent.[17] Everything seems to confirm that there had been a massive increase in rents, despite the theoretical validity of the Rent Decree of 1920, which authorized only increases of 10 per cent for each period of five years since 1914. This measure, although bitterly opposed by landlords, seems to have been entirely inoperative in poorer city districts.

In addition, it should be noted that a situation like this gave ample scope for abuses of all kinds. Pons Freixa noted that the rents of shanties were not subject to any market logic, and still less to any legal norms, but were determined entirely by the 'ambition of the landlords', since the desperation of the tenants obliged them to accept virtually anything that was offered. Hence, one could often pay *more* for an 'infected hovel' than for decent housing. Entirely illegal evictions were carried out, by simple force or with the connivance of local officials.[18] Similar abuses were seen in more conventional housing. As one example, in 1933 Dr Lluís Claramunt, Director of the Municipal Hygiene Institute under the Republic, wrote that in Barcelona some 20,000 houses or flats, housing 100,000 people, lacked running water because a few thousand 'miserly' landlords refused to connect it, despite the fact that this had been obligatory in the Municipal Regulations since 1891, and that this was one of the main reasons why typhoid fever was still endemic in the city.[19] In effect, it would appear that a large part of the working-class housing of Barcelona functioned within a black economy.

Proposals to enforce real controls on landlords, or for public housing schemes, met with implacable opposition from landlords' organizations, who denounced them as an intolerable and entirely anti-economic distortion of the property market. There was, however, one public initiative in housing that came to fruition during this period, the building of the four groups of so-called *Casas Baratas* or 'Cheap Houses' around the edges of Barcelona in 1929–30, which deserve special mention because during the Republic these four estates would become classic strongholds of the radical CNT.

A variety of reformers had urged the need for some kind of social housing to be provided in the city; however, when the Patronato de la Habitación (Municipal Housing Trust) was eventually founded in 1928 it was administered by some of the most notoriously corrupt local figures associated with the Exhibition project. Their and the regime's motivation in building the four groups, a total of 2,229 houses, while adorned with philanthropic rhetoric, was in great part simply cosmetic, since as the Exhibition approached it was realized that it was inconceivable to inaugurate such a prestige event on a site surrounded by shanties. Nothing indicates this more than the manner in which the first group to be completed, the Aunós estate on the west of Montjuïc, was occupied, its residents being forcibly transferred there by the Civil Guard from shanties on Montjuïc itself just a week before the Exhibition opened. Similarly, the location of the four estates, in sites well outside the built-up area, in two cases outside the city boundary, and with virtually no communications with the city, responded to

virtually no other considerations than a desire to remove this potentially threatening population as far from view as possible.

Once the tenants were installed, scarcely anything was done to provide additional services. Also, despite the fact that large amounts of public money had been poured into the Patronato – one of the most notorious of the 'scandals of the Dictatorship' in Barcelona – the Trust very shortly declared itself to have massive debts, and demanded relatively high rents from the tenants of the *Casas Baratas*. Moreover, as the amount of work available to their predominantly unskilled inhabitants declined after 1930, unemployment in the groups rose rapidly, so that, far from being a philanthropic exercise in social integration, they became all the more almost deliberately created reserves for an isolated, marginal population.[20]

Barcelona at the end of the 1920s

By 1930 Barcelona had certainly changed greatly from the city of the *modernista* era at the turn of the century, the 'bourgeois paradise' described by Robert Hughes.[21] The acceleration in the pace of Barcelona prompted a whole crop of books pondering the transformation. Moreover, despite the uncontrolled and often corrupt nature of the twenties' boom, it is clear that the decade had seen not only the building of much good-standard housing, but also a widespread improvement in urban services and conditions. The Exhibition project itself had brought with it, as well as new parks, squares and public buildings and the first Metro lines, the widespread renovation and extension of street paving, drainage and lighting; Dr Lluís Claramunt, Director of Municipal Hygiene under the Republic, stressed in addition the improved inspection of milk and other foods and above all the great improvement in the water supply as the most significant changes introduced in the same period.[22]

As a result death rates in Barcelona, which had always been high, fell markedly during the 1920s.[23] In fact, although the overall growth of the city remained dependent on inward migration, it was during these years that the already resident population of Barcelona went through the 'urban demographic transition', in that the birth rate first began consistently to exceed the death rate, so that the urban population became stable and self-sustaining, a stage first reached in Britain after the 1860s and then in several other industrialized countries towards the end of the nineteenth century.[24] The causes and consequences of such a shift are evidently very complex, but elsewhere it can be seen to coincide – however imprecisely – with potentially far-reaching social and political changes, such as the growth of the 'labour aristocracy' in Britain, or the appearance of a 'patriotic' working class in Germany from the 1890s. Previously, Barcelona had long tended to have negative rates of natural increase and so be a net consumer of population, a situation typical of cities in the early stages of industrialization (see Chapter Two).

Improved conditions and a more sophisticated economy manifested themselves in other ways than new lamp posts and major buildings. The lower-middle

class and the more secure sections of the wage-earning working class had increased in number and in prosperity. Economic diversification had multiplied the numbers of office and white-collar workers of various kinds, who formed the largest single group among the male labour force in the 1930s.

Table 4.2 Distribution of the labour force in the province of Barcelona, 1927 and 1930

Occupation	*1927 Men*	*1927 Women*	*1930 Men*	*1930 Women*
Textiles	33,958	103,832	41,289	125,336
Metallurgy	38,581	4,896	46,314	6,333
Construction	33,957	100	50,122	269
Commerce	57,315	12,021	59,960	13,234
Public Services	21,484	564	23,353	586
Others	82,927	24,779	101,059	32,118

Source: Ministerio del Trabajo y Previsión Social, *Estadística de las huelgas*, Madrid, 1927–1932.

Many members of the lower-middle class and more stable working class – an ill-defined, but nevertheless recognizable sector – had been able to escape poor conditions in the city centre by moving into new flats in areas such as the fringes of the old Eixample. The improvement in general literacy had been almost as striking as the fall in the death rate. It was also in the years up to 1930 that large numbers of the 'popular classes' of Barcelona were first able to indulge on a mass scale in international tastes and leisure pursuits. The cinema, jazz – heard through the new medium of radio – even roller-skating, were all followed avidly, and it was during the twenties that football first began to draw large crowds.[25]

Although many were still by no means affluent, a sense of greater potential well-being and of being in touch with the possibilities of modern society was an essential factor in the burgeoning self-confidence and assertiveness of that sector – again ill-defined – made up of clerks, younger owners of small businesses, shopworkers, students and so on, who, as Enric Ucelay da Cal has pointed out, would during the 1930s form the most active base of the majority of left-wing groups outside the CNT, whether radical Catalan nationalists, social democrats or anti-Communist Party (PCE) Marxists.[26] Mostly young, they were noticeably active in the local popular associations – sports clubs, Catalanist groups, cultural societies – that multiplied tremendously during the twenties, and which would be a vital base for the political militancy of the following decade. They were very conscious of belonging to an industrialized society, and this as well as nationalism encouraged them to reject a Spanish state seen as incorrigibly archaic. At the turn of the decade, these groups were in the midst of a love affair with modernity, always depicted as intertwined with democratization, social change and the ability of an increasingly mature society to run itself through progressive institutions. The popular press in Catalan, another new product of these years, presented glowing accounts of progressive projects around the world – in suitably contemporary art deco-style – whether social-democrat housing schemes in Austria or the Soviet Five-Year Plan, and one paper, *La Rambla*, summed up the

identification of modern pursuits and political change with its subtitle *Esport i Ciutadania*, 'Sport and Citizenship'.

At the same time, and for all this effervescent optimism, in many parts of the city a different picture could be seen. The overall decline in death rates masked the fact that infant mortality, for example, could be as much as twice as high in the most overcrowded districts as in the central Eixample.[27] The other side of the coin of the modernization of Barcelona during the 1920s was the state of the poorest working-class districts, where conditions had little improved and in some cases declined, where a great deal of housing remained grossly inadequate, exploitative and unsanitary, and where a great swathe of the urban population were living in a state of chronic insecurity.

The available figures are more illustrative than solidly reliable, but nevertheless it does appear that greater differentials in incomes and living standards had appeared within the working class over the preceding years: thus, in 1917–18 the gap between the highest and lowest rates in each trade had in most cases been little over one peseta per day, but by 1930 the top rates had risen by six or seven pesetas, while bottom, unskilled rates had rarely increased by more than two.[28] Moreover, if the economic changes since 1914 had increased the number of white-collar workers, still more spectacular during the 1920s was the increase in the number of building workers, who went from being the fourth to the second-largest group in the male labour force just between 1927 and 1929. Casually employed, often recent migrants to the city, these groups were often economically extremely insecure, and became still more so thanks to a sharp decline in the work available in the trades most open to them. Unemployment as a whole remained relatively low at the beginning of the Second Republic, standing at 3.58 per cent for men and 3.17 per cent for women in the first quarter of 1931, but this overall figure obscured a marked rise in unemployment in construction, from 2.21 per cent at the beginning of 1929 to 11.44 per cent in early 1931.[29] There was a particularly acute fall in the number of casual jobs available in large-scale public works projects, which tailed off rapidly after the fall of Primo de Rivera in January 1930.

This insecure working class tended to be most concentrated in areas on the fringes of Barcelona, where not only housing but the condition of all urban services scarcely accorded with the image of Barcelona as a dynamic, modern metropolis. The situation was particularly bad in the smaller municipalities, whose resources, even had the political will been present, were entirely inadequate to deal with their greatly expanded populations. In 1931 a Left-republican centre in Collblanc-La Torrassa, in L'Hospitalet, complained that the area was 'almost abandoned', with a market consisting of a 'conglomerate of shanties' that was a 'danger to public health'. In Santa Coloma, a great many 'streets' were entirely unmade, lacking in any kind of drainage and subject to frequent flooding.[30]

It is, as many writers have indicated, always difficult to draw a strict line between the working class proper and the rest of the popular classes in Barcelona before 1939, and it was in the nature of the economy that even in the

most marginal areas there were small traders, workshops and landlords, and that due to the general insecurity an individual might have to be employed or self-employed at different times. Nevertheless, it seems undeniable that the developments of 1914–30 had produced a greater degree of social fragmentation, of geographical segregation and concentration of the poorest of the working class, in contrast to the mixed atmosphere of the traditional city *barri popular*. This is without counting specific cases such as the *Casas Baratas*, which by 1931 had become almost solid reserves of the casual working class, with over half their residents unemployed.[31]

Also, it was in these often ramshackle areas on the city fringes that social relations were most likely to be conflictive. It was, as I have indicated, in the areas of most inferior housing that the housing market was most likely to be determined by brute force rather than by any theoretical legal controls, and where all kinds of abuses and arbitrary practices were commonplace. Another area in which the poor working class came into growing confrontation with small property-owners was that of street trading, to which a great many insecure workers turned to supplement their inadequate incomes, or at times when work was slack.[32] The Catalan press was full of complaints about the number of street traders, who turned the new city into a 'Moroccan bazaar'; more to the point, local authorities received an endless stream of complaints from shopkeepers' organizations, who denounced street trading as unfair competition and demanded its suppression in the strongest terms.[33] Another, particular, conflict developed in L'Hospitalet: to the south of the *barri* of La Torrassa, perhaps the most notorious of the 'new districts' of the twenties, there was a vast area of market gardens, known as the Marina. Many of La Torrassa's unemployed regularly went to grab vegetables from these plots; in response local farmers began patrolling the area with shotguns, and the workers in turn took to raiding in groups for greater protection. In November 1931 a La Torrassa man was found beaten to death in La Marina, and in the words of one witness 'that place, at night, looked like a civil war'.

A great many of this new, insecure working class were recent immigrants from southern Spain, who, as unskilled newcomers, were the most likely to have to take the worst jobs and the poorest housing. As well as having a high proportion of immigrants, the general profile of the population in these areas was different from that seen in the rest of the city: in contrast to the steady fall in the Catalan birth rate, they tended to be young and have large families, so that the birth rate could be double that in Barcelona itself.[34] However, if one examines these areas on the fringes of Barcelona closely one always finds a large number of native Catalans living there too; even in La Torrassa, which during the 1930s would be regularly described by much of the Catalan press as *La Murcia Chica*, 'Little Murcia', and solidly immigrant, the largest single group in the population were originally from Barcelona, many having moved to L'Hospitalet from overcrowded districts within the city.[35] A line between immigrants and Catalan workers in these districts is as elusive as that between wage-earners and the other 'popular classes', and any concentration on the 'ethnic factor' usually obscures more important issues. As a means of accounting for, and to some extent

dismissing, the unrest of the insecure working class the ethnic argument would, however, be given increasing emphasis after Catalan republicanism secured power in the 1930s, in the process disguising the fact that the growth of these marginal areas was just as much a part of the development of the new Barcelona as the Metro and the parks on Montjuïc.

1930–1: the limits of popular unity

The interaction of the different elements that made up the new Barcelona became more obvious following the downfall of Primo de Rivera in 1930. The fall of the dictator released a generalized desire for change, expressed first among students and white-collar workers and then spreading to broader social sectors. The expanding energies of Catalan society made themselves felt in a citizens' mobilization which, gaining in momentum throughout 1930, would eventually sweep in the Republic.[36]

This agitation began among the intelligentsia and lower-middle class sectors in unitary campaigns purely for civil and political rights, but the general mood of excited mobilization soon spread to manual workers, who had very concrete material demands. The main vehicle for their agitation was once again the CNT.

Until then it had by no means been clear that this would be the case. During the 1920s it was widely assumed among other sectors of the Left, especially Marxists, that anarchist pre-eminence among the Catalan working class would be a thing of the past once a return to open activity was possible, and even prominent CNT figures such as Angel Pestaña had been despondent about the prospects of the movement as late as 1929. The CNT, however, revealed a remarkable power of revival.

The years of enforced inactivity had seen intense debates between militants of the CNT as they struggled to remedy the weaknesses of the movement experienced prior to 1923. The most familiar aspect of these discussions was the acrimonious and highly political dispute between the – roughly speaking – syndicalist and radical anarchist wings of the CNT. Another, however, was the concern, seen among militants of all tendencies, to find new methods, more broadly based than those of straightforward industrial agitation, that would increase the movement's effectiveness, its implantation in society and its resilience to repression. This led to considerable discussion of the meaning of one of the basic principles of the CNT, direct action, and of the need to extend it beyond the workplace in order for the workers' movement to become a genuine alternative system of social organization. An open letter sent by a group of radical anarchists in 1925 spoke of the need for anarchist ideas to leave the 'abstractions of thought' and be given immediate practical form in agitation.[37] From another wing of the CNT, Joan Peiró, most lucid of the syndicalists within the movement, criticized the organization's dependence on straightforward strikes and urged that it should establish district committees to organize action around any matter of concern to the working class, so that direct action could become mass action and a universal form of social agitation.[38]

In 1930 these ideas, vaguely discussed, encountered the contemporary reality of Barcelona. If open organization by the CNT was impossible under the Dictatorship, these years nevertheless had seen a vigorous expansion in anarchist cultural life, in publishing, schools, discussion and sports groups, and an increased interest in anarchist ideas on such fields as culture, science, philosophy and sexuality.[39] If the growth of popular associations during the twenties was one indication of the growing presence of the young, white-collar workers of Barcelona, the end of the dictatorship also saw the appearance of a number of self-defined anarchist centres in some parts of the city. Before 1923 there had only been very few specifically anarchist centres in Barcelona, and leading CNT members such as Salvador Seguí had been content to use more-or-less republican clubs such as the Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular. The young anarchist activists of the thirties, however, demanded much more ideological definition. As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, there were around Barcelona at this time a good many working-class youths who, without necessarily having been involved in earlier CNT activity, were drawn strongly towards anarchist ideas and especially anarchist practice, and these new centres were to become important bases of an intensely militant subculture.

At the same time, in 1930 the CNT was also once again demonstrating its vitality and its weaknesses in its conventional labour role. Reorganizational meetings held by its unions took place amid mounting enthusiasm. The second half of the year, however, saw a proliferation of the kind of minor disputes that drove leading 'organizationalist' syndicalists such as Peiró to distraction, since they were seen as squandering the Confederation's resources when it was still only semi-constructed.[40]

Until the surprise fall of the Monarchy in April 1931, though, this strike agitation could still be seen as part of the general movement towards democracy, at least from outside the CNT. Actions that were not co-ordinated – such as the first general strike by the reborn CNT in Barcelona, in November 1930 – might be condemned by the most prominent leaders of the Confederation, but they were treated much more sympathetically by left-wing republican journals such as the influential *L'Opinió*, one of the most important of the Catalanist republican elements that would come together behind the veteran leader Francesc Macià in March 1931 to form the future ruling party of Catalonia, the Esquerra. From late 1930, the Catalan republican Left openly courted the CNT and its mass base with open-ended, inclusive campaigns around issues of basic civil and union rights.[41]

It should be noted that, whatever the historic influence of anarchism among the Catalan popular and working classes, a strong republican tradition had signified the main political opposition to the dominant regime for over fifty years, and had created a series of expectations around the idea of the republic that were as broad as they were ill-defined, so that even revolutionaries might assume that a republic would at least bring with it an end to repression and petty restrictions on the labour movement (see also Chapter Two). The Catalanist Left appealed to these expectations with categorical promises of the immediate release of all

CNT and other 'social' prisoners and, especially, of an end to the hated practice of imprisonment 'on governmental order', that is without trial, sentence or right of appeal. In the run-up to the local elections of April 1931 – which the very recently-formed Esquerra had no expectation of winning – they helped raise this mood of anticipation to the maximum, with wild promises that they would correct all the abuses of the dictatorship, and vague comparisons between the changes they would introduce and the transformations undertaken by modern regimes around the world, from Soviet Russia to German Social Democratic city administrations.[42]

When, therefore, the 12 April elections ushered in the Republic – with a near-complete victory in Catalonia for the Esquerra – the change of regime was the signal for an outburst of pent-up hopes and frustrations, a continuation, extending onto a social rather than a political plane, of the mobilization built up over the previous year. It was this period that saw the second great explosion in the CNT in Barcelona. In only one month, May 1931, 105,000 new members were admitted into the Catalan region of the CNT, and by August the Confederation would have some 180,000 members in Barcelona alone, around 58 per cent of the city's work force.[43] Once again, the union demonstrated its remarkable ability both to generate and respond to enthusiasm and militancy, and grew beyond the expectations of any of its activists, syndicalists or radical anarchists. No sooner had the new union branches been formed than they initiated disputes, and a wave of strikes and conflicts spread through every industry, for union recognition, or immediate wage demands.

This rash of disorganized wildcat agitation was a cause of real despair among the leading old guard syndicalists of the CNT such as Pestaña, Peiró or Sebastià Clara, who saw it as likely to destroy thoughtlessly the great opportunity for the consolidation of the Confederation supposedly opened up by the Republic.[44] These disputes naturally led to confrontations with employers and, very shortly, with the Republican authorities and police. However, in their continual calls to attention to the CNT membership on the need to establish full union structures before initiating disputes, the syndicalist old guard ignored one significant fact about the CNT's organization – that it had always developed through action, not in an isolated process of administration. Equally, they also skirted the fact that the disputes that led most decisively to confrontation between the Confederation and the Republican Government in Madrid were not low-level wildcat strikes but large-scale conflicts such as the national telephone strike begun in July, precisely the kind of prepared and co-ordinated action that they themselves had long been proposing.[45]

At the same time as strikes and disputes were spreading through the economy, conflicts also developed outside strictly labour fields in which the poorer working class came into growing confrontation with more established classes. Several arose spontaneously, but in a number of important areas CNT militants and the idea of direct action provided the urban poor with both ideological support and a basis of organization. May 1931 saw the launching of the Comisión de Defensa Económica or Economic Defence Commission of the CNT

Construction Union, which proposed a general rent strike around the central demand of a 40 per cent reduction in rents.[46] Key figures in this Commission were two leading radical anarchists, Santiago Bilbao and Arturo Parera, but the organization of the dispute reflects, not so much the pure anarchist notions of agitation for its own sake, but rather the discussions of direct action and the need for action immediately relevant to working people that were a standard theme for CNT moderates such as Peiró. The statements of the Commission made it clear that their demands were not intended to be merely revolutionary pretexts but reasonable measures that did not have to cause insuperable problems with the Republic if it was truly a liberal regime willing to deal with social problems – especially in view of the widespread prior acknowledgement by republicans that the state of housing and rents in Barcelona was a scandal left by the despised Dictatorship. The rent campaign really got under way in July 1931, and by August there were an estimated 100,000 rent strikers in and around Barcelona.[47]

At the same time a parallel but separate housing dispute was developing in the *Casas Baratas*, with the particular feature that their landlord was ultimately the Barcelona town hall or Ajuntament, now controlled by the Esquerra. The rents charged in the 'cheap houses' were well above what many residents were able to pay, and by mid-1930 the municipal housing trust, the Patronato, had begun attempts to evict non-paying tenants. The latter replied with a campaign – from an early stage associated with the CNT – that denounced the Patronato as a fraudulent enterprise and, after the proclamation of the Republic, demanded that the new Ajuntament suspend the Trust and halt all pressures upon tenants. The City authorities eventually initiated an investigation into the Patronato in June 1931.[48]

Other conflicts had a less visible focus, such as those over the unemployed and street trading. One of the expectations aroused by the coming of the Republic was that some form of immediate assistance would be provided for the unemployed, and in May 1931 the Barcelona Ajuntament announced a temporary scheme to give food vouchers to those without work. Large, rowdy crowds gathered at the distribution point for the vouchers, and in some cases rioted and attacked local markets. The Esquerra had to defend themselves against a tide of respectable opinion accusing them of subsidizing idleness, and the system soon had to be reorganized to restrict access to relief, although tensions remained.[49] The City authorities received greater praise for their handling of the associated issue of street trading: compared with earlier administrations, the Esquerra City council showed itself willing to be more responsive to lower-middle-class opinion, and in mid-May announced new regulations that sought to prohibit rigorously all unlicensed and untaxed trading.[50]

The response shown by the Republican state authorities to all of these conflicts was characterized by a very traditional reliance on police measures as the fundamental means of reacting to any social problem. Many republicans showed a constant preoccupation with the need for the new regime to demonstrate its ability to maintain order; far from being willing to allow the CNT freedom to operate, they sought to make clear their readiness to confront it, and

in labour disputes in Catalonia especially, the representatives of the central Government openly favoured the Socialist union, the UGT, which sought to establish itself in the region by absorbing any groups of workers reluctant to join in CNT strikes (see Chapter Six). Police were detailed to impede picketing, and in June the Republic formed its new police detachments, the Assault Guards, to act as a riot squad in urban conflicts.[51]

In non-labour conflicts the response was even more clear-cut. The Barcelona Chamber of Urban Property demanded the immediate suppression of the rent campaign as being against 'all social, legal and judicial order', and their argument was, in effect, accepted entirely: efforts by the Economic Defence Commission to suggest a negotiated solution were simply ignored, and no attempt was ever made to deal with it as any other than a police matter.[52] Instead, it was subjected to repression beyond anything inflicted initially upon strikers: meetings by the Commission were banned, its leading members arrested, and Assault Guards were sent to assist at evictions of striking tenants, in street battles that, CNT militants recall, provided an initiation into militant activity for many young future activists.[53] Similarly, the Guards were also sent to disperse the crowds of unemployed, and on lightning raids on the crowds of street traders that congregated around the city. From July 1931 indefinite detention on governmental order, the same procedure that it had been confidently stated would disappear without trace under a republic, was once again common practice in dealing with those arrested in pickets and other incidents.[54]

It had been expected that the newly dominant Left-republican party of Catalonia, the Esquerra, would provide a fulcrum of social conciliation around which conflicts could be defused and a new era of co-operation inaugurated. Leading figures of the party such as Macià himself and the Mayor of Barcelona, Jaume Aiguader, did intervene on a case-by-case basis in major industrial disputes as mediators. However, they failed to get any real grasp on the situation. For a long time the Catalan autonomous Government, the Generalitat, would be an authority in name only; in contrast, the most important functioning arm of government in Barcelona was the Civil Governorship, with control over the police apparatus. In April 1931 the Esquerra had taken over the Civil Government of Barcelona, under Lluís Companys, second most important figure in the party after Macià. At the beginning of June, however, he resigned to lead the party's parliamentary group in Madrid, and the Civil Governorship was filled by nominees from the central Government in Madrid, a Valencian republican, Carlos Esplá, and then a right-wing Catalan lawyer, Oriol Anguera de Sojo. An inflexible authoritarian, Anguera would become a hero to conservative opinion by adopting a belligerently intransigent line in all conflicts, refusing to release governmental prisoners and showing open contempt for conciliatory suggestions made by Macià. By failing to hold on to the Civil Government the Esquerra relinquished control over the one element of the state, the police, that was to be the central institution in the social conflicts of the following months, and so renounced the initiative in these conflicts.[55]

In addition to any immediate political miscalculations, however, other factors made it convenient for the Esquerra to back away from too direct an involvement in such disputes. The very dynamics of the social process in Barcelona were driving a wedge between their mainstream, lower-middle-class and white-collar supporters and the poorer working class. The initiative in opposing the rent strike was taken by the Chamber of Urban Property, who truculently demanded that the Republic should protect the rights of small property-holders, and dealt directly with the Civil Government in securing ever-stronger repressive measures against the strike and its organizers.[56] In the housing dispute in which the Esquerra still had direct responsibility, that of the *Casas Baratas*, the consequences were little different. At the end of August 1931 the Ajuntament's enquiry into the Municipal Housing Trust concluded that in effect the Trust had massive debts, in large part due to fraud, but that in view of the overall indebtedness of the City council any reduction in rents was impossible. During the summer it had been made plain that the City authority inherited by the Esquerra was genuinely bankrupt, but, in the same way that the party produced no clear idea of its reformist programme, it could suggest no alternative to strict financial orthodoxy as a response to public debt, so that the deficit had to be paid off by, among others, the tenants of the *Casas Baratas*.[57] The tenants' campaign replied that this was intolerable, and continued a general rent strike: in November 1931, the Ajuntament sealed off the Eduardo Aunós group of *Casas Baratas* with Civil and Assault Guards in an attempt to carry out evictions, and a conflict began that would continue, with sporadic crises and incidents, right up until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936.

In late 1931 the Ajuntament also collaborated with the Civil Government in yet another offensive against street trading, and made ready use of the police in dealing with any further movements of the unemployed. Beyond specific incidents, what is noticeable in even the leftist Catalanist press and the declarations of republican associations from mid-1931 – in striking contrast to the benevolent tone of 'popular unity' prior to April – is a very marked tone of belligerent intolerance towards agitation by the poorer working class. Striking workers in major disputes might still elicit sympathy, but other conflicts soon began to be portrayed as little more than criminal disruption; thus, from it being stated that some of those unemployed claiming the Ajuntament's food vouchers were abusing the system it rapidly came to be generally accepted that *all* were, and the unemployed scrounger emerged as a stock figure of ridicule throughout the Catalan press.[58] A significant part in this line of argument was played by the fascination with modernity characteristic of the Esquerra's core supporters. The presence and problems of the unruly, hand-to-mouth poor were seen as something that detracted from and potentially obstructed the process of giving Barcelona a progressive, active administration, rather than as a phenomenon that the latter would have to deal with. Thus, the endless denunciations of street trading – on which both Right and Left were in agreement – forever condemned it as a sight unworthy of a European city, which therefore had to be cleared away, rather than as anything that reflected real need.[59]

An ever-more important role was also played by the ethnic argument. Until mid-1931 it was rarely suggested that the CNT was an alien element in Catalan society. During the first months of the Republic, however, it began to be stated with ever increasing regularity that all those involved in the more conflictive disputes, the unemployed, street traders, were outsiders, non-Catalan immigrants, and so implicitly incapable of behaving properly in the sophisticated city. The image was presented succinctly in a cartoon that appeared in *La Publicitat*, favourite newspaper of respectable Catalan liberal opinion, in early September 1931, after the first CNT general strike in Barcelona under the Republic. This movement had been called – whatever revolutionary ambitions may have been associated with it – as a specific protest against the continued detention without trial by Anguera de Sojo of several CNT activists, most prominent among them the rent strike organizer Santiago Bilbao. In the cartoon, however, a girl, representing Catalonia, stands in front of a strange creature with the head of a mule and the body of a giant centipede. 'How can one explain', she asks, 'that although the Catalan worker is so practical and intelligent, you, the Catalan workers' movement, are a centipede?' The creature replies, in comic, exaggerated southern Spanish, '…Well you see now… I'll tell you …'

By the beginning of 1932 it would be stated almost as an unquestioned fact that 100 per cent of the inhabitants of problem areas such as La Torrassa were non-Catalan, and the magazine *Mirador* used a malevolent-looking mule, symbol of backward rural Spain, to represent the radical anarchist organization the FAI.[60] To suggest that the radical elements of the CNT and the marginal working class were immigrants was held up as an argument somehow sufficient in itself as an explanation of disruptive behaviour, and to obviate any need for more concrete examination of the specific motives for any particular incident. The problems of urban poverty were thus defined as somehow outside the Catalan political process. This attitude also fitted, again, the idealized conception of modernity beloved of progressive republicans. Modernization and urban growth, as they conceived them, were vehicles toward greater social harmony, and the idea that they could also throw up new fault-lines and conflicts was rarely contemplated.[61]

There was, consequently, little encouragement to view the conflicts around the city's fringes as other than police matters. This had profound consequences for the veteran leadership of the CNT, with their hopes of finally being able to build up the Confederation as a solid, permanent organization. The Republic was actually prepared to concede only a very limited space to the CNT, and the disputes that were part of the movement's very *raison d'être*, and so also often supported by the old guard themselves, led inexorably into intensifying street conflicts. Their appeals to the Republican authorities for greater toleration, and the interventions of their supposed chief ally in government, Macià, were shown to be utterly ineffective in the areas that mattered, in securing a reduction of police pressure and the release of arrested militants. This was the essential background to the ferocious onslaught of denunciation and criticism launched against the old guard by radical anarchists associated with the FAI, which would

within a few months dislodge the former from their main positions of influence within the Confederation.

This is not to deny that there were some *faístas* (members of the FAI) who from the beginning of the Republic were seeking to spur the CNT unions into purely revolutionary actions to destabilize the regime – notably, according to his own account, Juan García Oliver.[62] However, it is by no means clear that this was a generally held or clearly adopted position, and it needs to be recognized, above all, that the incidents and arrests that day-by-day provided the evidence against the arguments of the old guard arose out of disputes over concrete grievances, and practical efforts by CNT militants to respond to specific situations and problems that had developed within the city.

By early 1932, after the first transitional months of the new regime, a pattern had become visible in Barcelona that would, in very broad terms, persist throughout the Republic. The regime was not inflexible, and in some of the many disputes of 1931 workers won significant concessions from employers, notably in the metalworkers' strike of August, perhaps the greatest single success of the CNT during that year. Other disputes, such as the very violent conflict in the Seda Barcelonesa artificial textiles factory in Prat de Llobregat, became long-drawn out 'resistance strikes', chronic, recurring conflicts, with frequent incidents between pickets and police, of the kind that increased the militancy of some union members and drained away the enthusiasm of others. Meanwhile, the Law for the Defence of the Republic, introduced by the Azaña Government in October 1931, gave civil governors sweeping special powers to suppress union centres and activities whenever they thought fit, powers that were used to the full in Barcelona. This, together with the deviation by some *faístas* of some union agitation into revolutionary actions separated from practical demands, provided the background to the falling away of CNT support, and the growth in strength in the labour movement of other tendencies that departed from the CNT's confrontational tactics (see Chapter Five).

As to social conflicts in wider fields, the large-scale arrests of those involved in campaigns such as the main rent strike or the *Casas Baratas* tenants' rent strike checked their growth, but failed to stamp them out. Instead, like street trading, they became chronic sources of conflict, based, above all, in those parts of the city fringes where large sections of the population not only did not wish to pay but also often could not pay, and where the tactics of the radical CNT, far from abstract, could appear very directly relevant. In La Torrassa, in L'Hospitalet, and in the *Casas Baratas* many people effectively paid no rent throughout the Republican period. These areas would also be notorious as centres of the radical CNT, with a reputation as something of no-go areas for the police; La Torrassa was briefly taken over completely during the anarchist rising of December 1933, and for a long time the FAI magazine *Tierra y Libertad* was actually produced from the Ramón Albó group of *Casas Baratas*. An important role was played by the various anarchist centres, meeting points for the activists who sustained local enthusiasm. In contrast to the leading figures in the CNT of the 1910s and early 1920s, their members had next to no contact – other than confrontational – with

republican associations nearby, for the 'popular unity' on which earlier movements had been based – and which Catalan republicans still fondly evoked – had lost its place in the new city. [63]

Notes

1 J. L. Martín Ramos, 'L'expansió industrial', *L'Avenç*, no. 69, March 1984, pp. 34–42.
2 Generalitat de Catalunya, *Butlletí mensual d'estadística*, Barcelona, April 1935, p. 42.
3 From about average daily rates of 6–7 pesetas in most men's trades in 1917–18 to 9–10 pesetas in 1920. In 1930 a medium rate for male manual workers would still be 10 pesetas. Figures based on a comparison of the *Monografia estadística de la clase obrera (1917–1918)*, appendix to the *Anuario Estadístico de la Ciudad de Barcelona*, 1921, the *Anuari Estadístic de la Ciutat de Barcelona*, 1920, p. 681, and *Anuario Estadístico de España*, Madrid, 1930, pp. 549–50.
4 Generalitat de Catalunya, *Butlletí mensual d'estadística*, January–March 1934, p. 9.
5 E. E. Lampard, 'The urbanizing world', in H. J. Dyos and M. Wolff (eds), *The Victorian City*, London, 1976, vol. I, p. 41.
6 *Gaseta Municipal de Barcelona*, 1932 and 1935, Barcelona 1933 and 1936.
7 Figures based on membership lists in Cámara Oficial de la Propiedad Urbana de la Provincia de Barcelona (CPUB), *Memoria de 1931*, Barcelona, 1932, pp. 359–60.
8 N. M. Rubió i Tudurí, *La caseta i l'Hortet,* Barcelona, 1933, p. 3.
9 F. Pons Freixa and J. M. Martino, *Los aduares de Barcelona*, Barcelona, 1929, p. 52.
10 Sources: *Anuario de la Dirección General de los Registros Civil y de la Propiedad y del Notariado*, Madrid, 1934; Generalitat de Catalunya, *Butlletí mensual d'estadística*, December, 1935, p. 277.
11 Figures from *Anuari Estadístic de la Ciutat de Barcelona*, 1920, pp. 101–6, and *Gaseta Municipal de Barcelona*, 1932, pp. 188 and pp. 192–3.
12 See for example G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, Oxford, 1971, chapters 10 and 11; H. J. Dyos, 'The slums of Victorian London', *Victorian Studies*, vol. XI, no. 1, 1967–68; and H. J. Dyos and D. A. Reeder, 'Slums and suburbs', in Dyos and Wolff, *Victorian City*, vol. II, pp. 359–86.
13 See for example the papers presented at the *Congrés d'Arquitectes en Llengua Catalana*, Barcelona, 1932, by Rubió i Tudurí and others, all of which reiterate this basic faith in market mechanisms and question the very possibility of intervening in them.
14 *Gaseta Municipal de Barcelona*, 1935, p. 42; CPUB, *Memoria de 1932*, Barcelona, 1933, p. 55.
15 See J. Roca Cladera and E. Díaz Parera, 'La Torrassa: un antecedent de barri dormitori', *L'Avenç*, no. 28, 1980, pp. 62–70; and J. M. Rovira, 'Los pasillos, una típica vivienda obrera', *Progrés*, no. 9, L'Hospitalet, 1983.
16 J. Aiguader i Miró, 'El problema de les barràques i dels rellogats', *Butlletí del Sindicat de Metges de Catalunya*, 5 May 1927.
17 This becomes clear on comparing data for the early 1920s and early 1930s. See, for example, *Anuari Estadístic de la Ciutat de Barcelona*, 1920, p. 676; Pons Freixa and Martino, *Los aduares*, pp. 54–5; *Solidaridad Obrera*, 5, 7 and 13 August, 25 September, 10, 17 October 1931; Carles Sentís, *Mirador*, no. 201, 8 December 1932; *Gaseta Municipal de Barcelona*, 1935, p. 42. A generalized increase of rents at all levels in Barcelona, continuing throughout this period, has also been noted by Carme Massana, comparing figures from 1927 and 1935. Massana, *Indústria*, pp. 201–19.
18 Pons Freixa and Martino, *Aduares*, pp. 54–8.
19 Dr L. Claramunt i Furest, *La lluita contra la febra tifòidea a Catalunya*, Barcelona, 1933, pp. 205–6.
20 On the Casas Baratas see *Gaceta Municipal de Barcelona*, 1927–9; Archivo Municipal de Santa Coloma de Gramanet, *Actas de la comisión permanente, 1929–1931*; also T. García

de Castro, 'Barrios barceloneses de la dictadura de Primo de Rivera', *Revista de Geografia*, vol. II, nos. 1–2, 1974; on the transfer of shanty residents just before the Exhibition, *La Vanguardia*, 8 May 1929, and interview with 'Joan Roca' (pseudonym), 30 May 1984.

21 R. Hughes, *Barcelona*, London, 1992, p. 374.
22 Dr L. Claramunt i Furest, *Problemes d'urbanisme*, Barcelona, 1933, p. 8.
23 Source: *Gaseta Municipal de Barcelona*, 1934.
24 See particularly Lampard, 'The urbanising world'.
25 See for example L. Capdevila, *Barcelona, Cor de Catalunya*, Barcelona, 1928; A. Cirici, *El Temps Barrat*, Barcelona, 1973; J. J. Artells, *Barça, Barça, Barça*, Barcelona, 1972.
26 E. Ucelay Da Cal, *La Catalunya populista*, Barcelona, 1982, chapters 3 and 5.
27 *Gaceta Municipal de Barcelona*, 1929.
28 The *Monografia estadística de la clase obrera*, an appendix to the *Anuario Estadístico de la Ciudad de Barcelona* for 1921 and based on figures recorded in 1917–8, gives 6–6.50 pesetas as the usual daily rates for bricklayers, 6–10 pesetas for painters and 5–6.50 pesetas for engineering workers. The *Anuario Estadístico de España*, 1930, pp. 549–50, gives the normal rates in the same trades in Barcelona in 1930 as 8–15 pesetas for bricklayers, 7.50–13 pesetas for painters and 7.50–13 pesetas for engineering workers.
29 Ministerio del Trabajo y Previsión Social, *Estadística de las huelgas*, Madrid, 1927–32.
30 Arxiu Municipal de L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Correspondència de 1931, Associacions: Letter of 2 September 1931; Archivo Municipal de Santa Coloma de Gramanet, *Actas de la Comisión Permanente*, Session of 12 August 1931.
31 *El Diluvio*, 2 April 1930; *Solidaridad Obrera*, 12 October 1930, 28 February 1931.
32 Interviews with Concha Pérez Collado, 6 February 1983, 'Joan Roca' (pseudonym), 30 May 1984.
33 Condemnations of street trading in the press, see for example *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, 21 August 1931; F. Madrid, *Ocho meses y un día en el Gobierno Civil de Barcelona*, Barcelona 1932, p. 145.
34 J. A. Vandellós i Solà, *L'immigració a Catalunya*, Barcelona, 1935, p. 32.
35 In 1930 20.61 per cent of the adult population of La Torrassa were originally from Barcelona, and 18.25 per cent from Murcia, Roca Cladera and Díaz Parera, 'La Torrassa', p. 65.
36 On the campaigns of this period see particularly J. Aiguader i Miró, *Catalunya i la Revolució*, Barcelona, 1931, and *L'Opinió*, January–July 1930.
37 'Carta abierta a los camaradas anarquistas', *La Protesta*, Buenos Aires, March 1925, reproduced in A. Elorza, (ed.), 'El anarcosindicalismo español bajo la dictadura, 1923–1930', *Revista de Trabajo*, nos. 39–40, Madrid, 1972.
38 For the ideas of Peiró see *Trayectoria de la CNT* (1925) and *Ideas sobre sindicalismo y anarquismo* (1930), reprinted in *Pensamiento de Juan Peiró*, Mexico, 1959.
39 Manifested, for example, in the publications of the Urales family, such as the magazines *La Revista Blanca* (revived in 1923) and *El Luchador* (1931–2) and series of short novels *la Novela Ideal*, of which 521 titles were published 1925–38; see also A. Pons, *Converses amb Frederica Montseny*, Barcelona, 1977.
40 See for example the editorial *¿Aún no es bastante?*, in *Solidaridad Obrera*, 13 December 1930.
41 See especially *L'Opinió*, 12, 17, 26 September, 21 November 1930.
42 See *El Diluvio*, *L'Opinió*, *El Día Gráfico*, April 1931.
43 *Memorias de los comicios de la regional catalana celebrados los días 31 de Mayo y 1 de Junio, y 2, 3, y 4 de agosto de 1931*, Barcelona, 1931; Balcells, *Crisis económica*, p. 192.
44 See the editorials of *Solidaridad Obrera*, then edited by Peiró or Clara, throughout this period, and especially 7, 28 May, 28 November 1931.
45 On the expectations of CNT militants regarding the telephone strike see, for example, R. Sanz, *Figuras de la revolución española*, Barcelona, 1978, p. 242.

46 Presentation of the campaign, 'Actitudes, aclaraciones y hechos', *Solidaridad Obrera*, 12, 13, 15 May 1931.
47 *Solidaridad Obrera*, 8 August 1931.
48 Statements from tenants' movement, *Solidaridad Obrera*, 28 February, 19 April, 3, 6, 9 May 1931. Official enquiry, *El Día Gráfico*, 7 June 1931, *El Diluvio*, 4 July 1931.
49 On the problems of dealing with the unemployed and the voucher system see Balcells, *Crisis Económica*, chapter 1, and *Solidaridad Obrera*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Diluvio*, *El Día Gráfico*, May–August 1931.
50 New regulations on street trading, and thanks from tradesmen's groups, *El Diluvio*, 16 May, 11 June 1931. Newspapers carried almost daily reports of arrests of unlicensed traders and of continuing complaints from official tradesmen's organizations.
51 The analysis given of strike incidents is based on reports in *Solidaridad Obrera*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Diluvio*, *El Día Gráfico*, May–September 1931.
52 CPUB, *Memoria de 1931*, pp. 257–61; The Commission proposed the setting up of a mixed tenants-landlords commission, with technical assistance, to determine acceptable rent levels.
53 For more on all aspects of the 1931 rent strike see my 'The practice of direct action: The Barcelona rent strike of 1931', in D. Goodway (ed.), *For Anarchism*, London, 1989, pp. 79–109.
54 Data based on *El Día Gráfico*, *La Publicitat* and *La Vanguardia*, June–September 1931.
55 On the Civil Government at this time see particularly Madrid, *Ocho meses*; also C. Ametlla, *Memòries polítiques*, vol. 1, Barcelona, 1963, passim.
56 CPUB, *Memoria de 1931*, pp. 255–74; *La Vanguardia*, 23 July 1931
57 Official statements on the finances of the *Patronat de l'Habitació*, *El Día Gráfico*, 27 August, 14 October 1931; response from tenants, *Solidaridad Obrera*, 2 September 1931.
58 See for example the magazines *La Campana de Gràcia* and *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, considered broadly left-wing, during June–July 1931.
59 See for example *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, 21 August 1931, and Madrid, *Ocho meses*, p. 145.
60 On the composition of the population of La Torrassa, see, for example, the series of articles 'Múrcia, Exportadora d'Homes', by C. Sentís in *Mirador*, 27 October 1932–26 January 1933. Presentation of the FAI as a mule, *Mirador*, 18 September 1931 and subsequently.
61 The idea of modernization as equivalent simultaneously to urbanization and greater social harmony was most clearly articulated in the Catalanist republican intellectual Gabriel Alomar's theory of the *Catalunya-Ciutat*. See G. Alomar, *El futurisme i altres assaigs*, Barcelona, 1970.
62 J. García Oliver, *El eco de los pasos*, Barcelona, 1978, p. 115.
63 Interview with Concha Pérez Collado, 5 December 1983.

5 The crisis of organized labour

The battle for hegemony in the Barcelona workers' movement, 1930–6[1]

Chris Ealham

Prior to the social transformations that accompanied the outbreak of Civil War in 1936, *Solidaridad Obrera* had already described Barcelona as 'the capital of the revolutionary world', the 'epicentre of the Spanish Revolution'.[2] Such views reflected the numerical weight of the Barcelona industrial working class, which had played a pivotal role within the politics of the Iberian labour movement since the advent of industrialization in Spain: historically, the major institutions of the labour movement – the Socialist UGT and the anarcho-syndicalist CNT – originated from Barcelona, as did later union structures, such as the Sindicat Unic (see Chapters Two and Three). Barcelona's status as a centre for organizational innovation continued into the 1930s, with the formation of the Frente Unico and the Alianza Obrera; in short, the Catalan capital was also the workers' capital of Spain: from the 1910s the power of the CNT radiated from the city, and right up until the Civil War the city's unions represented jewels in the crown of the Confederation. As well as being home to a large part of the body of the CNT, the head of the union – the National Committee – also normally resided in Barcelona, where the CNT's political orientation was invariably determined. Indeed, the size of the Barcelona Local Federation and, by extension, the Catalan Regional Federation, often gave the delegations from the Catalan capital a decisive influence at national congresses, where they carried sufficient influence to reshape CNT policy at state level.[3] Barcelona was also the anarchist capital of Spain: it was the most important centre of FAI strength in Spain,[4] 'the spiritual capital of the world', in the opinion of Buenaventura Durruti, the most celebrated anarchist of his generation.[5]

There is a tendency within studies of the workers' movement in 1930s Barcelona to concentrate on the revolutionary period after July 1936 to the detriment of the early part of the decade.[6] Alternatively, when the early thirties have been examined, the social and political history of organized labour has typically been distorted by a teleology that has reduced the period to that of a prelude to revolution. This trend is particularly evident in a series of self-justificatory studies by former anarchist activists, a body of work that has generated a series of myths about the role of the FAI within the CNT in the 1930s and the importance of their 'revolutionary gymnastics' as a training-ground for the collectivizations after

July 1936.[7] This view has also influenced some academic historians, who have viewed the period 1930–6 as part of the 'heroic years', a crucial time of discovery and preparation prior to the epic drama of revolution and Civil War that came after July 1936. In similar vein, Antonio Bar has asserted that the CNT was strongest when the intervention of anarchists within the unions was greatest.[8]

This chapter seeks to revise such views, arguing instead that the years immediately before the Civil War constituted a period of organizational crisis, tactical elitism, syndical schism and political confusion for the Barcelona CNT, all of which can be attributed to the 'pure' anarchists of the FAI and their supporters. (It should be stressed here that the term *faísta* was frequently used generically and included many who were not actually members of the FAI but who rejected all compromise with either the Republic or with employers.)[9] It will also be argued that the radical anarchists transmitted this malaise beyond the CNT, exacerbating existing divisions within the Barcelona labour movement and weakening the organized working class as a whole during a time when the economic crisis and fascist mobilization made proletarian unity an imperative.

Given this picture of organizational division, it is ironic that the desire for unity figured strongly in the consciousness of important sectors of the working class before the Civil War. This apparent paradox can be explained by the aversion of both the CNT and the UGT leaderships towards policies that might have led to united proletarian action. In the 1910s CNT leaders had briefly championed the goal of proletarian unity, but the political crisis of the Restoration state and the impact of the Russian Revolution deepened inter-union conflicts which subsequently produced divisions within the Confederation between 'pure' anarchists, syndicalists, anarcho-syndicalists and the 'communist-syndicalist' supporters of the Russian Revolution. While these internal tensions were effectively frozen by the 1923 *pronunciamiento* of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, the gulf between the CNT and the UGT deepened further when prominent figures from within the Socialist bureaucracy, in a bid to escape repression and expand UGT membership at the expense of its illegal rivals, collaborated with the dictatorship.[10]

Dreams of Socialist growth in Catalonia were frustrated by the new political context ushered in by the collapse of the dictatorship and the monarchy during 1929–31 and the proclamation of the Second Republic, which allowed for the re-emergence of the Barcelona CNT. A 'human wave' poured into the Confederation and at the end of the summer of 1931 around 60 per cent of Barcelona's working class was massed in the CNT.[11] But as the CNT revived, so did the internal divisions of earlier years.

The reorganization of the CNT during 1930–1 can be largely attributed to the combined, if not always harmonious, efforts of anarchists, dissident communists and anarcho-syndicalists (the latter sometimes referred to simply as syndicalists; see Chapters Three and Four). Under the leadership of Joan Peiró and Ángel Pestaña and the Solidaridad group, the anarcho-syndicalists effectively controlled the CNT in the first half of 1931, enjoying a majority on the Barcelona CNT Local Federation, the Catalan Regional Committee, the National Committee and on the editorial board of *Solidaridad Obrera*.[12] The bulk of the anarcho-syndicalist

leaders consisted of older militants, who had been deeply affected by the repression of the Sindicats Lliures and the dictatorship in the 1920s (see Chapter Three). It was this experience that predisposed many anarcho-syndicalists towards the democratic option represented by the republican Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Catalan Republican Left), a party that they supported in the April 1931 elections as a lesser evil against the 'fascist' Lliga.[13] Support for the republicans also flowed from the anarcho-syndicalist conception of revolution, which assumed that stable workplace committees were the *sine qua non* for the transformation of the economy, a schema that could only be implemented if the CNT was allowed wide institutional freedom.[14] Nevertheless, militants like Peiró regarded the ultimate goal of the CNT to be 'anarchist communism', even if, like the rest of the anarcho-syndicalists, he believed that unions should be open to workers of all political persuasions, both anarchist and non-anarchist alike.[15]

The dissident communists inside the CNT, the majority of whom were militants in the anti-Stalinist BOC, similarly advocated syndical unity and the freedom of tendency within the unions, sharing also the critique of anarchist spontaneity.[16] The key tactical difference between the anarcho-syndicalists and the BOC was that the latter – in keeping with their Marxian ideology – maintained that the CNT had to augment its economic struggles with a political struggle for state power. Although outnumbered by the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, the *bloquistas* still enjoyed much influence in the CNT and most of its militants were seasoned *cenetistas*. These 'communist-syndicalists' had been a discernible trend within the CNT since the Russian Revolution and had important nuclei in the Barcelona CNT shop workers' and printers' unions and among certain provincial Catalan unions (see also Chapter Six).

The last major current within the CNT, the radical anarchists, maintained an ambiguous attitude towards syndicalism, an activity that some of their number postulated 'prolonged the class system' with 'reformist' strikes for short-term gains and 'miserable wage rises'.[17] In keeping with the vanguardist and insurrectionary strategies outlined by the likes of Bakunin and Malatesta in the nineteenth century, the radicals regarded the unions and their supporters as little more than auxiliary forces for the *grupos de afinidad*, the genuine foci of revolutionary activity, which would detonate the latent rebellious power of the masses. Though always fewer than the anarcho-syndicalist masses, the anarchist *grupistas* acquired disproportionate influence over the CNT due to the importance of their armed self-defence functions. The most important *grupo* was Nosotros, which included Buenaventura Durruti, Francisco Ascaso, Aurelio Fernández, Ricardo Sanz and Juan García Oliver, all of whom were essentially anarchist street fighters who believed in the living reality of revolution and had an unwavering conviction that capitalism was 'ready' for social transformation. Unlike anarcho-syndicalist organizers such as Peiró, who was a skilled glass worker, Nosotros was emblematic of the new, unskilled working class of post-First World War Barcelona: in 1930 all of its members were in their twenties or early thirties and all lacked a defined occupation. Formed within a social milieu in which there was little possibility of gradual change, the members of Nosotros exalted

the incipient insurgency of the most dispossessed sections of Barcelona's social structure while abhorring the moderation of the anarcho-syndicalists which, they argued, could only lead to the institutionalization of the CNT within Republican democracy.[18]

From the perspective of the radicals, the CNT had to be injected with anarchist purity, a mission that assumed greater urgency following the experience of exile in France in the 1920s, where Spanish libertarians witnessed the expansion of a mass pro-Bolshevik party and the ascendancy of Communists inside the Confédération General du Travail (CGT), the first anarcho-syndicalist labour organization. Fearing a repetition of this process in Spain, the radicals seized upon Diego Abad de Santillán's concept of *trabazón* ('connection'), with its promise to 'return the labour movement to anarchism' by fusing the anarchist movement with the unions, and formed the FAI in 1927 (see also Chapters Three and Four).[19] *Trabazón* imbued the FAI with a sense of manifest destiny for a mission that was bitterly rejected by both the anarcho-syndicalists and the dissident communists as a recipe for an anarchist 'dictatorship' over the CNT.[20] The result, as we will see, brought division and schism to the CNT in the years preceding the Civil War.

When the Republic was born, the FAI was far from achieving its objectives inside the CNT: it possessed no more than a few dozen militants in the Catalan capital; all of the Barcelona unions, with the notable exception of the Construction Workers' Union, were under anarcho-syndicalist leadership.[21] Moreover, the democratic-Catalanist project of the Esquerra, which included the repeal of the *comités paritarios* (Labour Courts) of the dictatorship that were so despised by *cenetistas*, the introduction of anti-unemployment measures and the defence of the right of organized labour to pursue legitimate working-class demands, marginalized the radical anarchists and shored up the position of the moderate anarcho-syndicalists at the head of the CNT, allowing for a *modus vivendi* between the new Republican authorities and the Barcelona unions.[22]

Yet a fatal flaw existed within the reformist project of the Esquerra: the nascent Catalan Government, the Generalitat, lacked genuine power and until this was devolved from the central Republican state, the Esquerra had no institutional means of promulgating reforms that could bind the working class to the new regime – and the Republican-Socialist Government was in no rush to relinquish power to a Barcelona authority that it accused of being in league with the CNT. This was particularly true of Francisco Largo Caballero, the Labour Minister of the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español/Spanish Socialist Workers' Party), who was also UGT Secretary General; he committed the Republic to a corporatist labour policy and preserved the dictator's *comités* in the guise of the *jurados mixtos*. For Largo, the *jurados* were the ideal instrument for restricting the CNT's freedom of manoeuvre and simultaneously breathing life into the tiny Catalan section of the UGT, which claimed a mere 13,203 members in Barcelona province in 1931.[23]

Largo's readiness to pursue narrow organizational objectives meant that he maintained the despised labour courts. In so doing, he scotched the single greatest

hope held by the CNT in the Republic. The flavour given to the new regime by his labour legislation produced a conflict between the UGT and the CNT in Barcelona and beyond that would continue into the Civil War. The main arena for this inter-union struggle was the port, where the UGT union claimed 2,470 members, making it the biggest Socialist union in Barcelona and a key force on the waterfront. Operating within the legal space provided by the arbitration courts, first under the dictatorship, then under the Republic, the traditions of the *ugetista* dockers were anathema to the CNT Transport Workers' Union, which by June 1931 claimed 25,000 members, including 4,450 dockers. As both unions competed to increase their membership at the expense of the other, open conflict became inevitable. Hostilities began in earnest in May 1931 when the CNT launched a strike action in pursuit of its goal of a closed shop on the docks in a bid to end the *ugetista* presence in the port and expel what it regarded as a Socialist Trojan horse in a *cenetista* citadel. The strike ended when the Generalitat, which was at pains to consolidate the position of the moderate anarcho-syndicalists and forestall a damaging and costly conflict on the docks, brokered a solution that, while allowing the UGT to remain on the waterfront, nevertheless favoured the CNT. The PSOE was infuriated. Largo, who asserted that central government enjoyed a monopoly over industrial relations, rejected the Generalitat accord as an 'intolerable attack on union freedom' by 'a patriarchal medieval government' and imposed a new settlement in favour of the UGT.[24]

The division between the UGT and the CNT on the waterfront mirrored the internal stratification of the Barcelona working class. Those workers who were prepared to submit their professional demands to the bureaucratic and protracted procedures of the state-controlled *jurados* generally belonged to the more skilled and better-paid sectors of the workforce, a clear minority among the dockers and indeed among the predominantly unskilled workforce of Barcelona. It was these same relatively better-off workers who provided the Catalan UGT with its main social constituency. By contrast, the CNT appealed most to the less qualified sectors, such as textile workers, street cleaners and building labourers, not to mention marginalized groups such as shoe-shiners and street vendors, elements who fell outside the classical social-democratic view of working-class identity and who were sometimes derided by Catalan Socialists as *déclassé* 'down-and-outs', even 'sub-human' and 'degenerate'.[25] The harsh economic context facing large sections of the Barcelona working class could not be easily resolved within the bureaucratic *jurados*, predisposing them instead towards direct action confrontations with employers. It was the readiness of the CNT to articulate the aspirations of social sectors feared by the Republican-Socialist authorities as dark elements, dangerous to society, which presaged a rupture between the Confederation and the Republic (see also Chapter Four).

This happened in the summer of 1931, when the dispossessed social constituency of the resurgent Barcelona CNT propelled the unions into a series of 'economic strikes', the majority of which aimed at little more than regaining working conditions and wages that had been eroded during the dictatorship. However, the Republican authorities, like their monarchist predecessors, inter-

preted CNT strike mobilizations as provocations and disturbances that were best dealt with by the forces of law and order. By August 1931, the newly appointed Civil Governor, Josep Oriol Anguera de Sojo, had employed the draconian monarchist practice of internment without trial against pickets in an attempt to remove the leaders of strike movements. The readiness of the Republican political elite to consolidate the new regime through repressive means thwarted the most basic and fundamental aspirations of the majority of the city proletariat and inevitably led to an escalation of social conflict. Consequently, in the course of the summer strike wave *cenetista* pickets clashed with both the old monarchist police force, including the Civil Guard, and the new Republican police, the Assault Guards, which was recruited in part from PSOE members. There were also several gun battles between CNT pickets and UGT scabs; the *ugetistas*, for all their legalistic discourse, occasionally provoked violent clashes with *cenetistas*, who viewed this as confirmation of the open door policy of the Barcelona Socialists for all the undesirable elements and gunmen from the Sindicats Lliures. Meanwhile, Largo's organizational bias and his predisposition towards *ugetistas* from the Labour Ministry fanned the flames of the port conflict; following intermittent wildcat actions and strikes, the UGT general secretary ordered a lock-out in an attempt to break CNT power on the waterfront and present the Socialist union with its own closed shop.[26]

Largo's willingness to utilize democratic institutions for his own party and union objectives had a profoundly radicalizing impact upon CNT activists in the summer of 1931; the consequent outpouring of anti-republicanism and anti-socialism split the cross-class alliance that had greeted the birth of the Republic in April. Largo publicly supported the enactment of draconian legislation, most notably the Law for the Defence of the Republic of October 1931, that prohibited traditional revolutionary syndicalist practices such as picketing and wildcat strikes, and which reminded *cenetistas* of the worst times of the dictatorship. Similarly, the UGT, like the Lliures before it, was viewed by the CNT as a favoured union, whose members were 'not real workers' but 'mercenaries at the service of capitalism' and the 'miniature Noske' (Largo) in the Labour Ministry.[27] CNT anti-republicanism also collided with the populist project of the Esquerra: the most radical sectors of the CNT base increasingly felt betrayed by the false promises of a party whose dependency on the largesse of the Madrid Government for a Home Rule bill and whose sensitivity to the public order fears of its middle-class constituency led it to endorse the Law for the Defence of the Republic as a counter-balance to those *cenetistas* whom it now regarded as beyond the pale.[28]

The repressive turn of the Republic brought the internal tensions within the CNT to a head. Not only was the position of the moderate anarcho-syndicalists undermined, but the clampdown on union mobilizations enabled the armed *grupistas* to pose as the defenders of the Confederation. At the end of August, in reply to FAI accusations that CNT moderates had capitulated to Republican repression, a group of anti-FAI *cenetistas*, the majority of whom were close to the Solidaridad group, issued the '*Treintista* manifesto'. The *treintistas* – as the supporters of the manifesto came to be known – denounced the

'myth of revolution' propagated by an 'audacious minority' through 'the violent deed', preferring instead an armistice with the authorities that might allow the consolidation of the CNT's organization in advance of the attainment of its long-term revolutionary objectives. Yet, given the repressive drift of the Republic, such hopes were naive; by late October one activist from the Barcelona Local Federation complained that conventional syndical activity was 'useless' because the authorities 'don't allow us to act'.[29] In sum, the prohibition of the daily syndical practices of the CNT rendered the *treintista* strategy inoperative and paved the way for the insurrectionary policies of the FAI and a confrontation with the Republic.

This seemed even more likely in mid-October, when the Republican authorities declared the Barcelona FAI to be an illegal organization. The FAI responded by mobilizing its activists, whom, it was claimed, were ready to give up their lives for freedom; that same week, Republican and Socialist Party meetings in Barcelona were disrupted as *faístas* directed their fury at the political forces that they accused of sustaining the 'Republican dictatorship'. The deteriorating social situation, political repression and the rabid nature of FAI sectarianism militated against a reasoned discussion of the *Treintista* manifesto; the numerous voices within the CNT in favour of a middle road between the polarities of *faísmo* and *treintismo* were drowned out, especially by the uncompromising journalism of Federico Urales and Federica Montseny, who stirred up anarchist malcontents against 'the enemies of the Confederation', whether anarcho-syndicalist, dissident communist or imaginary.[30]

In the last part of 1931 the radicals consolidated their positions within the centres of CNT power in Barcelona. Disguising their own tactical shortcomings by directing ultra-revolutionary invective at their opponents, the *faístas* inveighed against the 'bourgeois' CNT leadership who, they claimed, had sold out the revolutionary struggle through its secret agreement with the Esquerra. Typical of the tone of the polemic, Peiró, himself a member of the FAI and a trade-union leader who had endured jail and years of harassment from the security forces, was described by the enragés as 'the most degraded police agent'. Meanwhile, at assemblies of the Barcelona CNT Local Federation, delegates from the Transport and Construction workers' unions, the main centres of *faísmo* in the city's unions, advocated a purge of the 'traitors' whom they accused of betraying the struggles of the proletariat.[31] Instead of holding their ground, the *treintistas* capitulated before the rebellion of the radicals: in September 1931 they relinquished key positions on the *Solidaridad Obrera* editorial board; in March 1932 Pestaña and Emili Mira resigned from the National and Regional Committees respectively. The FAI willingly filled the vacuum and, although it had fewer than 2,000 activists across Spain in 1931,[32] the concentration of *faístas* and their sympathizers in the Barcelona unions gave them a strong *esprit de corps* and provided *faísmo* with its central bastion for the Republican years. Moreover, because of its strength within the CNT on a regional and state-wide level, the Barcelona Federation was a vital position from which the National and Regional Committees could also come under FAI control.[33] Thus, by the summer of

1932, *faístas* occupied key positions within the CNT: the *Solidaridad Obrera* editorial board included Felipe Alaíz, García Oliver and Montseny; Segundo Martínez was secretary of the Barcelona Local Federation; Ascaso, Alejandro Gilabert, José Canela, Patricio Navarro and Ramón Porquet sat on the Regional Committee; Manuel Rivas, García Oliver, Jover and Sanz were represented on the National Committee. Most decisively of all, the anarchist *grupos* extended their influence over the *Comités de defensa confederal*, the union self-defence squads: Nosotros alone had eight members in the Catalan *Comité de defensa confederal*, including Ascaso, Jover, Sanz, García Oliver and Durruti, thereby providing it with a largely unaccountable power base. The *faísta* ascendancy within the Confederation was assured and, testimony to the process of *trabazón*, the acronyms of the two organizations were increasingly coupled as CNT-FAI.[34]

The rise of the FAI has long been the source of debate. It has frequently been suggested that the FAI seized power within the CNT.[35] This perspective, which originates from *treintista* propaganda, largely ignores the socio-political basis of the FAI ascendancy, as well as the fact that – in contrast to social-democratic unions, for example – there were no stable, bureaucratic structures in the CNT that might serve as the target for any such institutional coup. There is evidence that the *faístas* occasionally relied on fraudulent measures, such as packing assemblies with supporters from other industries, in order to guarantee control of union *juntas*, but this appears to have been the exception rather than the rule.[36] Another misapprehension is that the FAI was essentially a movement of non-Catalan immigrant workers.[37] This interpretation reflects the anti-immigrant backlash of the Esquerra who attempted to isolate *faísmo* by portraying it as alien to Catalan society, in contrast to 'healthy [i.e. Catalan] elements within the Confederation'.[38] Though immigrant labour did play a central part in the radicalization of the proletariat and the rise of the FAI in the 1930s, armed insurgency and revolutionary maximalism were not an *ethnic* response; on the contrary, the radicalism of immigrant workers had more to do with their concentration among unskilled sectors of the labour market and the unemployed in the marginal ghettos on the outskirts of the city, where the formal political freedoms provided by the Republic did little or nothing to alter existing patterns of material inequality and social alienation. Thus, for the unskilled and the unemployed, whether Catalan or non-Catalan, the uninterrupted experience of socio-political marginalization confirmed FAI beliefs that there was no real difference between the Republic and the monarchy and that only the rapid implementation of *comunismo libertario* could end joblessness and capitalist exploitation. It was the many discontents of the jobless and the unskilled within the Barcelona CNT that were tapped by the FAI, something that also explains why the Construction Workers' Union, the union of the unskilled and the union with the highest levels of unemployed workers, became the first *sindicato* to fall under the sway of the *faístas*.[39]

Despite all this, suggestions that the FAI embodied the essence of the CNT *cenetismo* should be treated with scepticism. Merely because the revolutionary, anti-state discourse of the FAI found an echo within the political culture of the

cenetista base, it does not follow that *faísmo* was the logical corollary of *cenetismo*. Equally, the *faísta* aphorism that 'all those of the FAI are also the CNT' cannot explain the often ambivalent relationship between radical anarchists and the CNT; in fact, despite its vociferous claims to the contrary, the FAI operated as a vanguard political party within the CNT and, although it might be argued that the *bloquistas* or the *treintistas* sought a similar vanguard role for themselves, they would doubtless have been far more respectful of the politically plural base that had underpinned the CNT's revolutionary syndicalism since the 1910s and would probably not have divided the CNT rank and file as the *faístas* did.

Nor can it be claimed that the FAI contributed to the tactical orientation of the CNT. If the *treintista* view that the Republican state would not impede the development of mass organizations was ingenuous, so too was the *faísta* belief that the 'heroic gestures' of a few hundred poorly armed militants could produce the revolution or, at a minimum, encourage the authorities to change their anti-CNT tactics. But the anarchists were committed to an inexorable militaristic logic, and 1932 marked the beginning of what García Oliver termed 'revolutionary gymnastics'. As far as the FAI insurrectionists were concerned, even if these armed exercises did not provide the spark to ignite a revolutionary fire, they would at least force the authorities to rely on increasingly repressive measures and thereby impede the institutionalization of the proletariat within the Republic.[40]

The insurrectionary scripts acted out in January 1932 and in January and December 1933 revealed the tactical and organizational limitations of *faísmo*; in keeping with the FAI's Blanquist vanguardism and its naive confidence that it alone could force the revolutionary process, there was little attempt to broaden its putsches beyond the few hundred *grupistas* in the Barcelona area. For instance, when the January 1932 rising began in the provincial mining region of the Alt Llobregat, twenty-four hours elapsed before the Barcelona CNT was informed that the 'social revolution' had started. Meanwhile, as internal CNT records later revealed, there were no more than '300 comrades on a war footing on the streets' of the Catalan capital, all of whom were bereft of weaponry since 'the comrade who knew their secret location was arrested'. A year later, the preparation of the January 1933 putsch was a similar fiasco: in keeping with the FAI's lack of interest in trade-union mobilization, the rising commenced on a Sunday, thereby precluding a general strike; after isolated skirmishes on the Rambles and in the Raval, the police swiftly gained the upper hand in the city centre and, although fighting continued in outlying proletarian districts and FAI strongholds, such as Clot, Poble Nou, Sants and L'Hospitalet, by the end of the first day the insurgents were routed.[41]

The repression that accompanied FAI risings – martial law and the abrogation of civil liberties – had a deleterious effect on other revolutionary workers' groups and on the Barcelona labour movement as a whole: on several occasions, for instance, *bloquistas* were jailed without trial, the BOC party offices closed and all trade unions faced an inhospitable legal climate. Most of all, the risings were an unmitigated disaster for the CNT: from 1932 onwards *Solidaridad Obrera* suffered bans and fines, while the Barcelona unions were subjected to long

periods of clandestinity. With the unions forced onto the defensive and their bargaining power undermined, many employers successfully launched a counter-offensive against the CNT, victimizing militants, slashing wages, increasing joblessness and revoking many of the gains that had been won in the summer strike wave of 1931. Highlighting the disarray and demoralization within CNT ranks, only one delegate from outside Barcelona attended the first clandestine meeting of the Catalan CNT Regional Committee after the December 1933 putsch; in the months that followed many local union committees reported a climate of dislocation and defeat as members deserted the Confederation.[42]

FAI putschism was largely incompatible with the democratic traditions to which the CNT laid claim, and it highlighted the loss of internal democracy that accompanied *trabazón*. For instance, the January 1933 rising was prepared at the behest of Los Indominables, a Barcelona-based Bakuninist *grupo*, which acquired the backing of Nosotros, the all-important 'super-FAI', that then constituted the *de facto* leadership of both the 'specific organization' and the Catalan CNT. In other words, a mobilization that would have incalculable and unforeseen implications for the union organization of nearly 200,000 Catalan workers was, according to one Barcelona *faísta*, decided at a meeting of fifty delegates from the *Comité de defensa confederal*, some of whom were probably not *cenetistas* themselves. This retreat from mass democracy was not unusual. The vibrant exchanges that marked CNT assemblies during 1930–1 became less frequent under FAI hegemony, when it became commonplace for small minorities of activists to resolve important tactical questions in barely quorate gatherings. On occasion, key decisions affecting the CNT-FAI were resolved at gatherings of delegates from fewer than six *grupos*.[43]

The advent of 'revolutionary gymnastics' widened the gulf between the various factions inside the CNT: for the *treintistas*, the chaotic putsches exemplified the strategic incapacity of the libertarians, while the *bloquistas* damned the FAI for failing to appreciate that revolution presupposed a co-ordinated seizure of power. The FAI, meanwhile, mythicized its risings as a blood offering to anarchy and lamented the cowardice of the reformist tendencies who lacked the courage to emulate their virile gesture. Increasingly, the logic of the FAI was openly schismatic: regardless of the consequences, the reformists had to be removed before the revolutionary instincts of *cenetismo* were dampened. Firstly, the communist cancer was eliminated from the CNT at the April 1932 Sabadell Regional Plenum, with the expulsion of a number of BOC-inclined unions and the separation of the Local Federations from Girona, Lleida and Tarragona who then created an organization called 'The unions excluded from the CNT' (see also Chapter Six). The moderate anarcho-syndicalists supported the expulsion of the dissident communists from the CNT, but any hopes that this might endear them to the *faístas* were misplaced: in September, just five months after the departure of the pro-communists from the CNT, the *treintista* 'counter-revolutionaries' who led the 20,000-strong Sabadell unions were banished from the organization by an increasingly inquisitorial CNT leadership. By the autumn of 1932 the most high-profile opponents to the FAI line, though frequently lifelong *cenetistas*,

were subjected to 'syndical trials' at poorly advertized meetings which, it was claimed, were often jammed with pro-*faístas* from other unions; a further round of expulsions ensued, including that of Pestaña.[44]

There was a spatial dimension to the fissures within the Confederation. The *faístas* dominated Barcelona city, whereas outside the capital the labour movement was led by the anti-FAI opposition: the *treintistas* controlled the towns and cities of Barcelona province, especially Sabadell, while the *bloquistas* held the three remaining Catalan provinces. In addition, the spheres of influence of the different factions were complicated by the occupational and skill differentials referred to above. For example, in those provincial towns and cities where the *treintistas* or the *bloquistas* enjoyed hegemony, the unskilled, particularly the builders, often followed the FAI. Conversely, in Barcelona city, the *treintistas* and the *bloquistas* established a foothold among certain types of skilled and semi-skilled workers; in Barcelona's print industry, for example, typographers backed the *bloquistas*, while the bulk of the unskilled packers supported the FAI, a cleavage that split the union in 1933. The divisions inside the CNT are therefore best explained by the internal stratification of the Catalan proletariat: the main social constituency of the FAI resided among the unskilled and the unemployed, while the *bloquistas* and the *treintistas* appealed to the more secure workers. The geographical dispersal of the various factions was a condition of the widespread political alienation of unskilled, migrant workers in a rapidly urbanized city with a low social wage and a weak local state; this material context gave resonance to the *faísta* strategy of systematic confrontations with state forces. In contrast, in provincial Catalonia, urban growth had, in general terms, been slower, working conditions were relatively better, employment more stable and unemployment and the cost of living lower.[45]

However, the internal differentiation of the working class cannot explain by itself the extent and the bitterness of the split within the CNT; rather, these can only be understood through an appreciation of the militant fundamentalism of FAI tactics or, what we might call, the *militarization* of anarchism. Thus, in October 1932, just a month after the *treintista*-led Sabadell unions had been forced out of the CNT, *faístas* attempted to assassinate a prominent anti-FAI anarcho-syndicalist, in what was the first armed clash between rival *cenetistas*. More followed. A month later the first fatality occurred, ironically a *faísta* who was part of a gang that attacked a group of *treintistas*. In this climate, the fragmentation of the CNT continued apace in 1933: in January, *treintistas* formed a political body, the Federación Sindicalista Libertaria, 'the FAI of the anarcho-syndicalists', and later in the year the Sindicatos de la oposición de la CNT (CNT Opposition Unions) were established, which soon claimed 35,000 supporters in Catalonia. The FAI responded to the challenge posed by new organizations with increasing violence, perpetrating armed attacks against *treintista* and *bloquista* meetings in the Barcelona area. The readiness of the *faístas* to launch physical attacks on other working-class groups prompted denunciations of FAI fascism (*fascismo rojinegro*) locally, while Madrid *cenetistas* speculated whether the Barcelona CNT-FAI had been taken over by agents provocateurs.[46]

The fragmentation of the CNT coincided, in 1933, with a deepening economic recession that further heightened enmities between the various tendencies. Nowhere was this process more evident than in the textile industry, one of the largest industrial sectors in Barcelona. During 1931–2 the Sindicato de Arte Textil y Fabril was the flagship of the Barcelona CNT, quickly becoming a FAI stronghold, with Durruti and Ascaso among its members. As the FAI consolidated its grip over the union, life became increasingly difficult for the *treintistas* and *bloquistas* who, in the summer of 1932, decided to form their own rival textile syndicate, which shortly afterwards claimed 2,000 members in Barcelona and a further 4,000 in Sabadell. *Faístas* launched an aggressive campaign against the rival union, the ferocity of which surpassed that of the dock struggle. As unemployment in the textile industry rose, so did the intensity of the CNT's campaign for a closed shop which, as with the docks, included the use of the strike weapon to secure the dismissal of workers from the rival union; when militants from the new union mobilized to defend their right to organize, the *faístas* raised their campaign of violence, initiating a series of gun battles with rival union activists in and around textile plants in the summer of 1933. Meanwhile, Espartacus, a FAI *grupo de afinidad*, threatened a scorched earth policy, vowing to burn down those factories where the rival union had a strong presence, a threat that was carried out in at least one case.[47]

The militaristic ethos of the *grupos* and their tendency to view complex political problems – such as the relationship between revolution and democracy or the diversity of working-class political opinion – in terms of relations of force, was the logical extension of the theoretical precepts behind 'revolutionary gymnastics'. This mentality also validated the assassination of anti-*faístas* within the labour movement: in the summer of 1933 seven *ugetistas* were assassinated in Barcelona in what can be viewed as an armed recruitment drive designed to persuade workers to affiliate to the CNT for health reasons.[48]

It would be wrong to give the impression that the FAI-led unions entirely repudiated conventional syndical activities in favour of armed *grupismo*; had they done so, the *faístas* would most likely have lost their hegemonic position within the Barcelona unions. Nevertheless, the FAI ascendancy witnessed a growth in armed vanguardism as *grupistas* attempted to compensate for the loss in bargaining power resulting from the membership crisis caused by the splits of 1932–3. Thus, in the summer of 1933, when a four-month long stoppage of the Barcelona Construction Workers' Union reached a stalemate, what began as a mass action capable of mobilizing tens of thousands of workers in favour of the six-hour day was taken over by the *Comités de defensa confederal*. Amidst warnings in *Tierra y Libertad* that scabs would be bombed off building sites, what might earlier have been achieved through union strength and mass mobilization in 1931 was entrusted to small armed groups. But *grupismo* was no substitute for mass pressure: the anarchist leaders of the Construction Union were eventually forced to broker a return to work on terms that were no different to those negotiated months earlier in the *jurados*. Fewer than 2,000 of the 25–40,000 union members turned up to the ballot on the new working conditions, revealing the scale of the demoralization

inside the union and a degree of abstention among the base that the anarchist leadership would rather have seen in general, not union, elections![49]

Although the state repression of the Republican years closed off many of the conventional channels of CNT syndical praxis, this alone cannot explain the eruption of armed vanguardism in the 1930s. Instead, the replacement of the *sindicato* by the *grupo de afinidad* as the main protagonist in the social struggle was inextricably linked with the militarization of the anarchist movement. In the Barcelona tram dispute of 1933–6, for example, following the victimization of around 400 union organizers, *grupistas* began a campaign of armed propaganda and bomb and gun attacks on plant and management in order to secure the re-admission of sacked workers. Similar tactics were used in other industrial sectors: in the baking industry armed squads visited employers, warning them they would be dead men if they did not employ unemployed *cenetistas*, while in plants where *cenetistas* had been victimized, or where workers were laid off, managers received single bullets by post or written death threats, some of which were fulfilled. Symbolizing the disregard of the *grupistas* for union democracy, during a dispute at a Barcelona textile plant, a young *faísta* from outside the workforce contravened a branch union resolution that rejected individual terror and assassinated the manager.[50]

The vanguard militarism of certain FAI groups was no alternative to the collective struggles that gripped Barcelona in 1931 and it failed to ignite anything other than a smouldering repression which, in turn, fuelled syndical demoralization, bringing woeful consequences to the local working class as a whole. Violence provided employers with a suitable pretext for closing workplaces and sacking workers, as occurred in 1934 when, following several assassinations of members of the textile bourgeoisie, the Unión Industrial Algodonera, the main employers' association in the sector, announced the closure of a chain of factories in Catalonia, leaving 5,000 workers without work.[51] Furthermore, FAI sectarianism hindered united working-class resistance to bourgeois austerity projects. Successive BOC initiatives were either dismissed by the FAI as a communist plot or rejected on the maximalist grounds that the plight of the jobless could only be resolved after the revolution. In the mean time, the FAI favoured individual or small group protests, such as shop-lifting sprees, measures that it believed would wear down the capitalist system but which, in fact, were just as likely to corrode the spirit of the unemployed.[52] FAI opposition to short-term collective struggles against the curse of unemployment must have been a bitter irony for many of the jobless workers whose dissatisfaction with the moderate union leadership had earlier facilitated the rise of the anarchists within the CNT.[53]

In view of this ultra-leftist sectarianism, comparisons between the role of FAI and that of the German Communist Party, the KPD, before the rise of Hitler are not ill-founded.[54] Indeed, the impact of the anarchists on the labour movement was perhaps worse, synthesizing as they did the KPD putschism of the early 1920s with the divisive sectarianism of 'Third Period' Stalinism. The effect of two-and-a-half years of *faísmo* could not have been worse: it had attacked the PSOE, the *treintistas* and the *bloquistas* as much as the bourgeoisie; it had split the CNT and

depleted its power in what were sometimes futile clashes with the state; its 'revolutionary gymnastics' and terrorism had invited a fierce repression that jeopardized the future of the entire labour movement; and there were signs that the disregard of the *grupistas* for the lives of ordinary workers was creating a popular apathy that had a dangerous parallel with the period before the 1923 coup.

The changed political circumstances after the triumph of the anti-republican Right in the November 1933 general elections and the growth of the fascist danger nationally and internationally did nothing to alter the line of the Barcelona CNT-FAI leadership, which remained impervious to the increasingly passionate calls for unity. In fact, the introspection of the CNT-FAI was accentuated further still by the unyielding repression of the Generalitat in 1934, so that the Catalan CNT, unlike its Asturian counterparts, remained outside the Alianza Obrera, the alliance of working-class unions and parties organized under the initiative of the BOC (see Chapter Six). By October 1934, and with many on the Left convinced that the quasi-fascist Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (CEDA) was on the brink of converting the Republic into a corporate, Catholic state, the Barcelona CNT-FAI leaders remained unmoved, hindering the anti-fascist Alianza by arguing that 'Republican fascism' had existed since 1931.[55] Opposed by the largest single proletarian organization in Catalonia, the Alianza was unable to offset the syndical fragmentation and political impotency of the proletariat that had steadily increased since 1931; there would be no repetition of the mass and united Asturian revolutionary movement on the streets of Barcelona. Indeed, while the Alianza rallied its forces in October 1934 to organize what was the first general strike to have occurred in Barcelona against the will of the anarchists, the CNT-FAI countermanded the strike order, even though at the same time Asturian workers were struggling to keep the Spanish army at bay.[56]

The post-October repression was barbarous: the powers of the Generalitat were abrogated, civil liberties were suspended, trade unionists were jailed *en masse* and independent trade unions languished in a state of semi-illegality. Meanwhile, employers took advantage of the new context to launch a fierce counter-crisis offensive; unsurprisingly, the number of recorded strikes for 1935 was the lowest of all the Republican years.[57] The scale of this repression finally impelled many anarchists to appreciate that the political situation had deteriorated drastically since 1931 and a new consensus emerged within the CNT-FAI in favour of breaking out of the repressive circle in which it had become trapped. This was accompanied by a reaction within libertarian circles against the control exerted by Nosotros over the CNT-FAI during 1932–4 and, during the period leading up to the outbreak of the Civil War, Nosotros was displaced by Abad de Santillán's Nervio group, whose *sindicato*-based conception of social transformation presaged a shift away from 'revolutionary gymnastics' and a new concern for union organization within the CNT-FAI.[58] The emergence of Nervio also facilitated the rapprochement with the *treintistas*, the majority of whom returned to the 'anarchist family'.[59]

The new concord with the *treintistas* also reflected the growing aspiration for anti-fascist unity within the CNT-FAI; even the radical youth movement, the

Federación Ibérica de Juventudes Libertarias (FIJL), previously one of the most sectarian components of the Catalan anarchist movement, now joined the pro-unity current.[60] This was combined with an end to attacks against rival trade unionists by the *grupistas*, a truce that continued until the Civil War.[61] There was even a recognition in libertarian circles that the relatively unsupervised admission of *grupos* into the FAI during 1931–4 may have allowed what José Luis Gutiérrez Molina has described as adventurers 'attracted by violent action' and provocateurs to enter the movement. Such misgivings would seem to add substance to *treintista* and *bloquista* allegations that those Barcelona *grupos* which excelled in attacks on anti-anarchist labour militants were composed of 'irresponsibles' and 'police informants' who were 'out of control'.[62]

When elections were announced for February 1936 it was clear to many workers that the divisions of the past had to be transcended in order to prevent a new right-wing electoral victory and a further step along the road towards the establishment of a corporate state. With the Asturian Commune still very much a potent symbol, the supporters of the Alianza believed they would benefit from the burgeoning support for proletarian unity. Yet the dislike of the anarchist leaders for the Alianza had not abated, and they successfully neutralized the unitarian sentiments within the CNT-FAI rank and file in two ways: first, by emphasizing the importance of 'anarchist unity' and the 'reunification' of the CNT, even though this was an incomplete process as the BOC-led unions did not return to the Confederation;[63] and second, by channelling popular aspirations for an amnesty of social and political prisoners into the Front d'Esquerres, a middle-class-led electoral alliance, the political option which the nominally apolitical CNT-FAI leaders preferred to the proletarian anti-fascism of the Alianza. Beneath the traditional anarchist apolitical veneer, therefore, there were only token denunciations of the 'electoral farce' and, despite the common revolutionary objectives of the anarchists and the *aliancistas*, CNT-FAI leaders discreetly advised their constituency that the best way to achieve an amnesty and the return of constitutional liberties was to vote for the bourgeois republican parties.[64]

Aware that the extreme Right and disgruntled army officers were conspiring against the Government, the CNT-FAI leaders avoided serious confrontations with the authorities during the spring and early summer of 1936. Instead, the CNT-FAI went through a period of self-examination during these months, reconstructing and bolstering the syndical organizations that had been repeatedly buffeted by the repressive state apparatus between 1931 and 1935, and celebrating a national congress in May that sealed the return of the *treintistas*. The only significant action by the *grupistas* was the assassination of Miquel Badia, the former Barcelona police chief, at the end of April, an attack that was a settling of accounts from the preceding period rather than the beginning of a new campaign of individual violence.[65] The presence of the *grupistas* on the streets of Barcelona would not be felt again before the July *pronunciamiento*.

The July military rising succeeded where the 'revolutionary gymnastics' failed, the opposition to the coup creating the spark that ignited a popular revolution. Though the *grupistas* excelled in street fighting with the army, the contribution of

the putsches of 1932–3 to the victory in the streets in July 1936 was almost negligible. Indeed, in July, even in the anarchist stronghold of Barcelona, important minorities of Socialists and dissident communists, who had been excluded from the 'revolutionary gymnastics' and who had suffered frequent violent assaults at the hands of the *faístas* in preceding years, played a significant – even if secondary – role in putting down the military rising, as did Republican and Catalanist elements inside the security forces.[66] Yet the anarchists were ebullient with 'their' victory, although whatever advantages the CNT-FAI held after the July days did not remain for long; in the summer of 1936, as in April 1931 and February 1936, the hostility of the anarchists to a political alliance with revolutionary Socialists and dissident communists meant that the political initiative quickly fell once more to middle-class republicanism.

If the street fighting of July 1936 confirmed the courage of the *grupistas*, the years between 1930 and 1936 revealed their weaknesses; they constituted an elite whose military conception of the revolution obscured any need to formulate a political strategy that might attract large numbers of workers. This meant that while the *grupistas* might eliminate a few unpopular or intransigent employers, they were unlikely to transform the existing socio-economic and political system. Moreover, as we have seen, *grupismo* was an armed strategy adopted by a number of anarchist purists who feared that the growing political diversity of the Barcelona working class threatened the future of the local libertarian movement; the rearguard battle of certain sections of the FAI to maintain political control over the city's workers culminated in the assassination of rival union organizers in a fratricidal war of attrition in which working-class energies that could have been directed against the social system were wasted. Not only did this provoke damaging conflicts within the wider community of workers, but the ensuing divisions and bitterness impeded the ability of the Barcelona labour movement to respond to the dominant socio-economic and political realities of the early 1930s.

Despite the organizational drive of *bloquistas*, *treintistas* and *ugetistas*, the CNT-FAI continued to be the biggest single union in its Barcelona stronghold and in Catalonia, although this perhaps had more to do with the high standing of its base activists and the historic reputation and prestige of the CNT in the collective memory in the neighbourhood (*barris*).[67] The syndical war unleashed by the FAI produced an unprecedented internal crisis within the CNT, severely eroded union power and caused a dramatic collapse in membership in the Greater Barcelona area which, according to *cenetista* figures, fell from 192,064 to 96,985 during 1931–6;[68] we can only speculate about the number of potential members deterred from joining the union during these years.

The scale of this membership decline demands a closer investigation of the rank and file of the Barcelona CNT which, scotching the best hopes of the FAI, clearly did not consist exclusively of revolutionary libertarians. Instead, adopting the typology of trade-union membership formulated by Antonio Gramsci, I suggest that the CNT rank and file consisted of distinct groupings that were characterized by sectional, corporate and hegemonic consciousness: the first two categories were concerned with economic issues, such as improvements in

working conditions, and gave little thought to issues of revolutionary transformation, while only those militants with hegemonic consciousness were truly revolutionary and believed that the full realization of proletarian interests presupposed the suppression of capitalism and the creation of a new socio-economic system.[69] As we have already seen, during the 1930s the FAI systematically expelled or repelled militants – the anarcho-syndicalists and dissident communists – who espoused a hegemonic consciousness that differed from their own 'pure' anarchism. Whereas the FAI assumed that the majority of *cenetistas* possessed an anarchist hegemonic consciousness, in fact their aspirations did not extend far beyond the re-negotiation of their terms and conditions of employment or what *faístas* would view as the prolongation of exploitation. Yet it was precisely these sectional and corporate concerns which attracted hundreds and thousands of Catalan workers to the CNT amidst great optimism during 1930–1 to pursue bread-and-butter gains; it was also many of these same workers who, after 1932, became disenchanted with the FAI's revolutionary exclusivism and missionary zeal, with the downward fluctuation in the collective bargaining power of the CNT unions. The readiness of these workers to return to the unions when it seemed that membership would yield new economic rewards explains why the CNT later recuperated some of its earlier strength, particularly after the August 1936 Decree of Obligatory Unionization. But the Barcelona CNT never regained the power it enjoyed immediately after the First World War, and from the beginning of the Civil War it faced an increasingly robust Catalan UGT, arguably the major beneficiary of the internal civil war within the Confederation before 1936, which enjoyed rapid growth from the start of the Republic among those intermediate sectors of the working class, such as white-collar workers, waiters and technicians, sectors that lacked the same industrial identity as the constituency of the CNT and which rejected the orientation of the Confederation under the FAI.[70] If, therefore, the power of the UGT finally eclipsed that of the CNT after the 1937 'May Days',[71] the decline of *cenetismo* had nevertheless started in the early 1930s.

Notes

1 I would like to express my gratitude to the Scouloudi Foundation of the Institute of Historical Research, whose financial assistance facilitated part of the research on which this paper is based.

2 *Solidaridad Obrera*, 27–29 May, 10 June 1931, 4 June 1936.

3 Normally just over half of the delegates to the Regional Committee conferences came from Barcelona.

4 While the comprehensive history of the FAI has yet to be written, the following studies are of use: J. Gómez Casas, *Historia de la FAI. Aproximación a la historia de la organización específica del anarquismo y sus antecedentes de la Alianza de la Democracia Socialista*, Madrid, 1977 (there is an English edition: *Anarchist Organization: the history of the FAI*, Montreal, 1986) and S. Christie, *We, The Anarchists! A Study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI), 1927–193*, Hastings, 1996.

5 Cited in S. Tavera, 'La CNT i la República Catalana', *L'Avenç*, no. 13, February 1979, pp. 21–6.

6 The main exceptions are the impressive doctoral theses by E. Vega, 'La CNT i els sindicats d'oposició a Catalunya i el País Valencià (1930–1936)', Barcelona University, 1987, and by Anna Monjo, 'La CNT durant la II República a Barcelona: líders, militants, afiliats', Barcelona University, 1993.
7 J. García Oliver, *El eco de los pasos*, Barcelona, 1978; R. Sanz, *El sindicalismo y la política. 'Los solidarios' y 'Nosotros'*, Toulouse, 1966.
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20 *Acción*, 23 August 1930; *La Batalla*, 17 February 1931.
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22 *L'Opinió*, 13 March 1931.
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25 *Justicia Social*, 1 August 1931, 29 April, 22 July, 11 November 1933; *Cataluña Obrera*, 26 May, 9 June 1933. For a study of the role of street vendors in the CNT see Chris Ealham, 'La lluita per al carrer: els vendedors ambulants durant la II República', *L'Avenç*, no. 230, November 1998, pp. 21–6.
26 *Las Noticias*, 3–30 October 1931; Madrid, *Ocho meses*, pp. 174–5; *Solidaridad Obrera*, 21–29 April, 10–12 June, 1–29 July, 4–30 October 1931; *L'Opinió*, 25 July 1931; *La Batalla*, 3 September 1931; Minutes of the Plenum of the Barcelona CNT Local Federation, 24 October 1931.
27 *Solidaridad Obrera*, 22–30 October 1931.
28 *L'Opinió*, 5 September 1931; *El Luchador*, 28 July 1933; *Solidaridad Obrera*, 21 July, 4 August, 29 October, 15 November 1933.
29 *Solidaridad Obrera*, 11 November 1931; *L'Opinió*, 30 August 1931; Minutes of the Plenum of the Barcelona CNT Local Federation, 24 October 1931.
30 J. Peirats, 'Una experiencia histórica del pensamiento libertario. Memorias y selección de artículos breves', *Anthropos. Suplementos*, no. 18, Barcelona, 1990, p. 25.

31 *Cultura Libertaria*, 5 February, 29 April 1932; *Tierra y Libertad*, 1, 22 April 1932; *El Luchador*, 5–19 February, 8–15 April 1932; *Solidaridad Obrera*, 15 March 1932; Minutes of the Plenum of the Barcelona CNT Local Federation, 29 November 1931.
32 J. M. Huertas Claveria, *Obrers a Catalunya. Manual d'història del moviment obrer (1840–1975)*, Barcelona, 1994, p. 243.
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35 R. Carr, *The Spanish Tragedy. The Civil War in Perspective*, London, 1977, p. 15.
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37 A. Balcells, *Catalan Nationalism*, Basingstoke, 1996, p. 104, note 1; D. Conversi, *The Basques, The Catalans and Spain. Alternative Routes to Nationalist Mobilization*, London, 1997, pp. 41–2; H. Raguer, 'Pau i guerra', in B. de Riquer i Permanyer (ed.), *Història, política, societat i cultura dels Països Catalans. De la gran esperança a la gran ensulsiada, 1930–1939*, Barcelona, 1999, pp. 44–5.
38 See, for example, *L'Opinió*, 17 May, 26 October, 2 December 1932; *Llibertat*, 20 December 1933.
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41 *La Vanguardia* and *Solidaridad Obrera*, 1–26 January 1933; Peirats, 'Una experiencia histórica', pp. 31–8.
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44 *Cultura Libertaria*, 5 February, 17 November 1932, 3 January 1933; *La Batalla*, 29 January–11 February, 9–16 June 1932, 28 September 1933; *El Luchador*, 5–12 February 1932.
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47 *La Batalla*, 10 March, 20 July 1932, 31 August–19 October 1933, 9 June 1934; *CNT*, 2 September 1933; *Solidaridad Obrera*, 3 September 1933; *Adelante*, 17–28 October 1933, 14 January–6 February 1934.
48 R. Vidiella, 'Causas del desarrollo, apogeo y decadencia de la CNT', *Leviatán*, February 1935, p. 32; *Comercio y Navegación*, March–November 1933.

49 *Comercio y Navegación*, April–September 1933; *Solidaridad Obrera*, 5 March–15 August 1933; *La Batalla*, 20 April–24 August 1933; *Correspondencia Sindical Internacional*, 20 June, 18 July 1933.
50 *Adelante*, 9–11, 21 February 1934; *La Vanguardia*, 22 February, 4–5 December 1934.
51 *La Vanguardia*, 28 April, 9–17 August 1934, 27 June 1935; *Las Noticias*, 16–17 January 1936; *Adelante*, 8 March 1934.
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56 CNT, *El Congreso Confederal de Zaragoza 1936*, Bilbao, 1978, pp. 54–68.
57 R. Vinyes i Ribes, 'Sis d'octubre, repressió i represaliats', *L'Avenç*, no. 30, 1980, p. 52.
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6 The search for unity

Marxists and the trade-union movement in Barcelona, 1931–6

Andrew Durgan

The importance of anarcho-syndicalist influence over the organized working class in Barcelona during the years of the Second Republic is widely recognized (see Chapters Four and Five). Far less is known about the other tendencies active in the city's workers' movement which have generally been overlooked or dismissed as of little importance. However, on the eve of the Civil War around only 40 per cent of unionized workers in the city were members of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT. The rest belonged to a multitude of usually small unions and professional associations, the majority affiliated to three federations led by Marxist parties. The growth of these unions in the months prior to the war laid the basis for a serious challenge to the CNT's hegemony in the city's labour movement. Throughout the years of the Second Republic, the Marxist factions would strive, principally through the tactic of the united front, to overcome their relative weakness and fragmentation, with varying degrees of success. Prior to the spring of 1936, with some notable exceptions, the Marxist groups tended to draw their support from a different working-class milieu from the anarcho-syndicalists, mostly from among white-collar and service-sector workers and often those from a Catalan-speaking background. The radicalization of these sectors during the Republic would also help the Marxist groups consolidate their influence in the city despite their continuing ideological and organizational divisions.[1]

In evaluating the relative strengths and weaknesses of the trade-union movement in Barcelona during the Second Republic various factors have to be taken into account. Figures available for union membership are unreliable, and can only be taken as a general indication of the strength of any particular faction, especially as it is clear that the number of dues-paying members was considerably lower. The relative importance of any union also has to be placed in the context of the structure and size of the city's working population at this time.[2]

Before 1931, the Marxist organizations had little influence in the Catalan capital. Although the Socialist trade-union federation, the UGT, was founded in the city in 1888, it soon moved its headquarters to Madrid. Thus the Socialists offered little alternative to the traditional apolitical trade-unionism which had first emerged in Barcelona some fifty years previously and on whose tradition the CNT later built. The Socialists were also hindered by their inability to relate either to Catalan populism, which had deep roots among some sectors of

workers, or the radicalism that characterized other workers especially after the First World War.

During the Primo de Rivera dictatorship the Socialists began to expand their influence, albeit very slightly. The persecution of the CNT contrasted with the relatively privileged position of the UGT, which collaborated with the regime. Yet despite these more favourable circumstances, by 1928 the Catalan UGT only had 5,886 members; the 'yellow' unions of the Sindicats Lliures were to have more success in replacing the CNT in many workplaces.[3]

The small Catalan Federation of the Socialist Party, the PSOE, was further weakened by the splitting off in 1923 of a section of its membership more sensitive to nationalism to form the Unió Socialista de Catalunya (USC). The new party set out to build a locally based Socialist organization and at first saw the CNT, rather than diminutive Catalan UGT, as the best place to carry out such a project.

The communists were even weaker in Barcelona in this period. A small Communist Party group had been established in 1920, but most sympathizers of the Russian revolution were members of the so-called 'revolutionary syndicalist' grouping in the CNT which did not integrate into the party until 1924, when it became the main component of the Spanish Communist Party's new Catalan Federation (Federación Comunista Catalano-Balear FCC-B). Although small, the FCC-B had some prestige because it recruited a handful of able CNT militants in the city, most notably in the print workers' union. In 1928, a new independent Catalan Communist Party, the PCC, was founded in Lleida by young activists, some from a nationalist background, impressed by the USSR's 'solving' of the national question but unimpressed by the bureaucratic centralism of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE). The PCC's main base in Barcelona was among office and shop (*mercantil*) workers. In 1930, the FCC-B broke with the PCE over its analysis of the Spanish revolution, its sectarian trade-union policy and its bureaucratic and undemocratic practices. The two dissident communist groupings, the FCC-B and PCC, united in March 1931 to form the Bloc Obrer i Camperol (BOC). The handful of Catalan communists still loyal to the PCE reorganized themselves as the Partit Comunista de Catalunya (PCdeC).

With the advent of the Second Republic in 1931, the CNT rapidly regained its hegemony inside the Barcelona labour movement. By August, amidst a massive wave of strikes led by its militants, the Confederation claimed to have around 170,000 members in the city. The UGT, in contrast, had only 17,065 in the whole of Catalonia by the end of 1931, the vast majority in the province of Barcelona; Socialist-led trade unions remained greatly outnumbered by their anarcho-syndicalist rivals for the next three years.[4]

The CNT dominated the major industries of the city – textiles, metal and construction. The UGT's limited base in Barcelona, in contrast, tended to be among a minority of skilled craftsmen and in the service and white-collar sectors. As for organized manual workers in general, the Socialists could initially only challenge the anarcho-syndicalists among transport workers, particularly on the railways and the docks. Their base among rail workers had much to do with

the traditional strength of the UGT at a state-wide level in this sector. In the port, the autonomous dockworkers' unions had strengthened their position during the twenties at the expense of the CNT; with the advent of the Republic they integrated into the UGT. The anarcho-syndicalists organized strikes both in 1931 and again in 1933 with the aim of driving their rivals from the docks. Despite the violent tactics used against them, the Socialists held on to their stronghold and won official recognition as the most representative union in the sector. Relations between the CNT and its competitors in other sectors of the Barcelona workers' movement were characterized by distrust and hostility that occasionally spilled over into violence. In particular, the radical anarchist FAI would play a key role in the fight against the CNT's perceived enemies in the workers' movement (see Chapter Five).

Despite such embittered relations, the Marxist groups, with the exception of the PSOE, tried during the first years of the Republic to win support inside the CNT. Both the USC and the BOC differentiated between the CNT membership and its anarchist leadership who they hoped could be pushed aside. However, the anarchists' sectarian attitudes towards all Marxists attempting to work inside the CNT's ranks led the Catalan Marxists to give up their hope of being able to influence the anarcho-syndicalist unions. By 1933, the USC had turned its attentions to the UGT. Only the BOC was able to mount a limited challenge to anarcho-syndicalist influence, especially outside Barcelona. The Catalan communists had always worked inside the Confederation, and the BOC had within its ranks a layer of experienced union activists. In the Catalan capital, the BOC's main base continued to be inside the office and shop workers' and print workers' unions but it was also beginning to make inroads inside the gas and electricity and textile workers' organizations.

Even when first organized in 1918, the Barcelona CNT's Sindicat Mercantil had proven indifferent to anarchist doctrine.[5] In fact, white-collar workers in general were Catalan-speaking and provided a mass urban base for left nationalism and to a lesser extent, the Catalanist-Marxist factions such as the PCC and USC. This contrasted with those sectors where Spanish-speaking immigrants were more dominant, especially in construction and textiles and other manual work, which provided the main base, albeit not exclusively, for anarcho-syndicalism in the city. A certain tendency for white-collar workers to feel separate from the industrial working class at a social level was reciprocated by the anarcho-syndicalists' lack of interest in them in the belief that they were not true proletarians. Members of the dissident communist PCC had been instrumental in reorganizing the Sindicat Mercantil between 1929 and 1930 and dominated its leadership. It was not long before the anarchists moved against the communist leadership of the union, using, as elsewhere, the CNT's ban on election candidates holding office inside its unions as the excuse to try and undermine the BOC's influence. After a series of tumultuous, and occasionally violent, assemblies, the Sindicat Mercantil was expelled from the CNT in March 1933.

A similar battle was also taking place inside the CNT Print Workers' Union in Barcelona. Between 1931 and 1933, the union leadership changed hands various

times. As in the Sindicat Mercantil, the anarchists were accused by the BOC of packing the union's assemblies with workers from other sectors. By June 1933, there were two rival juntas in the print workers' organization; in September the BOC-led faction, with support from the dissident syndicalists, the *treintistas* (see Chapter Five), finally left to form a new union. Although taking only a minority of the CNT's members, these were generally skilled and thus relatively influential inside the print industry.

Among gas and electricity workers, a split also occurred after nearly all the unions outside Barcelona rebelled against the CNT's regional leadership. The most vicious struggle between the BOC and anarchists took place within the CNT's powerful textile workers' union, the Sindicato de Arte Textil y Fabril, during the summer of 1933. A revolt took place in the union after the abortive forty-eight hour strike in May 1933, opposition to which led members in various factories to refuse to pay their dues. A new breakaway union was established in July 1933 by BOC militants and *treintistas*, which soon claimed some 2,000 members. As a result, the FAI, which treated the union as its personal fiefdom, launched a campaign of intimidation in those factories where workers had joined the new union, even organizing strikes to try and force employers to sack the rebels. The breakaway union was also beset with internal rows, and in June 1934 split into two separate organizations, one led by the BOC, the other by members of Angel Pestaña's recently formed Syndicalist Party. Experiences such as those of the textile industry, combined with what was seen as the increasingly dangerous adventurism of the FAI, led both the BOC and USC to denounce the anarchists as counter-revolutionaries by the end of 1933.

By mid-1933, both Socialist and dissident communist factions had managed to consolidate a small base inside the Barcelona labour movement. The UGT now had fifty-two affiliated unions in the city, nineteen of which had been organized since 1931, with a claimed membership of over 25,000 – albeit barely half paid their dues on a regular basis.[6] Apart from on the docks, the UGT now had some influence among hostelry, bank and transport workers and had grown among clothing, metal, rail, shop and wood-workers, bakers and printers. The BOC had also made some small gains in the Catalan capital, where it now controlled eight unions with a combined membership of some 7,000 workers. Apart from the *mercantil*, print, power and textile workers' organizations, the dissident communists also led small unions of customs, grocery, metal and rail workers, and were increasingly active in various UGT unions in Barcelona. BOC members formed part of the leadership in the UGT carpenters', mechanics', state railway and teachers' unions.

Various factors had led to this growth of the non-anarchist unions. The CNT itself had been weakened by 1933 by direct repression and its constant involvement in often wasteful strikes (see Chapter Five). Many workers were not only tired of the tactics of the CNT but also attracted by both the relative success of the Socialist-led unions' involvement in the state-run arbitration committees, the *jurados mixtos*, and the tactic, championed by the BOC, of the united front. This meant establishing agreements for joint action with other workers' organizations

over specific issues, without any of the groups involved having to renounce their own political identity. The BOC had grown steadily since 1931, and by 1933 was the most important workers' party in Catalonia with a membership of around 4,000, at least double that of its principal rival, the USC. Its main base was in the provincial towns and in the countryside of Lleida and Girona. In Barcelona it only had around 500 members, less than the USC, but its influence outside the capital meant that it played an important role in galvanizing the movement in favour of the united front in Catalonia as a whole.

Basing itself on the early strategy of the Communist International, the BOC saw the united front tactic as central to building links with other workers' organizations and hence to extending its influence. The tactic proved relatively successful in Catalonia because of the divisions which plagued the labour movement, the weakness of the non-anarchist sections and the pressure from workers themselves for united action. The first example of such a united front was the creation of the Workers' Front against Unemployment in February 1933. Unemployment was an issue of growing concern; by 1933 some 60,000 workers were out of work in the city, about 15 per cent of the working population. The CNT had paid little attention to the question and had dismissed such basic demands as that of a subsidy for the jobless as reformist because it meant demanding state intervention. For the BOC and other Marxist groups, the experience of Germany, where many of the unemployed had turned to the Nazis, made the need for some form of initiative over the question particularly urgent.

The Workers' Front was set up principally by the BOC and USC with the support of 131 different unions from all over Catalonia. Nearly all the unions involved from Barcelona were from the services or white-collar sectors – reflecting clearly the nature of these two parties' base in the city at this stage. Its programme was essentially that of the BOC-led Unemployed Workers' Union, which had been established five months previously, and called, among other things, for a subsidy to be paid to all the unemployed out of a special tax on the rich, for security of housing for the unemployed who could not pay their rent, for the municipal authorities to take responsibility for clothing and feeding unemployed workers' children, for a six-hour day, and for the expropriation by the Regional Government, the Generalitat, of the 'means of production and distribution that were inactive'.[7]

The Front soon was weakened by the withdrawal of the USC and the powerful office and shop workers' association, the CADCI, worried by what it saw as demagogic and extreme demands raised under the influence of the BOC. Although most of the subsequent protests over unemployment in the city were organized by the BOC and the Unemployed Workers' Union, the Front helped popularize the idea of united action and would prove the first of a number of more significant initiatives of this type.

During the autumn of 1933 two disputes led by united fronts of non-CNT unions, among gas and electricity workers and in the *mercantil* sector, demonstrated the effectiveness of this tactic. At a regional level, the CNT Power Workers' Union was heavily influenced by the BOC and, despite the opposition

of the anarchist leadership in Barcelona, formed a united front with the UGT and the principal white-collar unions in September 1933. This front grouped together most of the unionized workers in the industry. The gas and electricity workers were generally considered to be demoralized and poorly organized since the great La Canadenca strike of 1919 (see Chapter Three). The united front, after threatening to strike, won several important concessions out of the employers.[8] The significance of this victory was not lost on other sectors disillusioned with, if not hostile to, the anarchists' radicalism.

The united front tactic proved most effective among Barcelona's *mercantil* workers. As elsewhere in the world, the great amorphous mass of over 60,000 office and shop workers in the city had proved impervious to militant trade-unionism. However, their working conditions were often far worse than many of the manual workers that they often felt separate from, if not superior to. The *mercantil* workers would be affected by the general radicalization and politicization of the working class during the Republic. Agitation had centred since 1931 on trying to get rid of the hated living-in system, whereby shop workers had to sleep on the premises, on making Sundays an automatic rest day and for a general rise in salaries, which had been at the same level since 1921. Attempts to win these demands through the *jurado mixto* were continually frustrated by the employers' intransigence.

Having broken with the CNT, and not being compromised by involvement in the *jurado mixto*, the BOC-led Sindicat Mercantil was well placed to take advantage of the growing anger in the sector. With the breakdown of negotiations, the Sindicat Mercantil managed to persuade eight other unions, including the CADCI and the UGT, to join them in forming a united front involving some 18,000 workers. The BOC now broke with its traditional hostility towards the arbitration committees, and representatives of the Sindicat Mercantil entered the *jurado* in the autumn of 1933 with the clear intention of demonstrating to the workers the inability of this body to concede their demands and in turn to convince them that the only solution was to use more militant tactics.

The failure of this latest round of negotiations led to a five-day strike in the sector between 13 and 18 November. The city's commercial life was paralysed, and there were violent clashes between pickets and police on the streets. With general elections imminent, the Generalitat, much to the employers' disgust, decreed a range of improvements for retail and food-supply workers.[9] The impact of this strike would be seen in the further politicization and extension of trade unionism among office and shop workers.

The elections of November 1933 presented another chance for co-operation among the city's Marxist Left. The BOC's proposal for an electoral alliance was rejected by the USC, which preferred, as it had in previous occasions, to stand in the lists of the Catalanist republican party, the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya. The local PSOE, in contrast, agreed to form a Workers' Front with the BOC. The vast majority of working-class voters in Barcelona remained loyal to the Esquerra. The Workers' Front only polled 1.3 per cent of the vote in the city and its formation led to a clear division inside the UGT, where individual

unions, depending on which Socialist faction was stronger, supported either the Workers' Front or the Esquerra list. However, as subsequent events would demonstrate, especially in relation to the united front tactic, the Marxists had more influence in the city than the election results would suggest. The desire to keep out the Right had led many workers (including CNT members, despite this union's call for abstention) to vote for the Esquerra as the only viable electoral alternative.[10]

The victory of the Right in the elections made the need for unity in the workers' movement even more pressing. In response to the threat posed by the Right, the BOC, Socialists, *treintistas*, the peasant union Unió de Rabassaires, and the Trotskyist group Izquierda Comunista de España (ICE), founded the Workers' Alliance, or Alianza Obrera, against fascism. The Alianza's manifesto spoke of how the Right would use parliament to introduce an authoritarian regime, and advocated working-class unity not only to defend its rights but also as a move towards social revolution. The Alianza presented itself as an alternative to 'anarchist adventurism' and could also be seen as attempt to form an alliance of all those opposed to the anarcho-syndicalists.

The Catalan Alianza Obrera served as an example to the workers' movement throughout Spain, and during the following months similar united fronts were established elsewhere, the most important being that of Asturias. In Catalonia, the Alianza was more influential outside Barcelona, as was clearly reflected in the one-day general strike organized on 13 March 1934 in solidarity with striking workers in Madrid and against the threat of fascism. While the strike brought most important towns in the region to a standstill, in Barcelona it had little impact without the CNT.

This new-found unity was more apparent than real. The USC had always acted as a left appendage to the Esquerra, and its participation in the Catalan Government led to it being expelled from the Alianza in March 1934. The Alianza's manifesto expressly opposed any direct collaboration by its signatories with 'the petty bourgeois parties'. Further divisions became apparent as a result of the strike of 13 March. The Unió de Rabassaires withdrew from the Alianza, claiming that the peasants would not support such an action. Moreover, both the *treintistas* and the PSOE criticized this kind of strike because, according to them, the Alianza should be used only to organize an insurrection in response to any attempt by the Right to introduce fascism and not substitute itself for the trade unions.

Despite these setbacks, the desire for unity from the rank and file of the workers' organization meant that the Alianza was one of several unity initiatives inside the city's labour movement during 1934. Following the success of the power and *mercantil* workers' united fronts, similar bodies were established during 1934 among printers, metal, textile, railway, post office, catering, urban transport, petroleum and bank workers, teachers and employees of the Generalitat – all of them uniting those sectors hostile to the CNT and its tactics. Of these, the most important initiatives were among printers and metal workers. Although the Print Workers' United Front, formed by the BOC-led unions and the UGT in April 1934, involved only a small minority of the city's print workers, it was

based among the more skilled sectors and was therefore influential. The Metal Workers' United Front was, like the print workers', formed on a regional level and most of its strength was outside the capital among the former CNT metal workers' unions which had sided with the syndicalist *treintistas*. In Barcelona, it received the support of the UGT and the small BOC-led union.

During 1934, the Socialist unions also continued to gain ground in Barcelona. They were favoured not only by the decline of the CNT, but by the growing importance of the *jurados mixtos*. The drop in both the number of strikes and the number being won led to even more hopes being placed in the arbitration machinery in Catalonia, where the *jurados* had been placed under the auspices of the Generalitat in September 1933. The Catalan Government was eager to encourage the CNT's rivals and was thus sympathetic to the unions that participated in its arbitration procedures. During 1933 the *jurados* decided in favour of the workers in 72 per cent of the cases submitted to them in Catalonia.[11]

The Catalan UGT's new-found strength was reflected at its assembly celebrated in Barcelona in April 1934. The UGT now claimed to have seventy-six unions affiliated in the Catalan capital, which, according to figures provided by the Generalitat, had a total membership of nearly 40,000 workers, about 12 per cent of the workforce.[12] However, the Socialist unions' strength in Catalonia would be undermined by the split in its ranks between supporters of the PSOE and those of the USC. The origins of this division lay in the failed unity process between the Catalan Federation of the PSOE and the USC in 1933. Initially the prospects of unity had appeared good: the USC had abandoned all hope of reforming the CNT, the PSOE's deputies had voted in favour of the Catalan autonomy statute in the Cortes and were still collaborating with the republicans (a strategy to which the USC was firmly wedded) and both parties had to compete in the region with the anarcho-syndicalists and the BOC. In the spring of 1933 the two organizations voted in favour of unification, the only serious opposition coming from the PSOE's Barcelona branch – traditionally hostile to any concessions to nationalism. Unification was confirmed at a special congress of the two parties in July 1933, only to be rejected by the PSOE leadership in Madrid which backed the dissident Barcelona branch. As a result, the majority of the party's Catalan Federation opted to join the USC. What was left of the Catalan PSOE was based mainly in Barcelona, where it had barely 200 members.

At the Catalan UGT's Assembly in April 1934, the pro-Socialist unity delegates walked out after having failed to break the hold of the Madrid leadership over the union's internal structure. A manifesto was subsequently issued by forty-one unions in July announcing the formation of the Unió General de Sindicats Obrers de Catalunya (UGSOC). The new federation adopted the USC's conciliatory line towards the Left-republican administration in Catalonia and distanced itself from the increasing radicalism of the Largo Caballero leadership of the UGT in Madrid. Most of the UGSOC's 19,424 members were based in Barcelona, where it had a certain influence among hostelry, metal, transport and shop workers.[13] The fact that the majority of the UGT's unions remained under the control of the small Barcelona branch of the PSOE rather than following the

more influential USC probably reflects the apolitical and craft nature of many of these unions. Also, apart from in the case of the Socialists' Office and Shop Workers' Union, there is no clear evidence that those sectors more likely to be Catalan speakers followed the USC into the UGSOC, thus suggesting that the virulent anti-nationalism of the PSOE in Barcelona had not determined the allegiance of the UGT's activists when the split occurred.

Meanwhile, the workers' movement in the whole of Spain was becoming alarmed by the threat posed by fascism both internationally and at home. Gil Robles's Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (CEDA) was perceived by many, particularly the Socialist Left and the dissident communists, as representing this threat in Spain. Sections of the Spanish workers' movement responded by establishing Alianzas Obreras in various parts of the country. The entrance of the CEDA into government on 4 October 1934 put this anti-fascist unity to the test. The PSOE and UGT responded by reluctantly giving the order for a general strike throughout the country. In Catalonia, there was the added indignity of the central Government's blocking of the Generalitat's Cultivation Contracts Law. The general strike in the region was organized by the Alianza Obrera. Outside Barcelona the strike was solid, given the influence of the *treintistas* and the BOC. However, in Barcelona itself the situation was far more complicated due to the passivity of the CNT, which was still the dominant tendency in the city's labour movement. What is more, the Catalan Government and the Esquerra vacillated, fearing working-class radicalism as much as the CEDA in Madrid.

The strike's limited success in Barcelona depended on the activities of the BOC, which dominated the local Alianza Obrera. Its militants prevented any bus or tram from circulating on the morning of 5 October and were the main organizers of two para-military style demonstrations to demand the Catalan Government declare the Catalan Republic and arm the workers. The USC's absence from the Alianza meant that it proved difficult to impose the strike in those workplaces where the UGSOC was influential. The rapid capitulation of the Catalan Government, the failure of the Alianza Obrera to obtain the arms promised by the Generalitat and the passivity of the CNT, not to mention the collapse of the movement in most other parts of Spain, meant that the strike soon disintegrated. Despite this defeat and the subsequent repression, the events of October 1934 would prove decisive in the renovation of the Catalan and Spanish workers' movement during the coming months.

After the debacle of October 1934, the Government took advantage of the situation not only to suspend the Catalan Government but above all to move against the workers' movement. In Catalonia, martial law was imposed, 280 different workers' centres were closed and more than 3,500 workers and peasants were imprisoned. Both the *jurados mixtos* and the unfair dismissal laws were suspended leaving workers more vulnerable than ever; thousands were sacked and various agreements were overturned, leading to a general decline in conditions and wages.

The repression was not extensive or brutal enough to quell working-class militancy. Instead the heroic example of the Asturian miners, who had fought

off the army for nearly three weeks before being bloodily defeated, would serve as an inspiration to workers throughout Spain. In Catalonia, although the number of strikes dropped dramatically, there was still resistance. The first major dispute was among metal workers who, after a long struggle, had won the implementation of the forty-four-hour week in June 1934. This agreement was now revoked and the forty-eight-hour week reimposed. The Catalan Alianza Obrera called a one-day general strike in the metal industry on 10 December 1934 which was followed by further illegal strikes in Barcelona and elsewhere. The growing importance of the non-CNT unions in the sector, especially the UGT in Barcelona, guaranteed the Alianza's call was effective. On 1 May 1935 a general strike was organized by the Catalan Alianza with the backing of the CNT. This was the first time anarcho-syndicalists had supported an initiative organized by the Alianza, and represented a slight shift in its relations with the Marxist factions – something which would become more common during 1936.[14]

Another effect of October 1934 was to show even more clearly the need for further unity. As a result, there were three meetings in Barcelona in early 1935 between the various Catalan Marxist groups (BOC, ICE, PCdeC, PSOE, USC and the small radical nationalist party the Partit Català Proletari, PCP) to discuss unity. Although they had participated reluctantly in events in October, the subsequent repression radicalized many USC members, in particular its General Secretary, Joan Comorera, who by early 1935 was moving into the orbit of the Communist Party, attracted by its Popular Front policy. The change of line by the international Communist movement during the summer of 1934 away from its previous sectarianism towards some form of left unity led to belated participation of the PCE and its Catalan counterparts (PCdeC) in the Alianza Obrera, which they had previously denounced as counter-revolutionary. The Communist Party's new position also seemed to auger well for some form of agreement.

The differences between participants proved too deep to reach a lasting political unity; instead these meetings established two increasingly antagonistic blocs. On one hand were the BOC and ICE which defended the need for a revolutionary party encompassing the whole of Spain, the first step towards which would be the foundation of the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM) in September 1935. On the other hand were the USC, Catalan Federation of the PSOE, PCdeC and PCP, which favoured forming an exclusively Catalan workers' party on the basis of the new turn by the Communist International towards socialist-communist unity and the Popular Front, thus leading to the creation of the Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya (PSUC) in July 1936.[15] The immediate result of the polarization that emerged from these talks was the effective collapse of the Catalan Alianza Obrera due to the continued clashes between official and dissident communists. The breakdown of collaboration between the BOC and the Catalan PSOE, the PCP and the USC in 1935 would prove a turning point in relations between organizations that not only had been working together at different levels over the previous two years, but in general shared the same milieu in the Barcelona labour movement. The

consequences of this estrangement would be the growing isolation of the largest of these parties, the BOC/POUM.

During 1935, there were few unity initiatives in the Barcelona trade-union movement because most unions were forced to operate clandestinely or under the constant attention of the authorities. The divisions inside the Alianza Obrera and the growing polarization between the BOC and those moving into the orbit of the official communists, in particular the USC, also hindered unity initiatives. The employers and the authorities tried to take advantage of this situation by re-organizing the Sindicats Lliures. Although representing only a small minority of the city's workers, the Lliures were influential in the new *comisiones mixtas* set up to replace the *jurados mixtos*, especially as many unions were either closed down or refused to participate alongside their old enemies. Although the impact of the Lliures was limited, they made some headway in the textile industry where they dominated the *comisión mixta* with the connivance of employers and authorities alike. The POUM/BOC-led textile workers' union and the UGT took the lead in trying to drive the Lliures out of the textile factories, but the other unions refused to collaborate in united action. Factionalism continued to plague the textile workers' unions during 1935, especially when the POUM union decided to participate in the sector's *comisión mixta* in order to 'denounce its activities ... impede its work' and defend those workers who had been sacked. This position was not shared by the normally more moderate UGSOC textile workers' union, let alone the CNT which abhorred all participation in such state-run bodies whoever was in government, and led to further bitter clashes between the various tendencies.

The Popular Front victory in the elections of February 1936 changed once more the situation inside the Barcelona workers' movement and led to the reorganization of many unions. Various united fronts were also reactivated with the dissident communists once more in the forefront of such initiatives. The Socialist unions' response was more contradictory. While the UGT subscribed to new agreements with their dissident communist rivals among textile, transport and wood-workers, they refused to rejoin the *mercantil* and print workers' united fronts and were soon hostile to the POUM inside the metal and power workers' fronts.

The POUM's renewed unity offensive resulted in the founding of the Federación Obrera de Unidad Sindical (FOUS) in May 1936. The new federation brought together some 50,000 workers throughout Catalonia, most of whom were former members of CNT or autonomous unions which often had been organized since 1931 by the dissident communists themselves.[16] The POUM presented the creation of the FOUS as a step towards a broader unity and an eventual fusion with the UGT and CNT. The other unions were, however, unimpressed and the creation of the new federation would cause further tension between the various sectors of the Catalan workers' movement. Outside Barcelona the FOUS competed on equal terms with the *treintistas* and overshadowed the Socialist unions, but in Barcelona, the centre of the Catalan workers' movement, its influence was still limited to a few specific sectors. This

was the case among office and shop workers, where the nine unions in the United Front accounted for 10,000 of the new federation's 17,000 or so members in the city. The FOUS textile and print unions also had some limited influence, but in general the dissident communists were not only vastly outnumbered in trade-union terms by the CNT but increasingly by the Socialist unions. Yet the dissident communists' activism and militancy would, once more, mean that the unions they influenced had a disproportionate impact on the city's labour movement.

In the months following the electoral victory of the Popular Front there were various strikes in Barcelona, which, although not reaching the intensity of some areas of Spain, belie the idea of a 'Catalan oasis' of social peace.[17] Apart from important stoppages among metal, *mercantil* and print workers, there were also disputes among dockers, seamen, railway workers, confectioners, waiters, dustmen, street cleaners, stonecutters, milkmen, workers at the petroleum company CAMPSA, hairdressers, hatters and garment makers. The spectre of events in France, where a massive wave of strikes and factory occupations began in June 1936, added to the increasing panic felt among employers. In this context, most workers' organizations grew massively in the months leading up to the Civil War.

The first major dispute that broke out in Catalonia after the elections was among metal workers and reflected both the new mood of militancy and the continued divisions and realignments inside the trade-union movement. In Barcelona, the UGT Metal Workers' Union, which had recruited massively since 1934, played a crucial role in the strike and its close collaboration with the CNT would mark an important shift in relations between the two federations in the city.

The dispute in the metal industry started in mid-March, when workers at factories in Barcelona and Badalona began to work only a forty-four-hour week in protest at the imposition of a forty-eight-hour week by the previous government. This action was supported not only by the *treintista*, socialist and dissident communist unions grouped in the Metal Workers' United Front, but also by the CNT. The Generalitat, fearing the extension of the strike, decreed as compensation a forty-hour week to last for the same number of weeks as had the forty-eight-hour week and without any loss of pay. This offer was accepted by the United Front as being a way of giving work to a great number of unemployed. However, the CNT opposed the agreement, favouring instead a payment to compensate for the extra hours worked since the forty-four-hour week had been revoked. The anarcho-syndicalists now called an all-out strike. The UGT Metal Workers Union's decision to back this stoppage surprised the other unions in the United Front which, as a consequence, felt obliged in the interests of unity to support the CNT's initiative. A further compromise agreement was finally forced on the employers, but this pact was broken by the anarcho-syndicalists who pressed for a higher wage rise and other improvements. The UGT Metal Workers' Union, on the instructions of its national leadership in Madrid, yet again followed the CNT's lead.

A second strike now took place, confined to the anarcho-syndicalists' strongholds in Barcelona. The United Front, whose principal base was outside the capital, openly opposed this latest stoppage and even called on the Generalitat to force the owners to keep the factories open. With the metal workers' organizations bitterly divided, the strikers were finally forced back to work empty-handed in mid-April. The failure of this second strike and the resulting confusion was, according to the POUM metal workers, to demoralize a great part of the sector's workers and lower the prestige of the unions. Instead of the far-reaching victory that a united struggle should have produced, the strike led to disaster because of the anarcho-syndicalists' aim to out-manoeuvre the United Front regardless of the cost.[18]

The antagonism felt by the Catalan CNT towards some of its rivals hardened by June 1936. According to the FOUS, the Confederation's regional leadership had expressly forbidden its sections from entering into joint negotiations with other unions on working conditions. Experience was to show that this instruction seems to have applied to any collaboration specifically with the FOUS rather than the UGT. Especially damaging was the continuing union rivalry inside the textile industry. Violent clashes involving the FAI, while not reaching the same levels as in 1933, still took place in Barcelona's textile factories. The CNT, UGT and FOUS textile unions all presented separate sets of demands to the Catalan employers at this time and calls by the dissident communists for a united front were only taken up by the UGT on the eve of the Civil War. The CNT initially refused all contact with other unions in the sector before also making a belated appeal to the UGT for joint work.[19]

The increasing rivalry between the FOUS and other unions was most clearly illustrated in the Barcelona printing trade. Following the February elections, the POUM-led print workers' union had taken the initiative in re-forming the United Front in the sector. However, the other Catalan print unions were reluctant to participate. Not only did the CNT yet again reject all attempts to draw them into joint activity, but the UGT showed no interest in rejoining the United Front. A Regional Conference of Print Unions, supported almost exclusively by autonomous or POUM-led unions, drew up a new list of demands, but despite an intense campaign to win support from other unions, renewed attempts to involve the CNT and UGT proved fruitless.[20]

The employers refused to discuss the print workers' demands and a strike was declared on 16 June. While the stoppage was reported to be total in the provinces, in the Catalan capital the United Front was faced with the opposition of the UGT, UGSOC and particularly the CNT, which issued a manifesto calling for the strike to be broken. To impose the strike, the FOUS union did not balk at using force, thereby provoking *Solidaridad Obrera* to protest about the activities of armed groups of agents provocateurs and 'POUM fascists'. Despite this opposition, within two days 85 per cent of the city's print workers had stopped work, including some CNT members. After five days of increasing violence, the stoppage was temporarily called off because the employers had agreed to discuss the United Front's demands in the *jurado mixto*. This was heralded by the FOUS

as a victory because it meant conditions would be discussed directly in Barcelona rather than exclusively in Madrid through the industry's National Wages Committee. As a consequence, a number of important concessions were won.[21]

Parallel to the printers' dispute, a new strike was taking place among the office and shop workers. Following the 1933 strike, most *mercantil* organizations had grown and strengthened their influence in the sector but here too there was increasing rivalry between different factions, exemplified by the refusal of CADCI (now led by the PCP) and the UGT to rejoin the United Front, and by their attempt to reach an agreement with the CNT.[22] The *mercantil* unions were determined to restore the gains won in 1933 which had been annulled by the authorities in June 1935. The employers refused even to discuss the workers' proposals (their intransigence seems to have had more to do with the ruling class's general political offensive against the proletariat than with economic reasons). A strike became inevitable.

The stoppage, with the joint backing in the end of the United Front, CADCI and the UGT, began on 18 June, lasted nine days and, unlike 1933, extended outside Barcelona. The city's commercial life was soon paralysed, most shops were closed down, no ships could leave the port because the customs officials were out, and food distribution was subject to control by the strike committee. The employers were soon forced to back down and by 27 June most of the strikers' demands had been met.[23]

This new victory for the *mercantil* workers seems to have been equally as unexpected as in 1933 and its impact equally as dramatic. Once more this traditionally weak sector had sustained a strike with an extension which was impressive by any standards. Over 100,000 workers were supposedly involved throughout Catalonia, despite the indifference of the CNT and the hostility of the Esquerra. Both the POUM and the parties that would soon constitute the PSUC tried to make political capital out of the victory.

Rather than the more radical FOUS, it was the UGT and UGSOC which expanded most rapidly in Barcelona in the months leading up to the war. By the end of June, according to the Generalitat's labour department, the UGT, despite a near permanent crisis in its local leadership, claimed over 40,000 members in the city organized in seventy-four unions, and the UGSOC claimed a further 30,000 in twenty-three different unions. These figures are undoubtedly inflated; nevertheless, all the evidence points to a significant growth of the Socialist-led unions in the Catalan capital at this time. The UGT and UGSOC had recruited extensively not only where they already had some support, on the docks and among transport workers, but also in those sectors previously considered strongholds of the CNT: construction, metal and textiles.[24]

Contemporary sources, however, dismissed the Socialist unions in Catalonia as being of little importance.[25] This view can in part be explained by the general passivity and conservatism of most of those sectors organized by the UGT and UGSOC. Both the Socialist-led federations were based mainly on small, often craft-based unions. For instance, in the port the UGT had eight unions alone dedicated to the unloading and loading of different goods. This fragmentation

contrasted strongly with the unitary and industry-based unions favoured by the more militant sections grouped in the CNT.

By April 1936, the UGT and UGSOC agreed to reunite their unions on a sectoral basis, parallel to the unification process between the Catalan Federation of the PSOE, PCdeC, PCP and the USC. The new-found influence in the Catalan UGT leadership of the official Communists – the real champions of political unity at this stage – seems to have helped overcome the mistrust between the two union federations which had still been very apparent only a few months previously. This process of reunification would be completed at the beginning of the Civil War and would provide the PSUC with an important trade-union base consisting of some 85,000 workers in the region by July 1936 – if the Generalitat's figures are to be accepted – the majority of which were in Barcelona.[26] The growth in the UGT and UGSOC in the Catalan capital has also to be seen in a political context of increasing support for the politics of the Popular Front: an inter-class alliance against fascism and the need for one unified Catalan workers' party.[27] In contrast, continuing support for an openly revolutionary and proletarian alternative was still reflected in the mass base of anarcho-syndicalism, and, to a lesser extent, the POUM.

According to the sources available some 250,000 people – 60 per cent of the working population – were members of the 265 unions that supposedly existed in the city by beginning of the Civil War, at least 50,000 more than in 1934.[28] The dues-paying membership, however, was probably only half the claimed total.[29] The increase in union membership was most notable in the metal industry, construction and the service sector. Most newly unionized workers had entered the Socialist-led unions since February 1936. The CNT continued to maintain its power, and claimed in May 1936 to have around 90,000 members in Barcelona, although according to the anarcho-syndicalists' rivals the real figure was much lower and the CNT had even lost its hegemony over the region's proletariat.[30] What is apparent is that the relationship between the CNT and its base was somewhat ephemeral, but the continued influence of the anarcho-syndicalists in the city's labour movement would become clear during the first weeks of the civil war. An internal Communist Party report, written in January 1936, was probably correct in affirming that despite its internal problems, the CNT had 'conserved its union cadres in most major industries in Barcelona' and had 'more possibilities than any other organization of re-organizing itself'.[31]

Despite numerically being matched by its Marxist rivals, the CNT's unitary unions were clearly more powerful than the majority of small unions that made up the UGT, UGSOC or FOUS. Moreover, many of the independent unions that participated in the *jurados mixtos* were little more than professional associations, as were some of those integrated in the Socialist federations, especially among white-collar workers. Although the CNT had lost ground, they still organized a substantial majority of all unionized construction, wood, and textile workers. However, among metal and transport workers, their hegemony had been seriously challenged by the Socialists. In the port, the UGT, UGSOC and

independent unions clearly outnumbered the CNT, as continued to be the case with service and white-collar workers.

The significance of this growth in the Socialist unions would soon be seen in the Civil War. The compulsory unionization decrees of the Generalitat in August 1936, along with the rapid expansion of all workers' organizations in the Republican zone, meant that by October 1936 the UGT had, in terms of membership, overtaken its anarcho-syndicalist rivals.[32] In evaluating the effects of compulsory unionization in Barcelona, the fact that over half the working population was already unionized in some way or other has to be taken into account. The majority of the city's over one hundred autonomous unions, faced with the choice of integrating in either the UGT or CNT, usually chose the former. In the exceptional circumstances of the war, as one historian puts it, 'the UGT seemed to have found its historical role [in Catalonia]: to head a moderate and a-political trade unionism outside of anarcho-syndicalism'.[33]

By the spring of 1936 both the UGT and CNT were starting to accept that there should be one anarchist and one Marxist federation, which would form the basis of their pact in the region during the war. Despite the CNT's traditional hostility to its Marxist rivals, there had been a shift towards some limited forms of collaboration with the UGT, as was seen in the metal workers' strike, the participation in June 1936 of the anarcho-syndicalists in the Power Workers United Front at the expense of the FOUS, and the collaboration between the CNT and UGT rail unions.[34] This change reflected the need for the anarcho-syndicalists to take the Socialist unions in Catalonia into account, given their new-found influence as well as a shared hostility towards what was seen as an unnecessary third federation, the FOUS. It was also a consequence of the strategic shift by the CNT at its National Congress in Zaragoza in May 1936, where it called for a Revolutionary Alliance with the UGT. The acceptance by the CNT and UGT of each other's existence contrasted with the unitary slogans of the FOUS. Despite the limited successes of their united-front policy, especially during 1933 and 1934, the BOC/POUM's trade-union strategy proved incapable of decisively undermining the influence of the anarcho-syndicalists or offering an alternative to those sectors of the working class in Barcelona which rejected the CNT's radicalism and which now turned towards the UGT. Faced with the rapid bi-polarization of the trade-union movement in the first months of the war, the dissident communists felt obliged to integrate into one of the two major federations. The POUM mistakenly believed that their experienced trade-union militants would be able to exercise more of an influence inside the weaker Catalan UGT, win its leadership and then pose the question of fusion with the CNT. In fact, the disappearance of the FOUS would prove disastrous for the POUM, which soon found its union activists vastly outnumbered by the more moderate and newer membership of the UGT. The PSUC would thus have few problems in undermining and eventfully destroying the POUM's trade-union base.

Most important, the growth of the Socialist-led unions in the months prior to the war also helps explain the subsequent strength of the PSUC. While the latter

obviously benefited from the patronage of the USSR and the support from military and middle-class quarters, it is quite clear that it had an important base among workers in the Catalan capital, and not just in the white-collar and service sectors. The PSUC itself had little more than 2,500 members in Catalonia at its foundation, of which probably over half were in Barcelona.[35] The POUM had over twice this number but was relatively weak in the Catalan capital. The subsequent growth of the PSUC – it would claim 60,000 members by July 1937, 15,000 in Barcelona[36] – cannot be divorced from the support it had acquired for its politics even before the war started. This was especially the case in Barcelona. In contrast, the general isolation of the POUM had much to do with its weakness in the city and hence its lack of leverage over the CNT. The PSUC's mass trade-union base would be another factor that guaranteed its dominance in the region by the summer of 1937 and thus end the revolutionary aspirations of the CNT and POUM.

Notes

1 On the relations between the Catalan Marxist groupings and the local workers movement see A. Durgan *B. O. C. 1930–1936: El Bloque Obrero y Campesino (1931–1936)*, Barcelona 1996; on the history of the Catalan socialist organizations see D. Ballester, *Marginalitats i Hegemonies: L'UGT de Catalunya (1888–1936)*, Barcelona 1996; P. Gabriel, 'Sindicalismo y sindicatos socialistas en Cataluña. La UGT, 1888–1938', *Historia Social* no. 8, Autumn 1990, pp. 50, 56–8; R. Alcaraz i González, *La Unió Socialista de Catalunya*, Barcelona 1987; A. Balcells, *Trabajo industrial y organización obrera en la Catalunya contemporánea*, Barcelona 1974, pp. 123–80; J. L. Martin i Ramos, *Els origins del PSUC*, Barcelona 1977.

2 There were probably up to 420,000 salaried workers in Barcelona by 1936, although only a general calculation can made based on the different and conflicting sources available; see J. Hortelà, *El desarollo industrial a Cataluña*, Barcelona 1968, vol. 2, pp. 209–10; A. Balcells, *Crisis económica y agitación social en Cataluña (1930–1936)* (Barcelona 1971) p. 191; P. Gabriel, 'La población obrera catalana ¿una población industrial?', *Estudios de Historia Social,* nos. 32–33, 1985; E. Vega, *La CNT i els sindicats d'oposició a Catalunya i el Pais Valencià (1930–1936)*, Doctoral Thesis, Universitat de Barcelona, 1987, p. 90.

3 C. M. Winston, *Workers and the Right in Spain, 1900–1936,* New York, 1985.

4 P. Gabriel, 'Sindicalismo' p. 59; Ballester *Marginalitats*, p. 134; Confederación Regional del Trabajo de Cataluña, *Memorias de los comicios de la región catalana celebrados los días 31 de mayo y 1 de junio, y 2, 3, y 4 de agosto de 1931*, Barcelona 1931.

5 J. Arquer, *El proletariat mercantil i la consciencia de clase*, Barcelona, 1935, pp. 8–9.

6 *Acta de la Comisión Ejecutiva de la UGT*, Madrid, 6 April 1933.

7 *Fam*, 10 February 1933; *La Batalla* 9, 23 February 1933.

8 Durgan, *B. O. C.*, pp. 195–6.

9 Ibid., pp. 197–202; *Butlletí Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya* 17, 18, November 1933.

10 Voting figures seem to suggest that the anarchist abstentionist campaign had little effect, See Durgan, *B. O. C.*, p. 219.

11 Balcells, *Crisis económica*, p. 188; R. Vinyes, *La Catalunya Internacional*, Barcelona 1983, p. 168.

12 Nevertheless, the UGT Executive in Madrid reported that membership of the *whole* regional organization was only 35,000. In part, this discrepancy was explained by the fact that various of the unions listed had only recently integrated into the UGT and as yet were not recognized by Madrid as being affiliated. *Butlletí Oficial de la Generalitat*,

'Cens Electoral Social', 31 July 1934; Unión General de Trabajadores de España, Secretariado General de Cataluña, *Primera Asamblea General,* Barcelona, April 1934; *Actas de la Comisión Ejecutiva de la UGT,* Madrid 1 March, 11 April 1934.

13 *Justicia Social,* 11 August 1934; *Butlletí Oficial de la Generalitat*, 'Cens Electoral Social', 31 July 1934.

14 El Comité Local de la Alianza Obrera de Barcelona, 'Primero de Mayo. ¡Viva la Huelga General!' (PCE Archive); 'Informe sobre la jornada del 1 de Mayo en Cataluña', n. d. (PCE Archive); *Acción,* 14 May 1935; *Comercio y Navegación,* May 1935; *La Vanguardia,* 1, 3, May 1935.

15 On the background to the foundation of the PSUC see P. Ardiaca, *La fundació del P. S. U. de Catalunya*, Barcelona, 1986; Martin i Ramos, *Els orígins;* M. Caminal, *Joan Comorera. Catalanisme i socialisme (1913–1936)*, Barcelona 1984; pp. 203–13; L. V. Ponamariova, *La formación del Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya*, Barcelona, 1977; Vinyes, *La Catalunya,* pp. 253–76.

16 Gabriel, 'Sindicalismo', p. 64 gives a figure of 27,000 without citing his source; as does David Ballester, *Marginalitats,* p. 210. The FOUS itself claimed to have 60,000 members; a detailed examination of sources available suggest that this figure was closer to 50,000; see A. Durgan, 'Sindicalismo y marxismo en Cataluña 1931–1936. Hacia la fundación de la Federación Obrera de Unidad Sindical', *Historia Social* no. 8, Autumn 1990; A. Durgan 'Els comunistes disidents i els sindicats a Catalunya 1931–1936', *L'Avenç*, November 1990; Durgan, *B. O. C.*, pp. 450, 547–53.

17 On the 'Catalan oasis' see Balcells, *Crisis económica,* pp. 231–4; F. Cucurull, *Catalunya, republicana I autònoma (1931–1936),* Barcelona, 1984, pp. 285–90; for a critique, see, Vinyes, *La Catalunya,* pp. 303–35.

18 *Las Noticias,* 21 March –15 April 1936; *Comercio y Navegación,* April 1936; *La Batalla,* 6 March, 10, 17 April 1936; *Front,* 10 April 1936.

19 *Front,* 5 June 1936; interviews with two former members of the FOUS textile workers' union, Vicenç Ballester (3 April 1984) and Meri Arbonès (21 Nov 1984).

20 *Front,* 20 March 1936; La Junta. Sindicat d'Indùstries Grafiques i Similars, 'A tots els obrers de les Artes Grafiques' (leaflet), March 1936.

21 *Las Noticias,* 7–21 June 1936; *Comercio y Navegación,* June 1936; *Front* 5, 26 June 1936; *La Batalla,* 15, 26 June 1936; *Solidaridad Obrera* 17, 18, 19 June 1936; Durgan, *B. O. C.*, pp. 467–8.

22 *Las Noticias,* 14 April 1936.

23 FUTM, *Noves bases de treball dels estaments de l'engròs, detall i alimentació*, Barcelona, n. d.; FUTM-CADCI, *Bulletí del Comité de Vaga,* no. 1, Barcelona, n. d.; *La Defensa* November 1935, March 1936; *Lluita* (FET), 15 March 1936; *Las Noticias* 17, 23 June 1936; *La Batalla,* 26 June, 3, 7 July 1936; *Treball* (Sindicat Mercantil), July 1936; *Comercio y Navegación*, June 1936; Durgan, *B. O. C.*, pp. 468–73.

24 *Butlletí Oficial de la Generalitat*, 'Cens Electoral Social', 31 July 1934, 22 November 1935, 3 July 1936; *Justícia Social-Octubre* 3, 14 July 1936; *Acta de la Comisión Ejecutiva de la UGT,* 9 July 1936.

25 For example see, P. Bonet, 'La situación del movimiento sindical', *La Nueva Era,* February, 1936; A. Nin, 'La Federación Obrera de Unidad Sindical', *La Batalla,* 15 May 1936; *Front,* 1 May 1936; J. Arquer, 'La Unitat Sindical', *Front,* 17 July 1936; 'Informe sobre la situación en Cataluña', n. d. (PCE Archive).

26 *Butlletí Oficial de la Generalitat,* 'Cens electoral', 3 July 1936; Gabriel, 'Sindicalismo', p. 64; The joint PCdeC/USC paper *Justícia Social-Octubre* (17 July 1936) gave a figure of 100,000 on the eve of the Civil War; Ballester, *Marginalitats,* p. 210, gives a far lower figure of 40,000, but makes no reference to the Generalitat's figures, which were based on those unions participating in the *jurados mixtos*.

27 Vinyes, *Catalunya Internacional;* and E. Ucelay da Cal, 'Socialistas y comunistas en Cataluña durante la guerra civil: un ensayo de interpretación', *Anales de Historia de la Fundación Pablo Iglesias,* vol. 2, *Socialismo y Guerra Civil*, Madrid 1987, pp. 311–12.

28 The calculation of union membership is based on: Confederación Regional de Trabajo, *Memoria de la Conferencia Regional Extraordinaria celebrada en Barcelona durante los dias 25, 26 y 27 de enero de 1936*, Barcelona, 1936; *Solidaridad Obrera,* 6 May 1936; *Butlletí Oficial de la Generalitat,* 'Cens Electoral Social', 31 July 1934, 22 November 1935, 3 July 1936; *Actas de la Comisión Ejecutiva de la UGT*, Madrid 1933–6; *Justícia Social,* 1934–6; *Justícia Social-Octubre,* 1936; UGT, Secretariado General de Cataluña, *Primera Asamblea General;* POUM and BOC press 1930–6, especially *La Batalla*.

29 *Acta de la Comisión Ejecutiva de la UGT*, Madrid 6 April 1933; Ballester, *Marginalitats,* pp. 156, 174; N. Jones, 'Regionalism and revolution in Catalonia', in P. Preston (ed.), *Revolution and War in Spain 1931–1936*, London 1984, p. 95.

30 A. Nin, 'La Federación Obrera de Unidad Sindical', *La Batalla,* 15 April 1936 and 'Importancia del Congreso', *ibid.,* 22 May 1936; R. Vidiella, 'Causes del desarollo, apogeo y decadencia de la CNT', *Leviatán,* February 1935.

31 'Informe sobre la situación en Catalunya', n. d. (PCE Archive).

32 *Solidaridad Obrera*, 6 October 1936; *Butlletí de la Unió General de Treballadors. Secretariat de Catalunya*, 15 December 1936; Gabriel, 'Sindicalismo', pp. 65–76.

33 Ibid., p. 69.

34 *Las Noticias,* 17 June 1936; *Justícia Social-Octubre,* 3 July 1936.

35 Durgan, *B. O. C.*, pp. 492–3.

36 B. Bolloten, *La guerra civil española: Revolución y contrarrevolución*, Madrid 1989, p. 613; Ponamariova, *La formación*, p. 101. According to Nin, speaking at a Central Committee meeting in December 1936, the POUM had 30,000 members at this time, mostly in Catalonia, 2,200 in Barcelona, *Boletín Interior del POUM,* 15 January 1937.

7 Revolution and collectivizations in Civil War Barcelona, 1936–9

Antoni Castells Duran

Between July 1936 and January 1939 one of the most radical socio-economic transformations seen in the twentieth century took place in Barcelona and throughout Catalonia. It began when the city's workers fought against the armed uprising launched by the military against the Republic on 18 July 1936 (17 July in Morocco) and supported by the most reactionary elements within the Spanish state – the Catholic Church, big landowners and the banking elite. The uprising was defeated in Barcelona leading to almost three years of civil war (see also Chapter One). At the same time, it marked the start of a radical transformation of the city. Yet the causes went much deeper, and must be sought in the economic, social and political characteristics of Catalan society in 1936.

In the first place, at an economic level it should be noted that in 1930 Catalonia was a highly industrialized society. Of a population of 2,791,000, more than a million lived in Barcelona.[1] And unlike most of the Spanish state, in which the primary sector predominated, 54 per cent of its population worked in industry (68 per cent in the province of Barcelona itself).[2] The Catalan economy was closely tied in with that of the Spanish state as a whole. Yet it was still the case that Catalan industry was largely composed of small and medium-sized concerns, whose plant was in general obsolescent. This, combined with inefficient business and commercial structures, ensured that average productivity levels were low and that Catalan industry was hardly able to compete in the international market.[3] Yet in some basic industrial sectors, such as mining and electricity production, in which there was an important presence of foreign capital, plant size was greater and technology more advanced.[4]

At the same time, following the collapse of the major Catalan banks the financial sector was especially weak, with negative consequences for the whole of the Catalan economy. Moreover, from the beginning of the 1930s Catalonia had been hit by the onset of the international crisis of liberal capitalism, the so-called Great Depression, though its impact was less pronounced than in the majority of capitalist countries in Europe and America because of the relative isolation of the Spanish economy.[5] By 1936 therefore the Catalan economy was in decline. This very much represented a crisis in the model of

development championed by the liberal bourgeoisie, and was, despite its own specificities, part of the wider international crisis of capitalism. It was in this context of crisis that the need for alternative models of economic development was felt.

Barcelona's social structure was no more advanced. After the failure in their attempt during the nineteenth century to transform the Spanish state into a modern capitalist state similar to those in the west, the city's dominant classes – the haute industrial and commercial bourgeoisie – limited themselves to backing the moderate Catalanist Lliga Regionalista (Lliga Catalana from 1933). Yet they were more than willing to turn to the central state for help in suppressing labour when they believed their interests to be endangered.

Below them were to be found the middle classes, made up of a conglomerate of small-scale industrialists and merchants, state functionaries, bank and commercial employees and the like. Economically their conditions were often precarious. Politically, they were closely linked to Catalan nationalism and republicanism, and this, during the Second Republic, was to lead them into outright conflict with the Spanish state. They were largely represented by the Catalanist republicans, the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, which from 1931 became the dominant party in Catalonia. Catalanism and republicanism also influenced some sectors of the Catalan working class, as was to be seen with the formation of the two Marxist parties (POUM and PSUC) during 1936 (see Chapter Six). However, the major trade union in Catalonia remained the CNT; under its wing was to be found a strong, combative and radicalized labour movement, in which the standing of those who proposed a radical transformation of society was strengthened by the failure of the republican regime to improve their collective situation.

The strength of the anarchist movement in Catalonia represented a major difference from the situation in the majority of European countries and the United States. Moreover, it was also the case that because of factors such as ideological divisions and disagreement between rank-and-file affiliates and the leadership, many workers who considered themselves to be part of the movement represented by the CNT did not actually pay their dues, although when circumstances changed they would rejoin. Without taking into account this difference between the CNT-organization and the CNT-movement (at times much broader than the first) it is difficult, for example, to understand the role played by the CNT in defeating the Barcelona military in July 1936 (see Chapter One), or the constructive role the anarcho-syndicalists were to play in the city's collectivization. At the same time, while in most of the industrialized world Social-Democratic and Marxist parties and unions maintained a strong presence, in Catalonia their influence was limited. Moreover, even in the Marxist camp Catalonia was exceptional. For while, on the one hand, the PSUC formed part of the Third International, an alternative revolutionary Marxist party, the POUM, which maintained a stance critical of the Soviet Union, was able to obtain a limited though real influence within labour (Chapter Six).

The Catalan Revolution

In Barcelona, with the defeat of the military uprising after two days of street fighting, the state collapsed and the military disintegrated. The demise of the state and with it of those centres of decision-making which legitimized and, at the same time, supported it (factory owners, local administrations, law courts, commanders of the military and police), led to a great dispersal of power in the hands of civil society. Thus the first weeks of the Civil War were to see the rise of the militia columns, neighbourhood committees, factory assemblies and committees, and the local committees of the anti-fascist militias (which replaced the law courts). These became the centres of real power with effective decision-making capacity.[6]

With the defeat of the military rebellion it was the workers, and particularly manual workers – who had played an important role in its suppression – who were politically victorious.[7] This was followed by a wide-ranging and profound transformation of Catalan society, based on the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist postulates of the CNT-FAI. It gave rise to a unique experiment which followed the directives of neither capitalism nor state socialism. The attempt needs to be seen in the context of the crisis of liberal capitalism between the onset of the First and the end of the Second World War, during which time a series of alternatives were tried, ranging from state socialism in the Soviet Union, fascism and National Socialism in Italy and Germany respectively, and the New Deal in the United States.

Even though the collectivist experiment undertaken in Catalonia did not fully realize its objectives, it was one of the most radical transformations seen anywhere in the twentieth century, affecting practically all aspects of economic, social and political life. It formed part of the Spanish revolution but retained its own specific characteristics, different in part from the rest of Republican Spain. In this chapter, given the limitations of space, I will concentrate on the transformations in industry and services. This does not mean that other aspects of the revolution were unimportant. However, the choice is not arbitrary. The profundity and significance of these transformations make it possible to reach some general conclusions regarding the global alternative represented by the revolution.

The process of collectivization-socialization

After the defeat of the military rebellion, in the days and weeks that followed the workers of Barcelona and other Catalan towns began to take over the running of most of the factories.[8] The spontaneous nature of this collectivization-socialization meant that it was not based on the orders of any state bodies, parties or unions. Workers, through their factory committees and industrial unions, put into effect the concepts they had learnt regarding the organization and running of society in general and the economy in particular. It was through the libertarian athenaeums, co-operatives and unions, and through anarchist

press and propaganda, that such ideas had percolated into working-class life and thought.

The seizure and collectivization of the factories meant that they passed from being private to being public property, and that it was the workers themselves who directed them. This, however, was seen as only the beginning of a wider process of collectivization-socialization, through which a new economic system would be built from the ground up, co-ordinating economic activity between industries and in each locality, finally resulting in the socialization of all wealth.

However, the leadership of the CNT-FAI soon abandoned this ultimate objective, arguing that in present circumstances this would be tantamount to imposing their own dictatorship, and this was to lead to the progressive abandonment of their anarchist principles.[9] This has to be seen in terms of the correlation of political forces in Catalonia and in the Republican zone in general. The process of collectivization-socialization was supported by the great majority of manual workers in industry and services (except in banking), but was rejected by an assortment of social groups including the industrial and commercial petty bourgeoisie, state functionaries, and engineering, technical and supervisory staff. These groups had largely opposed the military uprising but favoured the maintenance of private property or state control of the means of production. Both numerically and in terms of their influence they were important social strata, which were politically represented by the Esquerra, Acció Catalana Republicana (ACR), the peasants' Unió de Rebassaires, the PSUC and UGT.

A significant number of office workers in the large industrial concerns, along with shop and banking staff and administrative workers, remained suspicious or even openly opposed to the collectivization-socialization process. This group of workers, despite the fact their wages were little different from the manual workers, regarded themselves as of a higher social status. And it was above all these workers, along with members of the petty bourgeoisie and technicians, who joined the PSUC and particularly the UGT after the onset of the war. As a result they were able to impose their criteria within the UGT, part of whose membership had originally supported the collectivization process initiated by the CNT, and they facilitated the PSUC's control over the union.

The attitude of the petty bourgeoisie and factory technicians was to condition the progress of collectivization. The Collectivizations Decree of 24 October 1936 was very much a compromise reached by the various political forces. Thus it sanctioned the collectivization of large-scale industry but at the same time guaranteed the maintenance of private small-scale industry. However, on numerous occasions the collectivists ignored the decree and, despite the opposition of the Catalan autonomous Government, the Generalitat, proceeded to collectivize small-scale industries and services, particularly when they grouped together individual enterprises. At the same time, the collectivists launched an intensive propaganda campaign in which they tried to convince small-scale employers that rather than living on the economic margins subordinate to the bourgeoisie it would be far better to live as a worker, with a just employment in a solidaristic and free society.

This had little impact. The reaction of the petty bourgeoisie was not homogeneous. Some sectors, such as employers in carpentry and other woodworking trades, did not oppose collectivization, but their overall attitude to the socialization of the economy was hostile, and they were on numerous occasions to spearhead the defence of private property. Politically the PSUC and UGT were especially effective in their defence, with the result that many within the petty bourgeoisie were to join the party and/or union, especially after the creation, on the initiative of the PSUC, of the Corporations and Bodies of the Small Retailers and Industrialists (GEPSI), which formed a branch of the UGT.

As far as the technicians were concerned, the collectivists argued that both they and the workers should closely collaborate in the running of their enterprises. Thus they were guaranteed a place within the new industrial structure. But the collectivists also maintained that all work was equally necessary and valid and so all workers should be economically and socially equal. Accordingly, the technical staff would forgo all the power and privileges they enjoyed over the rest of the work force.[10] The collectivizers tried to attract them to their midst by arguing that they were workers exploited by capital, and that they would participate in the construction of a more just and free society in which they would be able fully to develop their capabilities and initiative. Instead, within this sector of society an alternative technocratic project of reform took shape. It was critical of bourgeois society for what it saw as its irrationality and the unjust distribution of wealth, and proposed in its place the organization of society according to supposedly rational and scientific criteria. Although the collectivists agreed with the critique of the bourgeoisie, at the same time they criticized what they saw as the creation of a society organized and led exclusively by an intellectual elite. In this way, they maintained, a new aristocracy of knowledge would emerge, which would replace the aristocracy of money, in the same way as it had replaced the aristocracy of blood. This divergence was at the root of the ambiguous relationship between the technical elite and the collectivists. On the other hand, unlike in other twentieth-century revolutions, the majority of technicians remained and continued to work rather than emigrate. Despite their criticisms and reservations, while the collectivists maintained their political dominance the technicians collaborated in the collectivist project, while a minority participated enthusiastically. However, as political forces shifted, they voiced their discontent more vociferously and moved across to support the statist project, which was much closer to their own alternative.

The stages of the collectivization-socialization project

As a result of both its own internal dynamic and of the changing political correlation of forces in Catalonia and within the Republican zone, the process of collectivization-socialization changed greatly as the war progressed. It may broadly be divided into four phases.

During the first period, between July and October 1936, the collectivist revolution spontaneously broke out, and the experiment in workers' self-management

proceeded unhindered. During this time the majority of factories were collectivized and most of the industrial associations were set up.

A second phase ran from October 1936 to May 1937. This was initiated with the Collectivizations Decree, and was to see a process of growing co-ordination between collectivized factories and the legalization of a large number of expropriations. Thus the process of collectivization-socialization was consolidated. However, these months also witnessed a growing state intervention, and this, despite the predominant role played in the state institutions by the CNT-FAI, signified a grave contradiction with the principles and premises on which the collectivist alternative was based. The shift towards state control would, however, be greatly enhanced during the third and fourth periods.

In the third phase, between May 1937 and February 1938, the CNT-FAI began to lose its political pre-eminence, and the power of the central state was reinforced. The conflict of the 'May Events' (*fets de maig*) was preceded by a build-up of tension between those who wanted to push ahead with the revolutionary process and those who wished to halt and reverse it. On 3 May 1937, the Chief of Police, Rodríguez Sala (a member of the PSUC) attempted to take over the telephone exchange, which was being run by a CNT-UGT control committee. However, his forces were resisted and only managed to take over the lower floor of the building. The workers inside then informed workers from other factories, who, considering Salas' actions as an attack on the collectives, spontaneously stopped work and began putting up barricades. As a result, on 4 May all of Barcelona except the centre was in the collectivists' hands and the Generalitat found itself in the sights of the cannons of the fortress of Montjuïc, under CNT control. Between the third and the seventh of May there were clashes between, on the one side, the security forces under the control of the Generalitat and supporters of the PSUC and ACR, and, on the other, armed workers belonging to the CNT-FAI, Libertarian Youth and POUM. The political and trade-union leaders, particularly those of the CNT-FAI and POUM, called for calm and for an end to the hostilities, but failed to provide any political direction. As a result, the workers agreed to abandon the barricades on the morning of 7 May, and this was followed in the evening by the entry into Barcelona of a column of Republican Government Assault Guards and police with the remit to 're-establish order'.

The May Events had a number of serious consequences. First, in large measure because of the conciliatory and uncertain actions of the leadership, the collectivists suffered a serious political defeat. The CNT lost its political predominance, the POUM was repressed, and Catalan autonomy was significantly cut back. At the same time, the Republican Government of Largo Caballero fell and was replaced by a more conservative government led by Juan Negrín, in which the right wing of the Socialist Party and Communists loyal to Moscow predominated, and in which the anarchists refused to serve. In the aftermath of these events the CNT distanced itself from the collectivizations. Significant in this respect were the resolutions approved at the Valencia Plenum in January 1938 in which support for a single wage was abandoned, a body of factory inspectors

was created, and procedures for the implementation of sanctions approved. This was accompanied by a growth in the control exercised by the upper echelons of the unions.

This process of state control was further accentuated during the fourth and final period between February 1938 and January 1939. These months were characterized by the growing intervention by the Republican Government, and a widening of attacks on the collectives, designed to favour both state control and reprivatizations. At the same time, the CNT leadership abandoned its defence of worker self-management and accepted state control. This was reflected in the 18 March 1938 pact between the UGT and CNT. Yet, despite this adverse climate, many collectivized factories and associations of factories continued functioning until the occupation of Catalonia by the Francoists.

The collectivist drive, July 1936–May 1937

In the first months of the war the collectives expanded rapidly throughout Barcelona. Between 70 and 80 per cent of factories were collectivized and in most industries the workers then went on to set up associations of factories (*agrupaciones*) which took in all or part of the plants in a specific industry, industrial sector or geographical area (a locality, a *comarca* (county), or the whole of Catalonia). In this case the individual plant ceased to exist as such and its assets and liabilities, like its workers, formed part of the new grouping. This led to the organization of a number of large industrial groupings, such as the Barcelona Association of the Collectivized Construction Industry (11,000 workers), Barcelona Association of the Socialized Woodworking Industry (8,000 workers), the Barcelona Association of Socialized Public Entertainments (10,000 workers), and the Unified Electricity Services of Catalonia (11,500 workers). Furthermore, a number of large collectivized companies operated, such as the Barcelona trams (with 3,442 workers, 3,322 of whom were affiliated to the CNT), Hispano Suiza, La España Industrial, CAMPSA, and Damm Beers. These large companies and the associations were the most significant components of the collectivization of Barcelona industry and services, and a knowledge of the functioning of the associations in particular is of key importance for our understanding of the whole process.

There were, of course, a number of differences between the associations, depending on such factors as the territories they covered (local or Catalan wide), their industrial structure, whether or not they were legalized, whether both the UGT and CNT or only the CNT participated in their creation and operation, and whether they survived until the end of the war. Yet a number of similarities can be discerned with respect to the new forms of organization, the restructuring and rationalization of production, and their social function.

In the first place, the organizational structure of the associations and collectivized factories operated along similar lines.[11] At the highest level of decision making was the General Assembly, formed by all of the workers (manual, administrative, white-collar and technical) in the *agrupación*, which implemented overall

strategy, elected and if necessary dismissed members of the more specialized committees, and controlled their functioning. Below the Assembly was the Factory Council, which carried out the day-to-day running of the company, and was usually divided into a number of separate commissions. The members of the Factory Council were, in their turn, elected by workers' assemblies. In general, part of the Council's membership was elected in assemblies of the various sections which made up the association, and another part by the association's General Assembly. This structure was completed by the Union Committee, which looked after the workers' particular interests, such as wages, working conditions, health and safety; it was set up because it was felt that the Factory Council, interested above all in economic development, might damage the workers' interests, and it was also seen as a means of avoiding the concentration of power in the hands of one body and a limited number of individuals. These three bodies, which functioned at the level of the association as a whole, were complemented by similar bodies at a sectional, local and plant level, which were invested with autonomy to resolve those questions which affected their sphere. The aim was to devolve decision making as far as possible while not undermining the interests of the association as a whole.

In those associations which had been legalized there was also an inspector chosen by the Generalitat's Minster of the Economy (*Conseller d'Economia*), in agreement with the workers, whose job it was to liaise with the state and ensure its programmes were implemented. In practice the inspectors' influence was to vary with the balance of political forces. In the legalized associations there were also a director, sub-director, secretary and management committee, who were elected by the Factory Committee.

The associations gave great importance to the development of rapid and fluid vertical and horizontal communications. They also attempted to simplify the decision-making apparatus and reduce as far as possible the number of people exclusively dedicated to management. Indeed, in many associations the majority of members of the Factory Council still worked on the factory floor. At the same time, both the members of this council and those in other executive bodies continued to receive the wage which corresponded to their professional status. The objective was to prevent the emergence of an internal bureaucracy with its own privileges and specific interests, while maintaining output.

From the outset the collectives faced a number of difficulties. To begin with, in 1936 the Catalan economy was immersed in depression and faced severe structural difficulties. To this was added the problems which derived from the war. It had to contend with a shortage and escalating cost of raw materials and energy, a loss of internal markets, the destruction of factories and installations, the shortage of men of working age, and the need to adapt and reorganize in order to meet the demands of the war. Some sectors, such as construction, were especially badly hit by the impact of the war on demand.

There were also problems which specifically affected the collectivized factories and associations. In particular, as a result of the mentalities and habits acquired under the old system in which workers had been both exploited and

subject to hierarchical management, they might be reluctant to put in the required effort, could lack self-discipline and be unwilling to assume responsibilities, and be ill equipped to take on administrative tasks. However, in the general enthusiasm these problems were usually quite rapidly overcome. The actions of governmental institutions also caused difficulties. The associations faced discrimination in the acquisition of raw materials and supply of energy, and also had to bear the cost of late or non-existent payment by official bodies. This was to provoke grave financial crises in a number of associations. State hostility could also be manifested through such means as police searches, temporary confiscations, support for the demands of ex-proprietors, and even the abolition of the association through direct intervention by the Generalitat or a Republican government decree. To this should be added the pressures derived from the hostility of international capital where there had been an expropriation, which caused the associations two kinds of difficulties. First, in order for exports not to be confiscated at their point of arrival, such associations had to trade through the Generalitat and so had no direct access to foreign currency. Second, when one or more factories within an industrial sector had operated with the participation of foreign capital, the association was faced with the dilemma of either excluding them or treating them the same as the Catalan companies and thereby facing both international reprisals and breaking with Republican legality (which only allowed such expropriations when the national interest demanded it and required indemnity payments).

Yet, despite these problems, in the key fields of the reordering of the productive process, the improvement of working conditions and social provision, and the rapid adaptation of Catalan industry to the needs of a war economy, the associations performed creditably. In the first place, the associations were able to carry through an important task of restructuring and reorganization. Production was concentrated in the larger and better equipped plants at the same time as the most modern machinery was selected, with the results that costs were cut and working conditions improved. Thus, for example, in woodworking the mattress makers were able to reduce the number of workshops from over eighty to four; the Collectivized Industry of Mirrors, Windows, and Sheets of Glass cut the number of centres of work from over a hundred to twenty-nine; the Association of Collectivized Barbers and Hairdressers reduced the number of establishments from 1,100 to 235; and the number of centres of production in the Socialized Dairy Industry fell from fifty to nine.[12]

This was accompanied by a number of innovations which cut costs, augmented productivity and improved the quality of the product. Statistics were elaborated in order that the association could plan its future development with greater certainty. There was a growth in the specialization of the centres of work and a rationalization of global production. For example, the Unified Electrical Services standardized voltages and high tension cables, and the Construction Association divided Barcelona by zones in order effectively to carry out the maintenance and repair of housing.[13] There was also modernization of plant and machinery, with the retirement of the oldest capital goods and investment in

new equipment. On occasion, moreover, the number of shifts was increased to ensure maximum utilization.

Similar administrative and structural reforms were also undertaken. Administrative, accountancy and commercial operations were centralized. This facilitated the elaboration of statistics and book-keeping, allowed a rationalization and specialization of work, a reduction in personnel and an improved commercialization of the product. Parasitic intermediaries were eliminated and production and consumption were brought into closer proximity, benefiting the producers and the consumers. This was especially effective in associations such as the Barcelona Association of the Socialized Woodworking Industry, which undertook a programme of both horizontal and vertical integration, eliminating commerce between the workshops in the sector and reducing costs.[14]

This was undertaken at a time when the industrial and service sectors had to implement important changes in their activities. First, the need to save foreign exchange resulted in a process of import substitution. In both primary and manufactured products this was successfully carried out, making possible a reduction in unemployment and emancipation from foreign dependence. This could be seen in the production of various classes of glues and varnishes used in woodworking, natural fibres in the textile industry, optical instruments and various classes of steel which had previously not been produced in the country. This programme was, moreover, accompanied by the promotion of an independent research base and the encouragement of production in areas of advanced technology.[15] Second, an overhaul of production was necessary because of the needs of the war (as discussed below) and new social priorities (for example, provision of basic necessities, new resources for teaching and professional training, and in health), combined with the retraining of workers engaged in activities considered pernicious and degrading such as boxers, gamblers or prostitutes.[16]

The drive to raise productivity in the sphere of production complemented the realization of an important programme aimed at improving working conditions and social provision. First, on the shop floor more attention was paid to the improvements of standards of hygiene. At the same time there was a significant reduction in wage differentials as a result of the elimination of the high salaries previously earned by directors, board members and the like, and, through the establishment of a single wage for all workers of the same category, a reduction in the number of professional categories and in the wage differential between them (including, on occasion, its elimination). There were also cases in which wages were supplemented according to the number of dependants.

Concomitantly social security services were set up, run and controlled by the workers themselves, which included free medical and hospital cover, the provision of illness and accident benefits, post-natal care and pensions. Concrete measures were taken against unemployment. Thus attempts were made to increase the number of jobs and, if this was insufficient to eliminate unemployment, devise job-sharing schemes (even if this meant the existence of hidden unemployment). A lot of effort was also put into worker training and health care, with the constructing of sporting facilities, swimming pools, libraries, adult

schools, and training centres. Efforts were also, finally, made in the direction of customer care, as can be seen by improvements in product quality, in workplace hygiene, as in the case of hairdressers and establishments in the dairy industry, and in efforts to facilitate access to products and services through the geographical rationalization of retail outlets.

Finally, a war industry was quickly developed. In 1936, at the start of the war, Barcelona and the rest of Catalonia completely lacked a war industry, and therefore had to adapt civilian industry, particularly in the field of chemicals and metallurgy. The collectives began this transformation immediately, with the CNT unions electing the metalworker, Eugenio Vallejo, on 21 July to direct the organization of these industries. Soon after, on 7 August 1936, the Generalitat created by decree the War Industry Commission, in order to control and co-ordinate production. This commission was accepted by the CNT, after having received a series of guarantees, in recognition of the need to collaborate in the war effort. As a result, the direction and organization of the war industry can be considered a collectivist-statist mix, in which factories were run by the workers but the war industry as a whole had to meet the objectives laid out by the Commission. In practice this arrangement worked satisfactorily. The Commission, along with co-ordinating the metal and chemical industries commissioned for war-time production, also set up some new industries and established relations with factories that elaborated auxiliary products for the war in such fields as textiles and optics.

In October 1937 the war industry was made up of 400 factories, which employed 85,000 workers and produced a wide range of weaponry, along with explosives, gas masks, plane engines, armour-plated vehicles and the like.[17] It is worth stressing the speed with which this large and diversified war industry was organized.[18] Yet from the outset the Republican Government was suspicious of the growth of an industry not under its control and did all it could to boycott it by such means as the non-supply of necessary raw materials and foreign exchange. On one occasion, indeed, rather than authorizing the transfer of an arms factory to Catalonia (at that time a safe zone) as the Generalitat had asked, it allowed the Francoists to take it over.[19] Subsequently as the Republican Government's power grew it attempted to bring the industry under its control. This it finally achieved through the militarization decree of 11 August 1938. It was, however, opposed by both the Generalitat (provoking the resignation of both the Catalan minister, J. Aigaudé, and the Basque minister, M. Irujo, from the central Government) and the workers in these industries, leading to a decline in both the workers' interest and work rate, and, consequently, to a fall in output.

The rise of state control, May 1937 to January 1939

After the disintegration of the state in July 1936 the Catalan political parties and groupings soon began to reorganize, and were able to involve the leadership of the CNT-FAI in their plans for state reconstruction. Thus when the new Generalitat Government was formed on 26 September 1936, all the

anti-fascist political and trade-union forces participated. Even though the power of the Generalitat in large measure still only existed on paper, and the authority of the central Republican Government was practically non-existent in Catalonia (in the modern era Catalonia has never enjoyed more autonomy than between July 1936 and May 1937), this was the first step in the reconstruction of state power.

As a result of agreements between the various parties and unions, new state bodies were created in order to direct and co-ordinate the Catalan economy, such as the Catalan Economic Council, War Industries' Commission, and the Generalitat inspectors.[20] Until the middle of 1937, these organizations were not in general able to halt the collectivization-socialization process because of the predominance of the CNT-FAI; however, they did prevent the full socialization of the Catalan economy and damaged its future prospects, and also laid the basis for a future imposition of state control.

It was, not, however, until the second half of 1937, when the consequences of the 'May Events' began to be felt, that the influence of the state grew appreciably, though, given the opposition of wide sections of the working class, it was never able fully to eliminate the collectivist gains. This state *dirigisme* presupposed a shift in power to the government-run 'technical-economic' bodies, at the same time as the mechanisms of working-class control were eliminated. That is to say, in the name of the supposed economic efficiency, it re-established authoritarian and hierarchical forms of organization and control which had been eliminated by the collectives.

Although this reassertion of state control was initiated and, in large measure, carried through by the Generalitat, as state power was reconstructed the Spanish Republican Government increasingly made its presence felt. This led to an increasing number of disputes between the two authorities as central government looked not only to eliminate collectivist control but also roll back Catalan autonomy. In those factories and sectors in which the central state was able to take control the anti-collectivist drive went furthest, with the elimination of all worker participation in the decision-making process, and either the imposition of a new elite of state functionaries or the return of factories to their old owners under state tutelage.

Yet despite the claims of its supporters, on numerous occasions state control resulted in the undoing of those programmes of economic rationalization introduced by the collectives. This could be seen in the case of the dissolution of the Unified Catalan Electricity Services (SEUC) and Unified Catalan Gas Services (SGUC) by the Republican Government in April and May 1938, which resulted in the re-establishment of the old divisions between the various companies. A decline in production and productivity also followed the take over of the war industry.[21]

There were several reasons behind the general inefficiency of state control. First, it was opposed by a wide sector of the working class and consequently brought about a loss of interest and decline in productivity. Second, the large number of bureaucrats involved in the productive process hampered production

and produced discontent in the workforce. Third, the state lacked the organizational structures and competent personnel to intervene effectively. Fourth, the state often acted out of political-ideological imperatives rather than those of economic efficiency (as in the case of the dismemberment of the SEUC and SGUC and of bureaucratic controls and interference in the war industries). Finally, the imposition of state control was accompanied by numerous disputes, in particular between the central Government and the Generalitat, as seen in the case of the war industries.

It should be emphasized that, despite the important role played by the PSUC and UGT, the imposition of state control was not carried out in the name of a Marxist plan of centralized socialization in the name of a workers' state. The results in reality would not have been very different. But in fact it was put into practice by a liberal-democratic state fronted by an interclass government. The state's anti-collectivist drive, aimed at reprivatizing part of the economy while transferring the rest (in particular the large-scale and war industries) into state hands, had the support of not only the republican bourgeoisie, the bureaucracy and most technicians, but also most of the leadership and apparatus of the various working-class organizations, including, especially from March 1938, the CNT-FAI. In short, state control signified the expropriation of the workers on the part of the state. They were dispossessed of the direction and organization of productive activity with the support of the leadership and apparatuses of the working-class organizations. The experience of the Civil War shows that expropriation by the state does not necessarily have to be directed against the bourgeoisie but can also be aimed at the workers themselves.

Final considerations

The collectivist experiment which unfolded in Catalonia during the years 1936–9 represents the only attempt up to the present to reorganize an industrial society according to socialist libertarian principles. This gives it exceptional importance, both from a historical and socio-economic perspective. With the collectivization-socialization of the Catalan economy the collectivists looked to transform individual into collective property and establish direct worker control over production, with the aim of constructing a freer and more egalitarian society. They advocated the exercise of direct democracy as against the delegation of power in the hands of the political and technocratic professionals, and believed that if democracy and socialism were not to be an illusion without real content they had to be based on the workplace and the home.

Furthermore, despite the fact that the war, the division of Spain into two zones, and disputes within Catalan society prevented the culmination of the collectivization-socialization process, at both an economic and social level it attained a series of important results. As we have seen, it was able to achieve greater social equality, encourage the training and education of the workers, and undertake an important overhaul and rationalization of the productive apparatus. This collective experience was supported by most of the workers, as is

made clear by their defence of the collectives when they came under attack, and the low levels of absenteeism. Yet the collectives were defeated at a political-military level. Accordingly the collectivization-socialization of the economy was halted and put into reverse from May 1937, and the collectives totally eliminated following the occupation of Catalonia by the troops of General Franco in January 1939.

Notes

1 Servei Central d'Estadística de la Generalitat, *Població de Catalunya*, 1937.
2 Instituto de Economía de la Empresa, *Análisis espacio-temporal de la población activa en España*, 1860–1965.
3 J. Alzina, *L'economia de la Catalunya autònoma*, Barcelona, 1933. For the early twentieth century see Chapter Two, pp. 18–22.
4 A. Castells Duran, 'Les grans potències davant la guerra civil espanyola, 1936–39', *L'Avenç*, no. 140, 1990, pp. 22–8.
5 J. P. Fàbregas, *Els factors econòmics de la revolució*, Barcelona, 1937, pp. 107–8.
6 A. Castells Duran, 'Poder i col·lectivització a Catalunya durant la guerra civil', *El Contemporani*, no. 9, 1996, pp. 27–30.
7 This is shown by the interview between Lluís Companys, president of the Generalitat, and the leaders of the CNT-FAI, in which he asked them to take over the running of the government, and the subsequent failure of the attempt to form a government without CNT participation on 2 August 1936. See, D. Abad de Santillan, *Por qué perdimos la guerra*, Madrid, 1975, p. 72; D. Ibárruri, *El único camino*, Moscú, n. d., pp. 532–3.
8 This was recognized in the preamble of the Generalitat's own Collectivizations Decree, *Diario Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya*, Barcelona, 28 October 1936.
9 The beginnings of this retreat can be seen in the CNT-FAI's decision to participate in the Economic Council, created by decree by the Generalitat to order the country's economy on 11 August 1936, followed by its integration into the Generalitat Government from 26 September 1936.
10 The collectivists advocated a equal family wage for all workers; though this was never achieved the spread of wage rates was significantly reduced. See A. Castells Duran, 'Criteris per fixar la remuneració del treball: dues concepcions', *Polémica*, nos. 62–63, 1996, pp. 25–7.
11 This was a consequence of the Catalan workers' assimilation of collectivist conceptions over a number of decades. However, given the spontaneous nature of the collectivization the names of the various assemblies and committees varied greatly. Here for the sake of clarity we have adopted the names established by the Collectivizations Decree.
12 A. Castells Duran, *Les col·lectivitzacions a Barcelona 1936–1939*, Barcelona, 1993, p. 246.
13 Ibid., pp. 122, 230.
14 A. Castells Duran, *Las transformaciones colectivistas en la industria y los servicios de Barcelona (1936–1939)*, Madrid, 1992, pp. 35–58.
15 Castells Duran, *Les col·lectivitzacions*, Chapters V, VI, VII.
16 Ibid., pp. 199–208.
17 Comissió de la Indústria de Guerra de Catalunya, October 1937, *Report d'actuació*, Ediciones del Servicio de Propaganda de la CNT, Buenos Aires, 1939.
18 Andrés Aultmares, professor at the University of Zurich, stated with reference to the war industry, 'the unions have carried out in seven weeks what it took France the first fourteen months of the world war to put in place'. R. Rocker, *Extranjeros en España*, Buenos Aires, 1938, p. 74.

19 Letter from Lluís Companys to Indalecio Prieto, 13 December1937, Ediciones del Servicio de Propaganda de la CNT, Buenos Aires, 1939.
20 A. Castells Duran, *El proceso estatizador en la experiencia colectivista catalana (1936–1939)*, Madrid, 1996, chapters II, III, IV.
21 Ibid., chapters V, VI.

8 Women workers in the Barcelona labour market, 1856–1936

Cristina Borderías

> As my mother told me, her mother had already tried to get away from there (her home village in the province of Granada) and wanted my mother to go. And my mother didn't feel good there and would have preferred to go, but she got to know my father – and my grandmother didn't want them to get married because my father was from there – but they got married and after, for various reasons, they didn't go, but my mother wanted me at least to go. Far away. Better in Barcelona, they said. My mother above all didn't want me to get married to an agricultural labourer, especially in a village in Granada where the work was to serve the landlords (*amos*). And after the war they got even haughtier and really believed they were the bosses. For the women that was the worst thing. There was no future there. And my mother insisted so much that I should go, that I should leave, that, yes, I finally came. And, of course, there they said that Barcelona was the best. A big city where no one knew you, no one controlled you, and it was almost true. They soon employed you. And if you didn't like the job you could find another one, so you weren't so tied down. Also the workers there were nothing, but in the village they had always said that Barcelona was very working class, that to be a worker in Barcelona was something else. And here (in Barcelona) the women were freer, there was more work and even though you did the same job, work as a servant – because the women from here did the other jobs – it wasn't the same to serve here as it was there. Well here you worked in one house and then you left and nobody in the street knew, and that was it, but there you were always a servant. Here they said that you could find another job… although the best jobs were for Catalan women. I also learnt how to sew and from then on I was able to find my feet… and with that and other things I was able to get out.
>
> Worker in domestic service, born in Granada Province in 1926, emigrated to Barcelona in 1950[1]

We are not certain how this image of Barcelona reached such remote areas as the village in Granada from which this woman spoke. Many other immigrants that I have interviewed during the last fifteen years have spoken to me in similar terms about the city of Barcelona, and their mothers and grandmothers

also talked to them along the same lines. From these interviews it is clear that the village women had elaborated a mythical image of Barcelona, which, for those who did manage to migrate, first-hand experience would painfully correct. The narratives of these migrants evoke as factors pulling them towards Barcelona: the dynamism, flexibility and progressive diversification of the labour market, the labour and freethinking traditions, the strength of the labour movement and, later, from mid-century, the relatively fast economic and cultural modernization and growth of protest against the Franco regime. Furthermore, they also outlined a series of factors more specifically related to the greater opportunities and freedoms the city offered women: the wider range of jobs based on the fact that Barcelona was a large industrial and urban centre, and, as a result, provided more opportunity for social mobility; a culture less hostile to the presence of women in the labour market in comparison with other rural or urban centres; greater opportunities for promotion through the educational system; a weaker link between social status and position in the workforce; a wider 'marriage market' and, finally, less social control. In spite of this, the majority of the migrants who arrived in Barcelona between the turn of the century and the 1960s had to come to terms with the harshest of Barcelona's female spaces; only subsequent generations were able to ascend to new positions in the city.

The complex image of women's work and lives which emerges from these recollections bears only a limited resemblance to the historiography so far produced, which paints a rather simplistic and unfocused picture. Catalan social history has, in general, centred more on the labour movement than on the working classes and more on output than on the labour process or workers. As a result, it has been distinctly impermeable to the experience of women and, perhaps for this reason, women's history lacking the support of studies on the world of work, has tended towards other subjects, periods and areas. This is despite the fact that 'women and work' is one of the classic themes in women's history and that Barcelona is the most important centre of female paid labour in Catalonia and Spain. There is, moreover, an additional factor: until the second half of the twentieth century there are important deficiencies in the data. This makes it difficult to study aspects such as changes in occupational classification, skill levels, horizontal and vertical segregation, and almost impossible to relate these questions to personal and family trajectories or the life-cycle. Hence, research on female labour and the world of work has often centred on other areas of Catalonia. These deficiencies have also encouraged micro-social studies, in particular studies of factories and firms, the results of which should in the next few years provide important new insights.

However, studies of women's history have more frequently centred on associationism, feminism and the representation of women in the ideology and struggles of the labour movement than on women and work. Over the last few years there has been a renewed interest in female labour and some research has been undertaken on issues such as the relationship between the organization of production and the sexual division of labour, and between

family and work, basically in two specific contexts: the process of industrialization in the nineteenth and first third of the twentieth century, and the rise of the service sector in the twentieth century. In this chapter we will undertake an overview of the evolution of female work in the city of Barcelona between the mid-nineteenth century and the 1930s, with particular emphasis on two questions which have been the object of debate: the changes in female working practices in relation to industrialization, and the sexual division of labour in textiles.

The ideal of domesticity: myths and realities of female labour in the articulation of modern Barcelona (1848–1930)

> In Catalonia all the women worked, everyone worked here…. Women were only able to leave work later, and then not everyone could… us workers always had to work.
>
> Ironer, born in Murcia in 1910

The relationship between female labour and industrialization has been a classic theme in economic and social history. However, in Catalonia research along these lines has only been undertaken in recent years, and this despite it being acknowledged some time ago that: 'As in the rest of Europe, the contribution of women's work, which was both harsh and undervalued, was of key importance to Catalonia's industrialization, and without taking it into account neither the question of industrial development nor that of social change can be fully understood.'[2] Studies of this question in the major textile centres in the Province of Barcelona have begun to appear.[3] Taken as a whole, the impression these works give is that when the family unit worked from home on a putting-out basis in the early nineteenth century, married women played a central role. However, the rise of the new industrial structures which accompanied the growth of factory labour from the mid-nineteenth century led to a decline in the participation of married women. From this time, the weight of domestic chores, in a context of low wages and no birth control, meant that women worked outside the home when young but were substituted by their children at about the age of 30. Henceforth they only undertook paid labour at times of extreme necessity.[4]

Most studies conclude, therefore, that in the nineteenth century, when the family worked as a domestic team and earned a single wage, women were key figures in the process of production. However, once wages became individualized, paid labour was monopolized by men and women carried out the domestic chores. The latter was vital for the family's social and demographic reproduction. These characteristics, it is often argued, again changed from the beginning of the twentieth century with the extension of schooling and restrictions on child labour. At the same time, birth rates began to fall and domestic duties became

less onerous. The combined result was, over time, a tendency towards a growing incorporation of female workers into the labour market.

However, the statistical data at our disposal call such views into question. The image of Catalonia as the factory of Spain is well known, and in the nineteenth century its key industry, textiles, already had a large female presence – hence the centrality of the textile industry to the whole discussion. This is especially the case in Barcelona itself, where it employed 57 per cent of industrial workers at mid-century. In 1856 the city showed a marked segmentation along lines of gender. Overall men constituted 73 per cent of the labour market. A closer study of gender composition (see Tables 8.1 and 8.2) reveals that women made up 40 per cent of workers in industry, domestic service and commerce. Textiles and clothing employed 51 per cent of both the male and female workforce.[5] However, other industries were virtually closed to women. Outside the industrial sector, 40 per cent of all female workers were employed in domestic service and 7 per cent in commerce. Overall, therefore, a greater number women worked in the industrial sector. This tendency would, indeed, be more pronounced by the 1930s. The migration of female labour to the service sector would not take place until after the Civil War.

At the turn of the century women's paid work was still focused on the Catalan capital. In 1900 Barcelona made up 26 per cent of the Catalan population, 29 per cent of the active workforce and 38 per cent of the industrial workforce. However, the figures for women's work are higher: 49 per cent of the active female Catalan workforce, 43 per cent of female industrial workers and 53 per cent of female service-sector workers were employed in Barcelona.[6] Textiles would remain central to female paid labour throughout the first third of the twentieth century. There was a diversification of industrial labour, but this above all affected men, who were able to take advantage of higher wages in construction, metallurgy, steel making and chemicals. Women, on the other hand, found their entry into the new sectors blocked, both by old restrictions and by the social legislation which came into effect from the first years of the new century, with the result that levels of female employment in textiles remained quite stable (see Tables 8.1 and 8.2). [7]

As Table 8.3 indicates, in the first third of the twentieth century, despite fluctuations there was some increase in the percentage of women in the active population. However, it is small and could simply be the result of changes in the statistical methodology. In addition, as the table also makes clear, this does not mean, as has often been assumed, that employment rates were lower in the first stages of industrialization and that there was a linear incorporation of women into the labour force from the late nineteenth century. On the contrary, statistics produced in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries point to a high degree of stability. Thus, according to Ildefons Cerdà, in Barcelona in 1856 there were 22,049 female wage earners, who made up 25 per cent of the total female population. Data for 1905 and 1920 indicate few changes, with women employed in working-class trades (in which we include industry and domestic service) and in commerce making up 23 per

Table 8.1 Percentage distribution of male and female workers in Barcelona industry, commerce and domestic service, 1856–1930

	1856			*1905*			*1920*			*1930*		
Sub-sectors	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
Employers	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5.93	3.73	5.17	n/a	n/a	n/a
Food processing	5.33	0.00	3.16	7.33	1.43	5.62	2.39	1.29	2.03	6.63	4.19	5.84
Chemicals	1.35	0.49	1.00	2.92	7.56	4.27	2.71	3.67	3.02	2.93	2.27	2.71
Graphic arts	1.73	0.00	1.02	5.84	3.56	5.18	2.77	1.27	2.29	0.39	0.02	0.27
Textiles	44.94	40.01	42.93	14.19	52.42	25.32	6.20	28.59	13.39	10.69	33.39	18.05
Clothing	6.12	11.43	8.28	7.90	29.36	14.15	1.97	8.38	4.03	2.87	10.30	5.28
Leather trades	1.23	0.00	0.73	1.41	0.42	1.12	1.20	1.07	1.16	1.67	1.21	1.52
Woodworking and furniture trades	7.89	0.29	4.80	6.02	0.87	4.52	6.11	0.74	4.39	7.86	2.04	5.98
Metallurgy	6.36	0.05	3.80	8.15	1.37	6.18	0.88	0.02	0.60	5.37	0.01	3.63
Other metals	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.23	2.24	6.98	5.94	1.50	4.50
Construction	6.37	0.00	3.78	14.84	0.00	10.52	8.51	0.06	5.80	9.04	0.08	6.14
Transports	5.84	0.00	3.47	19.88	0.44	14.22	5.67	0.33	3.95	6.14	0.38	4.27
Other industries	3.03	0.53	2.01	10.33	2.55	8.07	6.43	2.16	5.06	16.05	18.13	16.73
Total industry	90.18	52.80	74.99	98.83	100.00	99.17	58.74	53.08	56.92	75.58	73.52	74.91
Commerce	5.94	7.35	6.51	0.00	0.00	0.00	18.92	16.29	18.07	7.40	1.52	5.49
Domestic Service	1.71	39.85	17.21	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.09	18.44	6.66	1.12	18.57	6.77
Total industy, trade and domestic service	97.83	100.00	98.71	98.83	100.00	99.17	78.75	87.81	81.66	84.10	93.60	87.18
Size of workforce on which the calculations are based (100%)	32,223	22,049	54,272	102,622	42,129	144,751	242,749	114,768	357,517	335,611	160,872	496,483

Sources: I. Cerdà, *'Monografía estadística de la clase obrera, 1856'*, in Teoría General de la Urbanización, vol. II, Barcelona 1867; 'Censo Obrero de 1905', in *Anuario Estadístico de la Ciudad de Barcelona, 1905*, Barcelona, 1907; Instituto Nacional de Estadística, *Censos Nacionales de Población*, 1920–1930.

Table 8.2 Percentage distribution of male and female workers in Catalan industry, commerce and domestic service,1910–30

	1910			*1920*			*1930*		
Subsectors	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
Employers	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.29	2.32	3.84	n/a	n/a	n/a
Food processing	1.83	1.53	1.78	1.53	0.92	1.39	3.46	2.81	3.32
Chemicals	0.34	0.42	0.35	1.60	2.34	1.77	1.56	1.76	1.60
Graphic arts	0.58	0.13	0.51	0.98	0.64	0.90	0.35	0.04	0.29
Textiles	6.81	29.15	10.25	7.17	45.81	16.01	7.49	38.55	13.96
Clothing	2.53	12.91	4.13	1.13	6.34	2.32	1.35	9.42	3.03
Leather trades	0.55	0.06	0.48	0.81	0.67	0.78	1.38	0.91	1.28
Woodworking and furniture trades	2.52	1.18	2.31	3.13	0.41	2.51	4.98	1.88	4.33
Metallurgy	1.85	0.12	1.59	0.45	0.01	0.35	2.00	0.01	1.58
Other metals	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.69	1.68	4.00	4.32	1.06	3.64
Construction	4.65	0.00	3.94	5.17	0.04	3.99	6.63	0.12	5.27
Transports	2.41	0.08	2.05	3.08	0.18	2.42	4.09	0.40	3.32
Other industries	1.23	0.18	1.07	3.79	1.44	3.25	12.04	13.35	12.31
Total industry	25.31	45.77	28.45	37.82	62.78	43.53	49.64	70.31	53.95
Commerce	3.53	3.77	3.56	10.98	12.51	11.33	7.31	2.62	6.34
Domestic service	0.31	27.53	4.50	0.46	14.34	3.64	0.64	18.85	4.44
Total industy, trade and domestic service	29.15	77.07	36.52	49.27	89.64	58.50	57.60	91.79	64.73
Size of workforce on which the calculations are based (100%)	757,072	137,560	894,632	808,755	239,848	1,048,603	957,282	252,065	1,209,347

Sources: as for Table 8.1

cent of the female population in 1905 and 28 per cent in 1920. Hence, it is clear that one cannot talk of a linear integration of women into the labour force between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nor is it possible to apply to the city the widely accepted U-curve model, which supposes that industrialization was accompanied by a fall in the percentage of women workers with the crisis of the putting-out system in the middle of the nineteenth century, and that this fall would not be made up until the mid-twentieth century. On the contrary, the percentage of women in the active population remained highly stable over time.

A further key question in this respect is the extent to which female paid labour was, as studies tend to assume, until the early twentieth century limited to single women. Unfortunately the data at our disposal are limited.

However, figures elaborated by Cerdà directly contradict this hypothesis, indicating that in Barcelona 75 per cent of both adult male and female wage earners (in all 20,795 women and 26,848 men) were married. This figure is of uncertain origin and does not seem very reliable. It is much higher than the percentage of married women in the total female population given in the 1856 census. Hence, for Cerdà's data to be accurate an unrealistically high percentage of middle and upper-class women would have had to have been unmarried. Moreover, it sits uneasily with the fact that domestic servants made up a large proportion of female workers (8,751), and that many of these workers must have been single. In these circumstances it is unlikely that much more than 50 per cent of female wage earners were married. Should this be the case then they would have made up about 35 per cent of married women in the city. Yet even if we undertake this downward revision of Cerdà's statistics it is still the case that there was a high degree of continuity in the number of married women in the labour force. Data for 1900 indicate that just over 32 per cent of the active female population was married. This had risen 10 percentage points by 1930 (see Table 8.4), but following the Civil War was to decline through to 1970. Concomitantly, there were marked fluctuations. This shows that the participation of married women in the labour market was highly dependent on the economic conjuncture and not simply a reflection of demographic factors or of changes in social and educational legislation.

Whatever we think of the accuracy of Cerdà's figures with respect to the percentage of working women married, the general point is backed up by social commentators of the time. Cerdà himself pointed to the limitations imposed on female labour by 'the continuous interruptions which maternity and the care of children impose', yet he did not believe that the percentage of female workers married was lower than that of married male workers. This is indicative of how widespread it must have been. Low real wages meant that working-class families all had to go out to work in order to make ends meet. Thus, one of the first reports on industry in Barcelona, written by Ramón de la Sagra for the government in 1840, indicated a spectacular increase in paid work by married women. This was seen by social commentators as one of the

Table 8.3 The female labour force in Barcelona, 1856–1930

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	1856	*1856*	*1860*	*1860*	*1887*	*1887*	*1900*	*1905*	*1910*	*1920*	*1920*	*1930*
Active women	22,049	24,567	28,250	28,395	31,111	33,348	66,219	64,225	60,202	104,690	114,768	160,872
Total women	89,805	89,805	126,723	126,723	220,696	220,696	278,565	284,955	313,867	374,998	374,998	530,893
Active men	32,223	62,270	69,523	80,484	114,021	130,465	167,305	137,678	193,639	216,580	242,743	335,611
Total men	93,982	93,982	114,714	114,714	202,559	202,559	259,206	258863	288,655	335,331	335,331	474,672
Total active population	54,272	86,837	97,773	108,879	145,132	163,813	233,524	201,903	253,841	321,270	357,511	496,483
% Women active	24.55	27.36	22.29	22.41	14.10	15.11	23.77	22.54	19.18	27.92	30.60	30.30
Active women % total active population	40.63	28.29	28.89	26.08	21.44	20.36	28.36	31.81	23.72	32.59	32.10	32.40

Sources: 'Monografia estadística de la clase obrera en Barcelona en 1856'; 'Censo Obrero de 1905' and *Censos Nacionales de Población*, 1887, 1900, 1910, 1920 and 1930.
Note: Columns 2, 3, 5, 8 and 10 indicate the number of female workers in the more working-class professions (industry, domestic service, commerce and independent artisanal workers). We have needed to make a number of calculations to make them comparable. Cerdà's figures, which are reproduced in Column 1, do not include independent artisans. Hence, in Column 2, we have estimated the number of independent artisans and added this to Cerdà's original figures. The original 1905 figures only refer to the industrial working class. For Column 8 we have therefore estimated the number of workers in domestic service, commerce and independent artisans, supposing an even growth between 1900 and 1910 (years for which we have figures). Columns 4, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 12 refer to the entire active population. The table serves to confirm that amongst women paid labour was predominantly lower class during this period and that there was no significant increase in female activity rates between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Table 8.4 Married women as a percentage of the female active labour force in Barcelona City and Catalonia by economic sector, 1900–30

	1900		*1910*		*1920*			*1930*	
Sector	*Barcelona*	*Catalonia*	*Barcelona*	*Catalonia*	*Barcelona (1)*	*Barcelona (2)*	*Catalonia*	*Barcelona*	*Catalonia*
Primary	34.21	n/a	17.34	n/a	44.62	n/a	n/a	44.39	n/a
Secondary	44.16	n/a	31.92	n/a	45.95	n/a	n/a	38.99	n/a
Tertiary	21.63	n/a	11.84	n/a	42.42	n/a	n/a	40.57	n/a
Average	32.82	27.74	21.21	23.1	44.36	40.46	39.47	39.42	32.63

Source: *Censos Nacionales de Población, 1900–1930*.
Note: Until 1920 it is not possible to distinguish between total active population and workers. The first column of the 1920 census indicates the percentage of married woman amongst 'non-employers' (and is therefore closely comparable to the data elaborated by Cerdà), whilst the second column refers to the whole of the active population including employees.

key reasons for the growth of mortality rates in working-class neighbourhoods. The ideal solution proposed by conservatives and social reformers was the bourgeois family model in which the married woman stayed at home. Yet the problem was seen as so urgent that even from this perspective short-term solutions were proposed. Thus, writing in the mid-nineteenth century, D. P. F. Monlau and J. Salarich, in their reports on working conditions, emphasized the urgent need to open nurseries in order to lessen the difficulties faced by working-class families. Similarly, within the labour movement many voices were raised against this growth of female labour, and against the competition with male labour that it occasioned. In this respect, labour leaders, social reformers and even conservative feminists could be in agreement. The subject of the 'broken family, the abandoned home and the unprotected children' would be a common theme in these years. [8]

For the majority of workers the ideal of the male breadwinner earning a family wage would not be attainable in the period under study. Figures elaborated by Cerdà indicate that 80 per cent of male workers failed to earn a family wage of 11.5 reales (2.9 pesetas), the minimum necessary to sustain a family with two children (see Table 8.5). A boy's wage was not equivalent to that of his mother before the age of sixteen, and if by this time there were more children it might be necessary for her to continue working. Male wages remained below necessary family income until at least the 1920s. The 1905 Workers' Census indicated that the average Barcelona male industrial worker's wage was 2.71 pesetas a day, while the outlay of a family with two children would be 4.13 pesetas. Most male workers did not reach a 4 peseta daily wage. Only a small minority made up of foremen and workers in highly skilled trades earned the minimum necessary to maintain a family. The situation was made worse by the impact of the First World War, which led to a 25 per cent decline in workers' real wages. In 1917 it was still the case that only a small minority of workers earned a family wage, while workers in textiles found themselves in a particularly dire situation.[9] Wages increased somewhat in the 1930s in particular. Yet excepting the most highly skilled workers in industry, transport and communications, and white-collar workers, the great majority still found it difficult to earn a family wage. It is indeed worth briefly noting that even in the post-war Spain of the 1940s, despite the Franco regime's self proclaimed intentions, this was still the case. Families Subsidies and Allowances for Family Responsibilities, introduced between 1938–46 for families in which the wife did not work, could add up to 70 per cent of the man's wage, and yet the regime had to admit in 1945 that real wages were falling and that the policy was a failure. [10]

All the evidence therefore suggests that between 1856 and 1930, and most especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, working-class families had to use all the labour resources at their disposal in order to ensure their survival, or turn to other strategies such as co-residence with parents, sub-letting or recourse to charity benefits. Although there are no macro-economic statistics that chart the evolution of paid female labour according to marital status in the

Table 8.5 Distribution of wages of male journeymen and labourers in 1856

Reales per day	*number*	*percentage*
Less than 7	1,173	5
Less than 8.56	4,015	17
Less than 9.94	8,550	36
Less than 11.51	19,333	89

Source: Calculated from, I. Cerdà, 'Monografía estadística de la clase obrera en Barcelona en 1856', pp. 617–649.

Note: According to Cerdà's data a daily wage of 11.51 reales represented a 'family wage'. A married worker needed to earn 9.94 reales to maintain his family, supposing that his wife worked and earned 1.54 pesetas, and 8.56 reales was minimum living wage a male single male worker need to earn.

second half of the nineteenth century, the indications are that in the nineteenth century for most working-class women the domestic model of the wife at home was more an ideological construct elaborated by other social classes than a lived reality. As far as married women in particular are concerned, it seems clear that their paid labour formed a part of the reality of working-class life. This is especially the case when we take into account outwork. As we shall see, it was not recorded in the census data. Overall, therefore, though the data are scarce it seems that in the city of Barcelona there was no significant change in patterns of work amongst married women between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The biggest change appears to have taken place after the Civil War, when the percentage of married women in the active population declined through to 1970. This makes it impossible to talk of the incorporation of women into the labour force at the turn of the twentieth century or to view the growth of female work during the twentieth century in linear terms. [11]

Industrialization and the sexual division of labour: the case of the cotton textile industry, 1850–1923

We have already stressed the importance of textiles in Catalan industrialization and the key role of female labour. The impact of industrialization on female labour has been one of the areas that has attracted most interest in historiographical debates, thereby placing the cotton textile industry at the forefront of research. Some researchers have argued that a general model can be developed to explain the evolution of the sexual division of labour within the cotton textile industry. In this model, in an early home-based manual and pre-industrial phase the industry was characterized by high levels of female participation, given that women specialized in spinning and men in weaving, and that a large number of spinners were needed to provide the weavers with yarn (about 17 spinners per weaver). This phase entered into crisis in the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century when the introduction of the mule jenny led to a drastic decline in the relative number of spinners needed per weaver and also provoked

the replacement of women by men on the new machines. The overall result was the masculinization of cotton textiles. The reasons behind this restructuring are still the source of debate. Some authors argue that men took over the mule jennies because of the greater physical strength required, combined with the obsolescence of skills learnt by women on the old Catalan variant of the spinning jenny, the Bergadana; a second group points to the differentiation in domestic and productive space provoked by the rise of the factory system, and to the greater difficulty women henceforth had in reconciling factory and domestic labour; while a third group maintains that in these new circumstances, given the low wages, women preferred to specialize in reproduction. For other authors, finally, none of these factors are by themselves sufficient given that such a complex process requires a multi-faceted explanation.

This second phase entered into crisis during the second half of the nineteenth century, with the generalization of first the self-acting mule and later the ring frame in spinning. This led to a new process of feminization in the industry. The explanatory hypotheses are again divergent. In the case of Catalonia, as for the early nineteenth century, some authors argue that technological factors were decisive: the continuous process of mechanization reduced the skill levels and physical strength required and thereby made it easier to employ low-cost female and child labour.[12] For others, socio-political factors, such as the reaction of employers when faced with growing wage demands and the strength of labour within the process of production, were more important. According to these authors, the employment of women and children was a reaction against worker power.[13] A final group of researchers have directed our attention to demographic factors not specifically related to the labour market. They maintain that from the first decade of the twentieth century, increased access to birth control and a concomitant easing in the burden of child rearing made women more willing to enter the factory. In addition, especially from 1915, restrictions on the use of child labour – both directly through new social legislation and indirectly through the extension of schooling – meant that factory work took on a greater relevance for married women in the family's reproductive strategy.[14]

Yet new local studies point to the impossibility of applying general models to the evolution of the sexual division of labour during the distinct phases of the industrialization process. As we shall see, depending on the local context the same technological and demographic changes could produce very different outcomes in this respect. Indeed, the limited number of studies undertaken on the city of Barcelona point to differences between the factories themselves, with the result that in all probability one cannot even talk of a homogeneous Barcelona model.

In Catalonia, by the mid-nineteenth century most of the industry was concentrated in Barcelona and the coastal plain. Then from the 1860s in particular much of the spinning side of the industry moved to river banks of north-east Catalonia (the so-called Alta Muntanya) in order to take advantage of cheap water power. Local studies indicate that the view that from the early nineteenth century men invariably took over as spinners is mistaken. In areas in

which there were extensive job opportunities, both weaving and spinning were regarded as women's work, and this was not affected by either the introduction of the power loom in weaving or the mule jenny followed by the self-acting mule in spinning, and this despite the fact that the new spinning machines required heavy physical exertion. This was the case in the city of Manresa, an important centre of weaving on the Llobregat river in the Alta Muntanya, where, because of job opportunities for men in both in the city's silk and lace factories, by the mid-nineteenth century women made up 90 per cent of the workforce in the industry. This was also the case in some rural areas in the Alta Muntanya, where women worked in the factories and men on the land.[15]

The case of Reus, a town in the province of Tarragona and a significant textile centre, provides another interesting variant. Here power remained in the hands of the employers, for while overseers (*contramaestres*) worked as spinners the employers directly employed women to piece the yarn. This case emphasises the need to go beyond a mere description of the sexual division of labour and to analyse the actual content of the work being done.

In contrast to these examples, over much of the industry men attained a powerful position in the labour process on the spinning side of the industry and replaced women on the mule jennies. This was the case in the important textile centres in the Alta Muntanya, the Ter and Freser Valleys, where male spinners were employed and subcontracted part of the work to male assistants or piecers, who would in time become spinners themselves. This was also the case in Vilanova i la Geltrú, a coastal town in the province of Tarragona only 50 to 60 kilometres to the north of Reus. As we have noted, this has generally been explained by the greater physical exertion required on the mule jennies. However, it has recently been argued, applying a hypothesis developed by William Lazonick for England, that with the introduction of the new mule jennies large numbers of assistants were required. Given the highly responsible nature of the spinners' work, employers put this work in the hands of men who were allowed to act as subcontractors and employ assistants. This can help explain the difference with Reus, where the subcontract system never developed and women remained employed in spinning.[16]

This again points to the inadequacy of interpretations based on technological factors only, and to the complex series of elements which defined the sexual division of labour. The situation in the Ter and Freser valleys and in Vilanova in the second half of the nineteenth century confirms this. In these areas after mid-century, when the mule jennies were replaced by self-acting mules men continued to work as spinners, and this despite the fact that this new machinery was less physically demanding and did not require such large teams. A first factor to take into account is that in these areas the male workers were industrial proletarians, and, unlike in Manresa, strongly opposed the employment of female labour. Furthermore, in the larger Ter and Freser Valley towns, like Ripoll, Roda and Manlleu, unionization rates among male spinners were high. The strength of the unions and greater presence of male labour explains relatively high wages in this area. Yet, despite their rejection of female labour, from the 1880s male

self-acting mule spinners were to face attempts by employers to substitute them with female workers.[17] The employers were stimulated to act by the onset of an economic recession and, on the spinning side of the industry, their task was made easier by the introduction of the new ring frames, which required far less physical effort. A prolonged struggle ensued. Employers made enormous efforts to undermine the unions and impose female labour, with the result that, by 1915, 77 per cent of the workers in the spinning and weaving factories were female and only in a few towns in which unions remained strong did men continue to operate the spinning machines.

This process of substitution was accompanied by the imposition of longer working days, cuts in wages, the intensification of labour, new systems of control and harsher disciplinary regimes. This shows how historically the sexual division of labour has been a key tool in the organization of the process of production, and how employers have used women to undercut men's wages. The cases of the Ter and Freser Valley and of Vilanova (which was, indeed, similar to that of England) indicates that the key factor in the maintenance of the position of the men on the self-acting mules and then ring frames was the strength of the labour unions.[18] Nevertheless, this needs relating to the labour market in the Alta Muntanya. It was in those areas in which men lacked alternative job opportunities that they fought hard to maintain their position.

Barcelona was in many respects similar to Manresa. Unlike the situation on the Ter, men had a wide range of job opportunities. They dominated the textile industry in the early nineteenth century, but this changed from the 1850s. Men were mostly employed on the mule jennies, but women largely replaced them on the new self-acting mules, which were rapidly growing in importance. The dominance of female workers was further consolidated on the new ring frames, especially from the 1880s.

This process, including the complexities of the situation, is brought out by an analysis of individual factories. Our study of La España Industrial, the largest Catalan cotton textile factory, shows that in the 1850s women worked on the self-acting mules.[19] Cerdà's 1856 statistics indicate that other factories followed suit. This was the case of the large Vapor Vell factory in which the proprietor Joan Güell maintained that rates of pay for men and women working on the same job were equal. On the other hand, there were factories like Can Batlló in which men worked on the self-acting mules and women as piecers. Moreover men worked as spinners on the so-called Barcelona Plain or Pla, in Gràcia, Sant Martí, Sant Andreu and Mataró. Given the present state of research, the possibility that the different size of the self-acting mules – smaller in the city itself and larger on the plain – is one of the causes of these gender differences cannot be ruled out.

However, as we have already noted, technological factors cannot by themselves explain variations in the sexual division of labour. Thus, a conflict which broke out when self-acting mules were first introduced in Barcelona from the 1850s has to be seen in socio-political terms. Even before unions were legalized in 1854 the male spinners were in a strong position in the process of production

and had a powerful union organization. The replacement of men by women was a strategy adopted by employers in a context in which they were reorganizing work structures in order to deal with heavy competition.[20] As the example of parts of Catalonia shows, there was no inevitability about this process. Where the men were in a strong enough position they remained employed as spinners.

Yet, in Barcelona the industrialists were largely successful. Between 1853 and 1855 agreements were signed between employers and workers regulating wages and employment. Then in 1854 following mobilizations by the workers, a Royal Decree was signed prohibiting the installation of self-acting mules. But this was reversed by a new decree on 21 May 1856 and subsequently women were largely employed on the new machinery.[21] Comparative wage rates of men and women show how the employment of women was used to cut wages and increase employer control. In 1856 the male mule-jenny spinners earned 15 per cent more than the average worker's wage. They were hit by the fact that the job was highly seasonal. Nevertheless, they earned more than any other workers in the cotton textile industry, including the male weavers. Moreover, they worked by the piece and paid one or two assistants out of their own wages. This gave them a certain degree of control over work structures in the factory. On the other hand, on the self-acting mules, despite the fact that teams were also employed, wages were only 67 per cent those of the mule jennies.[22] It should be stressed that this was not the result of deskilling. To operate a self-acting mule a long and demanding apprenticeship was necessary. It was a complex and dangerous machine and a lack of experience could result in serious accidents.[23] Hence the gender of the workers was the key differentiating factor. This is confirmed by the fact that in the Alta Muntanya, when men retained their position on the new machines, wages remained high. In Barcelona, from the introduction of the ring frame wages declined further. We have no equivalent statistics to those of Cerdà and so cannot undertake a systematic analysis of wage rates in relation to skill and gender. However, data for the years 1903–13 indicate the female ring-frame spinners earned 3 pesetas a day. This was lower than the most common wage of 4 pesetas, and no higher than wages in the preparatory processes prior to spinning. The loss of wages and the decline of the status of these workers within the industry is therefore clear.[24]

As far as the weaving side of the industry was concerned, in Barcelona male resistance to the employment of women had more success. The rapid mechanization of spinning from the mid-nineteenth century led to important growth in the number of weavers. Hand loom weaving, whether in the home or in a workshop, had been a primarily male occupation. With the introduction of the power loom the industry was opened to women. In 1856, 10 per cent of hand loom weavers and almost 40 per cent of power loom weavers were women. In addition, there was a very clear division of labour between the men who worked on large power looms in the factory, and women who worked from home, on small power looms or in small workshops. The Weavers' Association aimed to maintain this division of labour, an aspiration which lasted for many years. Thus in December 1931 the textile workers presented a demand calling for women to be excluded from work on large power looms and jacquard looms.

However, though research is still needed, it seems clear that the control of the textile unions over the sexual division of labour declined over time. In the second half of the nineteenth century men moved into better paid trades and increasingly left weaving in the hands of women. In this respect it is significant that between 1856 and 1905 the power loom weavers were one of the four trades whose wages increased least. Matters did not improve in subsequent years. Thus, in 1913 the factory inspectorate stated that the wages of weavers was below the Catalan average. This was a situation which the CNT tried to tackle in 1931. Overall, therefore, as in the case of spinning, the substitution of men by women has to be seen in terms of a number of factors, including the local labour market and employers' strategies, aimed at reorganizing the labour process and ensuring the profitability of their enterprises.

The sweating system: the invisibility of female labour

The sweating system, on occasion considered a residual form of artisanal labour, in reality underwent a rapid growth during the industrialization period, and also throughout the first third of the twentieth century, linked, above all, to the expansion of serial production. Social legislation, by considering the home as a private sphere in which the state could not intervene, defined work as taking place outside the home and thereby excluded sweated labour. Thus, none of the legislation approved between 1900 and 1914 affected it. In fact, the first legislation covering outworking was not approved until 1926, and after this date it was still common for social legislation to exclude sweated labour. The implementation of such legislation would thereafter be one of the factors which induced the growth of sweated labour, as industrialists used it as a means to elude the new labour laws.

It is, however, as contemporaries pointed out, almost impossible to quantify precisely the extent of sweated labour. Census data in general does not distinguish between factory and home-based workers, while other sources provide only fragmentary information. The Institute for Social Reforms calculated that there were 28,790 outworkers in Barcelona in 1914, almost 12 per cent of the active population. It was also estimated that in 1916 up to 60 per cent of the (largely female) labour force in the clothing industry could have been outworkers.[25] Moreover, large numbers of such workers were to be found in the black economy and were not, therefore, included in any statistics.

In the early twentieth century outworkers in sewing worked an average day of eleven hours, but thirteen- or even fifteen-hour days were not uncommon. Moreover, their wages, paid by the piece, were only 60 per cent those of a factory worker; on top of that was the cost of paying off and maintaining the sewing machine, and on occasion, the wages of an assistant. The reports of the Institute for Social Reforms also denounced the proliferation of numerous illnesses amongst the sweated outworkers, such as bronchitis, metritis, severe menstruation pains and tuberculosis. It was estimated that 65 per cent of people suffering from tuberculosis in Barcelona were female clothing workers. Their low

wages and miserable working conditions were worsened because of the role played by intermediaries and by competition from asylums, poorhouses, reformatories, prisons and convents, where women worked for nothing but food. The harshness of this competition would be reflected in the women's participation in the convent and church burning during Tragic Week in 1909.[26]

As in the majority of European countries, conservative ideologues opposed women's participation in the labour market and supported outworking because it was compatible with dominant middle-class values. Yet the conditions that the women were forced to endure led to criticisms even from such quarters. Thus, in 1902 Elías de Molins noted some of the paradoxes involved, 'theory totally rejects factory work, especially amongst married women, because it is against the family, and instead supports outworking. And yet in the great urban centres the numerous abuses, miseries and social sores which accompany outworking have made female factory labour if not good then at least acceptable.'[27]

Unions, however, paid little attention to this kind of work until 1905, when the Madrid UGT called for the application of the same regulations as factory work to sweated labour. In subsequent years Catholic unions began to occupy themselves with the conditions of female outworkers. This culminated in 1910 in the setting up, under the auspices of sectors of the Church and Barcelona bourgeoisie, of the Barcelona Sewers' Union (Sindicato Barcelonés de la Aguja). The same forces were behind the First Catalan Outworking Congress held in 1917. However, it was not until 1926 that the first laws regulating outworking were approved, and even during the Second Republic, in a context of economic crisis, there were numerous complaints about employers breaking collective agreements, cuts in wages and increases in the length of the working day. Employers justified paying lower wages by arguing that they merely complemented the wages of the male family members. Yet large numbers of witnesses testified that they were the only means of subsistence for many families on the border of the abyss, because the husband was ill, had died, or had abandoned the family home.[28]

Domestic service: emigration, marginalization and the search for new opportunities

There were similarities between sweated labour and domestic service. Like outworking, domestic service was exercised in a home environment, and therefore excluded from social legislation. Neither the attempts by the first associations of domestic servants in the first decade of the twentieth century or the labour movement in general during the Republican period managed to extend labour laws to the industry.

In 1856 there were 8,751 female domestic servants in Barcelona, 40 per cent of the total number of women working in the more lower-class occupations (industry, domestic service and commerce). Though the absolute number increased, the proportion of women employed in domestic service fell progressively in subsequent decades. In 1900 the number of female domestic servants

had doubled to 17,011, but this only represented 25 per of the city's female working population. By 1930 the number had risen to almost 30,000 but they now represented only 18.6 per cent of the female labour force. However, this downward trend was reversed in the two decades after the Civil War, when, in a context of industrial crisis and mass migration to the city, domestic service became one of the most common occupations, especially amongst immigrant labour. As the woman whose story opened these pages asserted, domestic service was the most frequent occupation of women from outside Catalonia. Industrial work was to a large extent monopolized by workers from Barcelona and other parts of Catalonia. Family networks channelled the demand for labour, protecting key positions within industry from the entrance of 'outsiders', resulting in strongly endogamic patterns of employment.[29] Domestic service was a refuge for migrant workers, whose families often needed two or three generations to rise up to positions in industry or in other occupations, even subordinate ones, within the service sector.

Domestic service was not, however, a homogeneous sector. There existed a complex world, which has yet to be explored, of cooks, housekeepers, wet nurses and maids (these the most common and most poorly paid); those who lived in and those who lived elsewhere and were paid by the hour; youngsters newly arrived in the city and housewives who combined this work with their own family duties. The variations in wages emphasized these contrasts, ranging from the 50 pesetas a month paid to a young nursemaid in 1930 in Barcelona to the 70 to 100 pesetas which cooks and maid servants could earn. Nor was it the same to be a domestic servant in the country and the city, and there was also great variation between regions. Outside Barcelona wages could be as low as 5 pesetas a month, and sometimes no wages at all, only board and lodging.[30] Yet varying wage rates were not the only difference. Many women who had worked as servants in small Andalusian villages have explained how the same work in a big city, where social control was more relaxed, could be less humiliating, and how in this context they could pass unnoticed by their neighbours.[31] Domestic service in a city like Barcelona also opened the door to new job opportunities, for the training the domestics received could later be used in other occupations within the public sphere, such as cooking, washing and ironing, to which some of these workers moved on.

Authors have usually emphasized the subordinate nature of this work, and the exploitation and marginalization to which these workers were subject. However, as the previous section makes clear, stress should also be laid on its importance as a strategy of transition for migrant workers from the rural to the urban world for both themselves and their families. Many of these women used their newly found positions as domestic servants in order to explore the local labour market and find lodgings so that other members of their family could then follow them to the city with a greater chance of success. Hence, in the successive waves of immigration which over the twentieth century turned Barcelona into a pluri-cultural city, the domestic workers of Barcelona had a central – but until now little noticed – role to play. Similarly, little has been made

of the way women from rural villages used domestic work in the city to escape from their limited horizons and prospects. In terms almost identical to the introductory quotation, many women have spoken of such strategies, elaborated, on many occasions, by mothers and daughters.

The rise of the tertiary sector: the demand and supply of female labour

As we have seen, over the first third of the twentieth century the female workers of Barcelona were primarily concentrated in the industrial sector. The service sector, however, underwent a process of rapid change. Although domestic service remained the largest employer of female labour, women for the first time began to make inroads in transport and communications (post office, telegraphic and telephone services), in public administration and in the liberal professions, with the overall result that while women working in these areas made up 4.8 per cent of all service workers in 1900, by 1930 they accounted for 14.8 per cent, and the figure continued to rise in the following decades. In fact, the growth of female labour in these occupational groups was more rapid than in the traditional occupations of the service sector such as domestic service and commerce.[32] These transformations provided new job opportunities for women from lower-middle-class backgrounds. At the same time, the fact that large numbers within this group remained single and celibate, and therefore in an economically precarious situation, provided a strong stimulus to find work. The first instances of this change came in the last decade of the nineteenth century, with the admittance of some women (wives, daughters or sisters of the men employed) into the telegraphic service as assistants (*auxiliares*). The attitude of the male workers was ambiguous. On the one hand, they were the first to demand these posts for the female members of their families, but on the other, they rejected the entry of women en masse. The arguments were the same as those previously used by male workers in the textile industry: competition from female workers and the danger of a fall in wage rates, the vulnerability of these workers to sexual harassment and the transgression of the accepted sexual division of labour.

From the end of the nineteenth century, the organization of new professional schools specifically for women, such as the Commerce School (1878), Post and Telegraphic Services (1883), Governesses (1893), Nurses (1915), Tachygraphy and Typewriting (1916), and Librarians (1915), is symptomatic of this change. Furthermore, the employment of women as assistants within the state administration was generalized in 1918, while it was left at the discretion of each ministry whether to employ women in other categories. This policy was very controversial because it meant that the state itself was promoting a change in traditional conceptions of the sexual division of labour. It was supported by various political groupings, but most actively by women's and feminist groups, whose political affiliation was very diverse, stretching from social Catholics to Socialists. However, it should be emphasized that the incorporation of women into the more highly qualified services was a slow process and was accompanied

by a rigid sexual demarcation of functions. This segregation was both horizontal and vertical; women's possibilities of promotion were on the one hand limited, and on the other they were excluded from certain jobs. In some professions, such as notaries, judges, state lawyers and customs officers, women were excluded even during the Second Republic. This segregation was reinforced during the Franco regime, when through numerous ordinances the promotion of women to positions of responsibility was blocked. This only began to change with the 1961 Law of Political, Professional and Labour Rights of Women, which was to open a new phase in the history of women's work.

In the specific case of the city of Barcelona, there have been few studies of the service sector. However, my analysis of the sexual division of labour within the Spanish National Telephone Company in the city allows some understanding of the use of female labour in the labour process. [33] Between 1924 and 1928 the basis was laid for a system of sexual segregation of labour which, with successive modifications, remained in place until at least 1978. The posts of telephone operator and office worker, who were in contact with the public, were totally given over to women, but women were, at the same time, confined to the lower ranks in the office and excluded from management posts. The case of the Telephone Company does not bear out the traditional thesis that associates the entry of women into the service sector (particularly into office work) with the deskilling of administrative tasks. Rather, it signified the recognition of specifically female skills needed within the new communications systems: interpersonal skills, an ability to shield subscribers from tensions within the company, collaboration amongst the female workers in contrast to the greater competition amongst the male workers, and greater powers of concentration and ability to deal with tension. These skills, as the company recognized in its recruitment campaigns, were vital in order to extend the telephone network and compensate for the deficiencies of the new technology.

However, while the company was conscious of the value of these skills it naturalized them and considered them as 'aptitudes', and this allowed it to pay the female categories of worker far lower wages than male categories, even when the women's formal level of education was higher. Thus, the company also used the introduction of female labour to secure cuts in wages and in order to implement new systems of work rationalization (intensification of work, more rigid control of productivity and new forms of discipline) to which male workers in the old telephone companies were reluctant to adapt. Women proved more flexible and efficient and were able to adapt more quickly to the new technologies and new work processes, increasing the levels of productivity and developing new forms of solidarity that were better suited to the harsher conditions of work.

The system of labour segregation developed during these years survived the egalitarian legislation of the Second Republic and was reinforced during the Franco regime. Indeed, as late as 1979 women were demanding they be employed in the categories reserved for male workers, and it is still the case today that the company is marked by a strong vertical and horizontal segregation, the result not only of company policy but also of male resistance to the employment

of women in traditionally male categories. Such male hostility is to be found throughout the history of the Telephone Company: from clerical work in the 1930s, to engineering in 1960s, and manual and computer work in the 1970s and 1980s. It was most often expressed in informal terms, but was strong enough to be commented on in the company's archives. Nevertheless, the greatest resistance was to be seen in the 1980s when the company tried to introduce female personnel into the departments which installed the telephone network, and this was to lead to the failure of the company's attempt to redeploy surplus personnel working on telephone switchboards. The politics of labour segregation has therefore proved an effective strategy in avoiding the entrance of women into new occupations and as a way to evade egalitarian wage legislation.

Discrimination and occupational segregation

Throughout the period under study, as in most European countries, women laboured in a harsher environment and received lower wages for the same job than their male counterparts. Indeed, as the examples of textiles and the service sector show, the process of feminization of occupations resulted in a deterioration of both working conditions and wages.

The entrance of women into an occupation has traditionally been perceived by men as a threat to their working conditions. For example, the cotton textile trade unionist, Juan Martí, maintained that as a power loom weaver in 1890 he earned between 20 and 24 pesetas a day, but by 1913 his wage had declined to 20 pesetas, and he claimed that this was due to the influx of women and children into the industry. Overall, between 1853 and 1930 it has been calculated that real wages in the cotton textile industry declined by 29 per cent. However, this needs to be put into the context of a general tendency of wage rates to decline in Barcelona as a result of large-scale migration from poor rural areas leading to a disequilibrium between demand and supply for labour. Moreover, the cotton textile industry faced an almost permanent overproduction crisis from the turn of the twentieth century and there was heavy pressure on industrialists to cut costs. In other industries the situation was not so desperate, as can be seen from the example of the clothing industries, where real wages actually rose during the same period.

As far as the comparison between male and female wages is concerned, there was a slight reduction in wage discrimination against women between 1856 and 1930, with women's average wages rising from 45 per cent to 56 per cent of those of men. However, this was the result of a reduction in the range of wage rates in the Barcelona economy rather than any specific factors in operation which were serving to reduce inequalities between male and female wages. Indeed, this reduction in the spread of wages was less marked in those sectors in which the employment of female labour was widespread, such as textiles, clothing, and the food industry. Women's wages continued to be set at a level greatly lower than men's, and even during the Second Republic women who worked in the same job with the same level of skill could be paid less.[34] Yet even

when there was a decline in overt discrimination between workers employed in the same categories, differentials in male and female earnings were maintained through other mechanisms, such as new systems of wage payment, progressive occupational segregation, the construction of the concept of skill based on male work and the implementation of new payments systems.

The transformation in the systems of wage payment initiated in the late nineteenth century do not, in general, appear to have favoured women workers. Thus, for example, the decline of piece rates in the cotton textile industry hit female workers, who when working on the same job had until then been able to earn wages equivalent to the men. Furthermore, the establishment of maximum and minimum wage rates for workers within the same category, which from another perspective has been seen as a victory for the labour movement, could lead to lower wages for women. Similarly, bonus payments systems were adopted in order to benefit the male head of household, with supplements paid for such elements as the number of children, possessing numerous families or non-employment of spouses.

The Second Republic established the principle of equal pay, but this was not put into practice. Thus it became common practice to change the denomination of some occupations in order to elude the new egalitarian legislation and to establish different categories for men and women within the same job, thereby justifying wage inequalities. In fact, during the 1930s only 4.6 per cent of labour contracts explicitly recognized the principle of equal wages for the same work and showed no signs of wage differentials according to sex, whereas 21 per cent distinguished between male and female categories and paid women lower wages. The remainder do not indicate wages according to sex, but this does not mean there was no discrimination. In general, Republican labour legislation, expressed predominantly through labour contracts, consolidated and legitimized already existing modalities of sexual discrimination, and established new ones in new areas of economic activity. Thus, despite the claims of the Constitution of 1931, in the sphere of work the Second Republic cannot be seen as a period of growing sexual equality in the labour market.

Already at the turn of the century in the minds of many women who migrated to Barcelona, the city meant not only more job and marriage opportunities but also greater autonomy within the urban and industrial environment in which they worked. The rise of the textile industry had given them a central role in Catalonia's industrialization process. In 1900 the percentage of women in paid labour was twice the Spanish average, and the gap was to widen over the first third of the twentieth century.

Despite the limited attention Catalan historiography has paid to female labour, it has become commonplace to refer to the progressive incorporation of women into the world of work in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet while this may have been the case for the middle classes, evidence indicates that it does not apply to working-class women. As we have seen, census data for the mid-nineteenth century and first third of the twentieth century point

to the stability in the employment of women in working-class trades (including domestic service) and in commerce. With respect to the relationship between employment and marital status, given the present stage of research it would be rash to draw firm conclusions. Nevertheless, it does seem that while the overall percentage of married women in work rose from 1900, amongst women in working-class occupations and in commerce the limited data at our disposal indicate the percentage employed may have been higher in the second half of the nineteenth century. Only a small minority of men within the popular classes were able to earn a family wage, and in these circumstances the wife's wage was a key component in the income of many families. Moreover, in many cases this income could not easily be substituted for that of the children, whose wages did not in general equal that of their mother at least until they were sixteen. In this respect the situation in Barcelona was not that different from that in Britain, where recent studies have called into question the existence of a family wage.

However, while most working-class women worked, ideologues who defended the concept of the male family wage opened the way for the restriction of female labour to a limited number of sectors at the precise moment when the labour market was diversifying. This served to legitimize lower female wages, at a time when the substitution of piece rates for fixed wages was widening the gulf between male and female wages, and made women solely responsible for social reproduction. Without taking into account this dual contribution of women to the family economy, based on integration into the labour market and housework, it is difficult to answer questions which are now being posed regarding the reproduction of the labour force and working-class family in the first stages of the industrialization process in Barcelona.

Conflicts between men and women in the labour market were one of the central issues of the period. Male labour unions opposed the entry of women into traditionally male occupations. This question was of fundamental importance in the textile industry. Male opposition to equal wages reinforced employer strategies aimed at reducing labour costs, though the growing presence of women in the industry cannot solely be understood in terms of their lower wages. This situation was to persist throughout the first third of the twentieth century. Even during the Second Republic and Civil War labour unions continued to support differential wages and protected the position of men against competition from women. The attitude of the unions in this respect is of crucial importance in explaining the growing distance of women from the labour movement over the period.

After industry, domestic service was the second most important sector for female paid labour during the second half of the nineteenth century. Traditionally women were able to use the opportunities offered in this area to survey the local labour and marriage market, both for themselves and for their relations. This facilitated the successive migratory waves into the city and the migrants' integration. In addition, through remittances domestic servants were able to support family members who stayed behind. Thus, though they were considered the most marginalized of workers, their work, in a time very different

from our own, played a central role in the population's geographical and social mobility.

Until 1930 work was above all undertaken by working-class women and focused on industry and domestic service, followed by commerce. However, from the last decade of the nineteenth century changes began to occur which would be of crucial importance in the post-war decades, opening up the way for the incorporation of middle-class women into the labour market and providing new opportunities of social mobility for the most literate sectors of the working class. Amongst the most important of these changes were the albeit limited improvements in the education system, the beginnings of professional education for women, and the entry of women into some service sector companies. This pointed in the direction of the major changes which would occur during the post-war years, when the rise of the tertiary sector was accompanied by the mass employment of women. These employments were presented as the symbol of the 'modern woman', especially appropriate for the 'new woman' who was emerging in the middle classes. Yet in our period this would still be a limited and restricted phenomenon. Work was seen as a sign of downward social mobility, in a context in which the labour market was fundamentally working class.

Notes

1 Woman interviewed for a study of immigration over four generations. Published in C. Borderías, 'Emigración y trayectorias sociales femeninas', *Historia Social*, no. 17, 1993, pp. 75–94.

2 A. Balcells, *Trabajo industrial y organización obrera en la Cataluña contemporánea 1900–1936*, Barcelona, 1974, p. 9.

3 Here I indicate works which are either specifically focused on the question or which, while dealing with the labour movement, contain relevant information. Balcells, *Trabajo;* E. Camps, *La formación del mercado de trabajo industrial en la Cataluña del siglo XIX*, Madrid, 1995; R. Nicolau, 'Trabajo asalariado, formación y constitución de la familia. La demanda de trabajo en la colonia textil Sedò y los comportamientos demográficos de la población, 1850–1930', Undergraduate Dissertation, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 1983; L. Ferrer, 'Notas sobre la familia y el trabajo de la mujer en la Cataluña Central, siglos XVIII-XX', *Boletín de la Asociación de Demografía Histórica*, XII, 2/3, 1994, pp. 199–232; M. Llonch, 'Inserción laboral de la inmigración y sistema de reclutamiento de la fábrica textil: Vilassar de Dalt, 1910–1945', *Boletín de la Asociación de Demografía histórica*, 2/3, 1995, pp. 149–61; A. García, 'Sistemas de trabajo y acceso a la fábrica en la primera algodonería catalana: algunas evidencias comparativas sobre políticas familiares, patronales y sindicales en la hilatura mecánica, 1841–1870', *III Taller de Economías y Estrategias Familiares*, Universidad Pompeu Fabra, March, 1997; A. Smith, 'Social conflict and trade-union organization in the Catalan cotton textile industry, 1890–1914', *International Review of Social History*, vol. XXXVI, 3, 1991, pp. 321–76; P. Pascual, *Fàbrica i treball a la Igualada de la primera meitat del segle XX,* Barcelona, 1991; J. Benet i C. Martí, *Barcelona a mitjan del segle XIX*, Barcelona, 1976.

4 I will deal with these themes with specific reference to the cotton textile industry in the section that follows.

5 All the data for 1856 are taken from Ildefons Cerdà 'Monografia estadística de la clase obrera de Barcelona en 1856', in *Teoría general de la urbanización*, vol. II, Barcelona, 1867, pp. 533–700.

6 Censo Nacional de Población de 1900, Madrid, Instituto Nacional de Estadística.
7 Tables 8.1 and 8.2: deficiencies in classification and data mean that the 1900 and 1910 censuses cannot be used in Tables 8.1 and 8.2. The 1905 census only refers to industrial workers. The 1856 census refers to all wage earners, and those of 1920 and 1930 include employers.
8 M. Aurelia Campmany, *La Dona a Catalunya, consciencia i situació*, Barcelona, 1966.
9 For salaries in 1856 the source is Cerdà, 'Monografía', and for 1905 and 1917 the *Anuarios Estadísticos de la Ciudad de Barcelona*. Both the Commission of Social Reforms, which carried out a survey in the 1880s, and the Barcelona Local Statistical Office, in 1917, lamented the fact male workers' wages would not cover their families' needs. On the construction of the concept of a family wage in Cerdà see C. Borderías and P. López, 'La teoría del salario obrero y la subestimación del trabajo femenino', *Quaderns D'història de Barcelona*, no. 5, 2000.
10 C. Borderías, *Entre Líneas. Trabajo e identidad femenina en la España contemporánea. La Compañía Telefónica 1924–1980*, Barcelona, 1993, pp. 35–42.
11 This is also the conclusion Pere Pascual reaches in his study of the textile centre of Igualada. He maintains that within the hosiery industry women's work was fundamental and the indications are – though concrete data is not available – that large numbers of women, including married women, continued working into their 60s, Pascual, *Fàbrica*, p. 146.
12 M. Izard, *Industrialización y obrerismo. Las Tres Clases de Vapor en Cataluña, 1869–1913*, Barcelona, 1973; Ferrer, *Notas*, pp. 199–212.
13 Llonch, *Inserción*; Pascual, *Fàbrica*; García, *Sistemas*.
14 Nicolau, *Trabajo*.
15 Ferrer, *Notas*.
16 García, *Sistemas*.
17 Smith, *Social conflict*.
18 Ibid.
19 C. Borderías, *Empleo, cualificación y género en la formación del mercado de trabajo Barcelonés (1848–1930)*, Madrid, forthcoming.
20 See García, *Sistemas*.
21 Some data can be found in Benet and Martí, *Barcelona*, and in M. Reventós, *Assaig sobre alguns episodis històrics dels moviments socials a Barcelona en el segle XIX*, Barcelona, 1925. The workers' position is laid out in a letter by José Barceló, Ramón Maseras and Antonio Gual to Laureano Figuerola, published in *Diario de Barcelona*, 4 August 1854.
22 Cerdà, 'Monografía', pp. 641–5.
23 D. B. Pahissa Faura, *Comparaciones entre la selfactina y la continua de anillos*, Barcelona, 1927.
24 See M. Sastre, *Las huelgas en Barcelona y sus resultados, 1903–1914*, 8 vols, Barcelona, 1904–1916; Instituto de Reformas Sociales, *La jornada de trabajo en la industria textil. Trabajos preparatorios del reglamento para la aplicación del Real Decreto de 24 de agosto de 1913*, Madrid, 1913. Balcells, *Trabajo*, has pointed out that the discrimination suffered by women was due to the complementary character employers attributed to their work and the inferior cultural, juridical and political position they found themselves in, not to any difference in skill levels.
25 Balcells, *Trabajo*.
26 J. Connelly Ullman, *La Semana Trágica*, Barcelona, 1972; T. Kaplan, 'Female consciousness and collective action: the case of Barcelona, 1910–1918', *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1982, pp. 545–66; T. Kaplan, *Red City, Blue Period: Social Movements in Picasso's Barcelona*, Berkeley, 1992.
27 Balcells, *Trabajo*, p. 95.
28 For example, Carmen Entreaigües, president of the Valencian Sewers' Union in, *Preparación de un proyecto de ley sobre el trabajo a domicilio*, Instituto de Reformas Sociales,

Madrid, 1918. Sweated work was not only limited to the working classes. Middle-class women affected by family and economic crisis also turned to outworking in a context in which work outside the home would manifest their decline in social status. Working-class women claimed that the recourse of the middle classes to sweated work in order, as they saw it, to continue living in luxury, was a cause of their own miserly wages.

29 On the importance of family endogamy in textiles see Llonch, *Inserción*. On the case of the telephone company, see Borderías, *Entre líneas.*

30 G. Nuñez, *Trabajadoras en la Segunda República*, Madrid, 1989.

31 C. Borderías, 'A través del servicio doméstico: las mujeres autoras de sus trayectorias personales y familiares', *Historia y Fuente Oral*, no. 6, 1993, pp. 105–22.

32 Borderías, *Entre líneas.*

33 Ibid.

34 On male and female wage rates in this period see the works already cited by Balcells, Benet and Martí, Camps, Llonch, Capel and Núñez, along with Alvaro Soto Carmona, *El Trabajo Industrial en la España Contemporánea*, Madrid, 1989.

9 The Barcelona bourgeoisie, the labour movement and the origins of Francoist corporatism

Soledad Bengoechea

At the dawn of the twentieth century the smoke from the chimneys of the factories located in Barcelona's peripheral neighbourhoods indicated to its visitors that they were in an industrial city; a city that in the course of time had become the economic capital of Catalonia, and the industrial capital of Spain. But although Barcelona had established itself as the country's most important industrial city, the entrepreneurial impulse of its bourgeoisie was stifled. The textile industry, backbone of the economy, had only limited outlets at home, while the Spanish market remained stagnant as a consequence of the immobility of an outmoded agricultural sector. These limitations led the industrialists to try and capture foreign markets, but their aspirations were checked by the free tariff policy applied by Restoration governments, who were accused by the industrialists of corruption, of undermining the democratic process through the practice of *caciquismo*, of representing the interests of Castilian agrarian capital at the expense of industry, and of being insensitive to the problems caused by the rise and radicalization of the city's working class.

Indeed, as a result of the changes brought about by this process of development and modernization Barcelona soon became the scene of continuous social conflicts (see Chapters Two and Three). The rise of labour protest awoke among the bourgeoisie a growing fear of what came to be known as 'the social question'. This chapter centres on the ideologies elaborated and strategies put in place by the bourgeoisie to combat the working-class threat from the late nineteenth century through to the end of the Franco regime.[1]

In order to free society of the affliction of 'the social question' a paternalist discourse was initially mooted, which rejected incipient state intervention in labour relations, encouraged industrialists to obtain the loyalty of their workers, opposed workers' associations, and placed emphasis on the control of labour remaining solely in the hands of the entrepreneur (in the language of the day, 'I am master in my own house'). Slowly, however, new aspects were introduced into this discourse. Thus some journalists and writers, tied to the defence of the social order, began to stress the need for class co-operation, an idea which would be central to corporatist doctrine. To reinforce this proposition it was argued that progress and the creation of wealth were a common endeavour of all men, under which the different roles of the entrepreneur and the worker should be

subsumed. The construction of this idealized version of labour relations made possible the affirmation that both boss and workers were 'producers'. In consequence, it was only necessary to find a mechanism by which they could act in concert.

The dream was to install a hierarchical, corporatist, regime of workers' and employers' associations, modelled on the medieval guilds, which would reconcile the social classes, and thereby overcome class conflict. The seductiveness of this construct rested on the fact that it offered the security of tradition without ignoring the promises of modernity. This allows us to understand why the discourse of corporatism awoke a lively interest in bourgeois circles, coming from the end of the nineteenth century to impregnate the cultural milieu in which the Barcelona (and, more broadly, a part of the European) bourgeoisie moved. But the discussion of social relations was not the only significant element in this discourse. Through its emphasis on the harmony of the producers within the guild corporations it also rejected the inheritance of the Enlightenment and questioned the legitimacy of democracy through its dismissal of professional politicians, a group which it described as unproductive.

Some authors have argued that in a number of European countries such as France, this challenge to the parliamentary liberal order was not the exclusive prerogative of the bourgeoisie or the radical Right, but was also advanced by revolutionary syndicalist and Marxist currents on the Left, and that a synthesis of rightist and leftist ideological currents in France (in particular nationalism, revolutionary syndicalism and futurism) resulted in it becoming the cradle of fascism before the First World War.[2] This theory has provoked a heated debate and reawakened an old controversy. Why did democracy not suffer a profound crisis in countries like France, which underwent such a so-called 'cultural rebellion' against liberalism, while in other places such as Spain, in which a similar cultural rebellion was supposedly less visible, was there a crisis of democracy and rise of authoritarianism?

In this chapter we will argue that the question posed is defective. In Barcelona – and to a lesser extent in other parts of Spain – anti-parliamentarianism also had deep roots. In the decades that preceded the First World War, a cultural rebellion slowly matured into a Spanish variant of corporatism. The ideological roots of this corporatist model can only be understood in relation to the conditions which Barcelona traversed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which encouraged the establishment of an organic, corporatist and anti-parliamentary political culture, one that rejected the liberal values inherited from the French Revolution. It was the combination of this culture with the logic of worker and employer trade-union organization and mobilization, boosted enormously in Barcelona as a consequence of political, economic and social conditions created by the First World War, which, it will be argued, produced a general consensus towards solutions to the crisis of the liberal state which were both anti-liberal and based on the unions. The corporatism imposed by the Primo de Rivera dictatorship in 1923 would accommodate only part of these demands. Only the Vertical Syndicates, instituted later by General Franco,

through which workers and employers were forced 'harmoniously' to integrate into the same organization, would skilfully combine the corporatist model elaborated by Catholic, nationalist, traditionalist, and conservative Catalanist thought at the end of the nineteenth century, with the syndicalist dialectic which grew up in the first decades of this century.

Tradition and corporatism

In the last years of the nineteenth century the development of a conservative, Catholic and Catalan nationalist discourse was stimulated by social conflict, a progressive loss of confidence in the politicians of the Spanish state (which was considered over-centralized), and hostility towards the tentative introduction of labour legislation. This discourse, which drew on both Catalan thought (the conservative regionalism of Manel Duran i Bas, the Catholic traditionalism of Josep Torres i Bages) and European ideological currents (Romanticism, French positivism, German historicism, integral nationalism, Christian socialism), had strong repercussions in Catalonia. In broad terms, what defined this doctrine was the critique of jacobin centralization, which was held responsible for the loss of values associated with a decentralized, paternalistic, guild-based society. However, the diversity of the ideological contributions that fed it gave it a theoretical richness that prevented it from becoming a monolithic creed. It adopted a traditionalist Catholic language which questioned the principles of modernity elaborated during the eighteenth century, rejected the heritage of the French Revolution and democracy, and looked back to the Middle Ages, calling for the recovery of the guilds. Yet although the belief that the collective will could be expressed by means other than the ballot box became increasingly general in Barcelona bourgeoisie circles, this did not prevent nationalist ideologues from taking a possibilist stance and supporting participation in electoral contests, a position that made it possible for them to found a Catalan regional party, the Lliga Regionalista, in 1901.[3]

With the founding of the Lliga and its victory in the 1901 general elections in the city of Barcelona, the Catalan nationalist ideal ceased to be an abstract image, and became a joint venture cemented by the party's electoral credentials. The Lliga was pragmatic, and attempted to play an important role in Spain's liberal governments, but it did not disguise its corporatist aims. Its model was that of a 'traditional' monarchy, with a powerful Church, and an 'organic parliament' in which the economic corporations would be represented directly rather than through 'professional' politicians. One of the party's founders, the textile industrialist Luis Ferrer-Vidal y Soler, aimed specifically to link ideology to political praxis, and soon became one of the most important corporatist ideologues in Catalonia. At the same time as the Lliga appeared as a political force Ferrer-Vidal presided over the Catalan employers' organization, the Foment del Treball Nacional (FTN). This explains why the FTN introduced a series of changes to its organizational structure in 1901, which, by encouraging the idea of the association of workers and employers by industry, aimed to facilitate the establishment

of corporatist practices in Catalan industry. However, unlike proposals elaborated in the more radicalized context of the early 1920s, which demanded the obligatory affiliation (*sindicalización*) of workers and employers, only voluntary affiliation was called for.[4]

A little later, in 1902, in the name of the FTN, Ferrer-Vidal put this corporatist vision to the Government. Under the influence of the doctrinal currents growing in strength throughout Europe, the project denied the legitimacy of state intervention in the economy, and suggested that Catalonia was uniquely befitted for the author's brand of Catholic corporatism. The document he drew up also reflected the influence of the German historical school of law – which maintained that the law is part of the history and tradition of a people – in Catalonia, through its proposal that only society, through its customs, was capable of creating new legal institutions. This defence of custom led the author, while invoking Prat de la Riba and Torres i Bages, to call for a social organization of work based on Catalonia's medieval guild tradition.[5] This project enjoyed a double virtue: it pursued class harmony within Catalonia, whilst externally it evoked unity. This made possible the rejection of interference in the sphere of Catalan labour by the central Spanish state. Thus corporatism was perceived as the formula through which a nation without a state could regulate itself, resolve social conflict (labour conflicts would be dealt with within the guilds) and influence the already constituted state.

During the following years the central governments refused to accept a project which introduced corporatist, decentralising, elements into the centralist liberal state. In the meantime, the FTN grew in strength, increasing the number of its affiliates, which it continued to integrate within industrial federations. This process intensified between the years 1913 and 1914. While the Lliga was gaining a degree of administrative autonomy for Catalonia through the Mancomunitat (a body set up in 1914, under the presidency of Enric Prat de la Riba, which amalgamated the functions of the four Catalan provincial administrations (*diputacions provincials*)) the FTN attempted to achieve autonomy within the industrial sphere. The realization that its influence over the Spanish state was limited, and the reality of the 'social question', led its leadership to try to convert it into an all-embracing organization, circumscribed to the territory of Catalonia, composed of associations of employers and workers, that would take the running of the economy out of the hands of the politicians, on the understanding that it was politics which should be subject to economics and not vice versa.[6]

Thus while it is true that, largely through the Lliga, the Barcelona bourgeoisie participated opportunistically in the liberal system, the call for some form of corporatist system, in which employers and workers would form a single category of producers, was present throughout these years. This fact motivated some employers and journalists to encourage the practice of corporatism, but above all they disseminated organic corporatist projects. These proposals flourished periodically coinciding with political and social crises. Their champions made clear that their objective was to establish 'harmony' between employers and

workers. At the time, they dubbed politicians as 'useless', because they were 'parasites', not 'producers', and called on the world of work to co-operate without recourse to them.

The syndicalist project

Although the corporatist project was perceived as ideal for the neutralization of class struggle it was clear that its implementation would be immensely difficult. The Government did not hide its reticence regarding the employers' demands, and in this climate growing mistrust of the Spanish state led the industrialists to opt for local self-organization. It was above all in the aftermath of the 1902 general strike in Barcelona (Chapter Two), which it was felt had become radicalized because of lack of firm state intervention, that an attempt was made to find answers to the 'social question' through the city's own institutions without regard for the Government. Following the example of other European countries (France, Belgium, Austria, Germany), employers began to take a sudden interest in matters such as strike statistics and the living conditions of workers, influenced by Christian social doctrine (which advocated the intervention of Catholics in the problems created for workers by industrial society), and spurred on by the writings of the French Catholic sociologist, Frédéric Le Play, who argued that in order to take countermeasures to deal with the working-class threat it was indispensable to elaborate reliable data. Equally, and with the purpose of disseminating these statistical results, the initiative of the Count of Chamberun – who began and funded a similar institution in Paris – was copied with the creation in Barcelona of a Museu Social.

In parallel, in bourgeois circles emphasis was placed on the need for social elites to practice charity and encourage the habit of saving amongst the workers, on the need to expand Catholic unions as a brake on revolutionary unionism, workers' mutual aid societies (*patronatos*) and labour exchanges (which were set up under the auspices of the Chamber of Commerce and the FTN). Equally, in order to deal with future threats, closer links were forged with the Catalan military and the Sometent (an armed institution of property owners of medieval origin which was strengthened in some urban areas).[7]

This was accompanied by calls for the unity of the Barcelona bourgeoisie. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the Barcelona employers started to back business associations which would act like trade unions, but it was once again the general strike of 1902 which accelerated this process. In the following years this movement largely coalesced around the four most important sectors of the economy: metallurgy, textiles, construction and woodworking, with employers and workers entering into a dialectical relationship in which industrial conflicts stimulated each to develop similar associative structures (see also Chapter Two).[8] The main objective of this process of employer unionism was to avoid or win strikes (through the use of the lock-out if necessary). Through these associations employers were able to set up or strengthen anti-strike funds and to compose blacklists of workers considered troublemakers. In addition, within the

associations conflicts which arose between employers themselves could be dealt with. They also allowed employers to act as a pressure group at a local level, to mobilize in order to influence the Government and, if necessary, to use violence against worker organizations considered revolutionary.

This type of associationism would be different from – if closely related to – the generically economic and corporative associations set up by the bourgeoisie, whose foremost representative was the FTN. Many of these union associations, above all those in textiles and metallurgy, were directed by members of important bourgeois families, who, at the same time, ran the FTN. But the FTN was not authorized to act as a union, and so while it tended to assume the function of dealing with politicians and the government, direct confrontation with the labour unions was delegated into the hands of the new employer associations.

In the decade between 1900 and 1910 a large number of employer unions appeared. To begin with they only brought together employers from a specific locality and trade, but growing social tensions provoked a change in attitude, especially in sectors such as metallurgy and, even more so, in construction. Of key importance in this respect were the events of Tragic Week in July 1909 followed by a rapid growth of labour agitation from 1910 and the foundation of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT in September of that year (Chapter Two). It was in this context of fear in employer circles in 1910 that the first Barcelona Federation of Construction Industries was founded with the support of the metallurgical bourgeoisie's Society of Mechanical and Metallurgical Industrialists. This association formed the embryo of the future Barcelona-wide employers' union, which, as we shall see, was finally to be set up in 1919.

The Barcelona construction employers saw their union as a paragon which could be exported to the rest of Spain, and went on to stimulate the formation of employers' associations and federations throughout the country, playing a key role in the creation of the Spanish Employers' Confederation, whose headquarters was established in Madrid in 1914. The idea of founding such a confederation was first mooted in 1911, in part as a response to the organization of the CNT, but it took off in the context of the growing political crisis evident during 1913–14, with the break-up of the two official Restoration parties. From its inception, the Confederation never hid its objective of articulating middle-class discontent and undermining revolutionary trade unionism. Furthermore, the decision to set up a country-wide association, with its headquarters in Madrid, entirely independent of the regime politicians, also showed the Barcelona industrialists' distrust of the Spanish political elite and, by extension, the Restoration system.[9]

On the eve of the First World War, then, corporative anti-parliamentary culture had strong roots within the Barcelona bourgeoisie (as well as, in a different guise, within the working class). Two models can, however, be seen to have emerged. In the first place, the FTN, closely linked to the Lliga, aimed to articulate the 'Catalan middle classes' (as they referred to the employer class) within a powerful corporate association. On the other hand, following in the footsteps of the CNT, the industrialists of the Barcelona construction industry

looked to affiliate the 'middle classes' within a Spanish-wide employers' union. The proposed organizational structure would rest on craft, industrial and regional federations, articulated within an employers' confederation, whose headquarters would be in Madrid, but which would be under the tutelage of Catalan interests.

The search for unity: the single employers' union

In Barcelona the outbreak of the First World War delayed, but also radicalized, a revolutionary process already in motion. As a result of Spain's neutrality Catalan industry was able massively to increase its exports. However, the benefits obtained were not, in general, reinvested but spent on consumer luxuries. Moreover, the short-lived boom turned to bust when at the end of the war the orders of the export sector began to dry up and, because of its traditional limitations, the Spanish market could not the absorb the subsequent overproduction. In this context new fortunes tottered and workers were infected by the revolutionary fever which swept across parts of Europe. Thus was the ground sown for the blossoming of violence (see Chapters Two and Three).

It was in these circumstances that the events of 1917 in Spain (see Chapter Three), combined with the impact of the Russian Revolution, triggered in Barcelona a crisis similar to that suffered in Italy. Although anarchist terrorism and social unrest were nothing new in the city's history, for the first time, between 1917 and 1923, worker and employer unions resorted to the assassination of individuals. The CNT, it appears, was first off the mark, but in response businessmen decided to contract the services of gunmen (Chapter Three).[10] During 1917 the increase in social unrest was such that even the politicians of the Lliga mobilized against the Government in order to obtain effective representation. But in August, when barricades sprang up in Barcelona, sharpshooters fired at troops from balconies, and the CNT called their mythical general strike, which the anarcho-syndicalists had lauded as the definitive instrument to destroy the capitalist system, both the regionalists of the Lliga and left-wing republicans distanced themselves from the revolt, and the city was left at the mercy of the army. When the strike ended there were thirty-two dead and sixty-four wounded, most of them from the CNT. These events showed the ineffectiveness of the major political parties: in reality, neither the republicans represented the interests of workers nor the regionalists those of the bourgeoisie. The conviction of many workers and employers that professional politicians lacked the capacity to solve their problems was strengthened, as was the idea amongst both groups that syndicalism and direct action were a more effective means than electoral politics in securing their ends.

Within *cenetista* ranks this belief was confirmed in the Sants congress of June 1918, which saw the reorganization of its unions into local industrial federations (Sindicats Unics). From then on the CNT presented itself as the ideal instrument for integrating all workers into a single union organization. Like the workers, employers in the construction industry tried to articulate a single employers'

union. In the first place they centred their efforts on Barcelona, and, subsequently, relaunched the Spanish Employers' Confederation as a powerful unified force. However, even in Barcelona there was difficulty in setting up a unitary employers' organization because of the diversity of industrial interests. Only in a context in which order was believed to be breaking down could the Right as a whole be induced to back such an initiative. In such circumstances some of the proposals of the construction employers could become attractive to industrialists in other sectors of the economy; for example, their call for the state to be stripped of its economic functions, and for control of the economy to pass into the hands of the employers' union. According to this plan the employers' union would be in charge of elaborating labour contracts – a frequent source of conflict – of an obligatory nature for the workers and employers, and would have a wide range of powers in the sphere of labour relations. The construction employers' suggestion that strikes should be contested through a general lock-out was also enormously tempting.

Indeed, the reality of the class struggle and the belief that parliamentary rule produced weak governments who were incapable of controlling the supposed social chaos were elements which turned the idea of a general lock-out into the employers' own version of a revolutionary myth; a myth that in turn served to stimulate employer cohesion. Furthermore, the industrialists hoped that the destabilization that would accompany a general lock-out would give the military an excuse and justification to threaten intervention to halt a process perceived by the bourgeois as revolutionary. The military would, in this way, execute the designs of the bourgeoisie by putting an end to the CNT and the liberal system of government which tolerated its existence.[11]

In Barcelona the events of 1919 would turn these desires into reality. The end of 1918, in what may be considered the onset of a semi-revolutionary conjuncture, saw the fall of the coalition Government presided over by the arch-conservative Antonio Maura, and in which the leading Lliga politician, Francesc Cambó, was Minister of Economic Development (Fomento), and its replacement by a new Liberal administration. This produced panic in many sectors of the Catalan bourgeoisie, and in these circumstances attempts were made within traditionalist and right-wing Maurista circles to forge a great right-wing alliance, which would either make possible the coming to power of an authoritarian government of 'national salvation' or lay the basis for dictatorial rule. This was the background to the formation in Barcelona of the Unión Monárquica Española (UMN), a coalition of monarchists and extreme Spanish nationalists.[12] However, divergencies on the right between the Lliga and Spanish nationalists (in particular the army) over the question of Catalan autonomy prevented the forging of a broader right-wing entente.

Nevertheless, the further intensification of social conflict in the spring of 1919 enabled the industrialists to achieve unity at an economic level. The spark was provided when the CNT declared a strike in La Canadenca (an electricity generating company) in Barcelona. The radicalization of the conflict, culminating in the declaration of a general strike, should be placed within the context of the

Bolshevik triumph in Russia and of a revolutionary atmosphere almost palpable in many European countries (Chapter Three). The fear generated had the effect of halting completely a campaign in favour of a statute of autonomy for Catalonia as the bourgeoisie channelled all its energies into solving the conflict. While the Government, under pressure, conceded an eight-hour day, the industrialists reacted by finally setting-up the Barcelona Employers' Federation. It was hierarchically organized, exercised an iron discipline, and had no qualms in imposing its will on both employers and workers. Amongst other measures, without consulting with the Government, it elaborated a new labour contract, which, it stated, employers and workers had obligatorily to accept. A large number of employer organizations quickly affiliated. In the rarefied climate of 1919 elites were willing to finance an employers' union because they felt that it had the capacity both to mobilize and employ violence, something which the traditionalist Right and an institution like the FTN lacked. Furthermore, it showed itself to be politically pragmatic, as could be seen on the question of Catalan nationalism and the model of state organization (whether to be a monarchy or republic). This was to allow a wide range of political tendencies to coexist in its midst.

In this atmosphere the Barcelona industrialists also strengthened their ties with the army, in particular with the figure of the Captain General of Catalonia, Joaquín Milans del Bosch. As a result, the military and employers managed to get the Government to declare a state of war leading to the imprisonment of thousands of workers. Co-operation reached its apogee when the bourgeois militia, the Sometent, took to the streets, led by members of the Lliga and under orders from Milans del Bosch. Thus, when faced with a revolutionary threat the Catalanist Lliga showed itself willing to forge an alliance with the ultra-nationalist Spanish military. Similarly, the Barcelona Employers' Federation set up a parallel police force, under the command of Manuel Bravo Portillo, a leading figure in the employers' assassination squads and a confidant of the Captain General. This put into sharp relief the fact that those who had the last word in Barcelona were now the military. From this point in time the weight of military power and continual censorship of the press began to extinguish Barcelona's fragile democratic life.[13]

1919: syndicalism or corporatism?

The semi-revolutionary atmosphere of early 1919 also stimulated discussions in employer circles of the model of political organization, accompanied by calls for further repression. The most influential proposals were based on an initial premise: the reality of trade unionism in Barcelona. After the Canadenca strike there were two union fronts (Sindicatos Unicos) in Barcelona, one representing the employers and the other the workers. Both were structured by industrial sector, both supported direct action in the negotiation of employment contracts, and both rejected state intervention in labour matters. The triumph of syndicalism in Barcelona was therefore a reality, and no reordering of labour relations

could ignore this fact. If it was accepted that both workers and employers had learnt to mobilize and that this learning process had taken place through associationism, then, paradoxically, their demobilization could only come through the provision of organizational outlets based on unions.

It was for this reason that during 1919 there were constant calls from employer circles for the imposition of the obligatory unionization of both workers and employers. While, on the one hand, the Government was petitioned to accept the project by venerable employer associations, such as the FTN and various official chambers, the Barcelona Employers' Federation aggressively called on its members to mobilize, and achieve the same results through street politics. It is clear that this authoritarian proposal had two basic aims: to dismantle the CNT and to fully articulate the employers' organization. The destruction of the anarcho-syndicalist unions, which would be attained by denying the prominent union leaders representation, was, it should be emphasized, the key issue that the employers wished to tackle.[14]

It was on the basis of this demand for obligatory unionization, which in turn needs to be related to the dialectics of Barcelona's union struggles, that the two most significant schemes for the organization of work were elaborated in the summer of 1919. Both had as their starting point this union dialectic, but the debate centred on whether the future organization of the world of work would be based on the corporation or the unions. The first of these proposals was intended to lead to corporative organization, which would neutralize the class struggle; the second to controlled trade unions, in this way minimising social conflict.[15]

During the Canadenca strike the corporatist guild project, first elaborated at the turn of the century, was again taken up by the textile industrialist, Luís Ferrer-Vidal, a Lliga politician, and leading figure in the Barcelona Official Chamber of Industry and the FTN. Once again he looked back to Catalonia's old guild traditions, but, unlike in 1902, he now tried to incorporate the reality of unionization in Barcelona by including employer demands for the obligatory affiliation of both workers and employers. For Ferrer-Vidal these 'vertical unions' were to be at the heart of the new corporatist regime. However, he continued to oppose unions per se, which he saw as instruments of class struggle rather than class harmony, and he therefore maintained that at a later stage they would disappear as all producers were integrated into the new corporate structures.[16] The alternative syndicalist project, elaborated by elements within the Barcelona Employers' Federation, such as its secretary, Josep Pallejá and its leading ideologue, Felipe Pons Solana, on the other hand, only called for the establishment of obligatory employers' and workers' unions, which would have to be approved by the Ministry of Labour (Dirección General del Trabajo), and occupy public premises (a formula totally unacceptable to the CNT).[17]

It should be stressed that these alternative proposals were still unfocused; only during the Second Republic did the far Right clarify its objectives fully. Divergencies also related more to the organic structures than to the desired results, which, in each case, was 'harmony between labour and capital'.

However, behind the divergence there also lurked significant political differences, for while the corporatist project remained tied to Catalan Catholic and conservative regionalist circles and limited itself to Catalonia, the syndicalist proposal was more secular and, linked to the Spanish Employers' Confederation, aspired to encompass the whole of Spain.

However, the Government refused to contemplate employer demands for obligatory unionization, and in these circumstances the question of how to deal with the CNT remained uppermost in the industrialists' minds. In Barcelona the Catholic unions had failed as a conservative alternative to the revolutionary syndicalism of the CNT, and it is in this context that from 1919 the Sindicats Lliures, which were led by a group of Carlist workers, obtained backing as a conservative alternative to the CNT (see Chapter Three). Although there is no definitive proof it seems more than likely that the employers were behind their foundation. What is known is that they were managed by a military figure in contact with the civil governor's office. Hence they appear to have become linked to the central Government who used them to undermine the CNT as an alternative to the employers' demand for obligatory unionization. Support for the Lliures also had an additional advantage in that it combined the two alternatives already expressed; integration and repression. With both military and bourgeois backing, from 1919 the Lliures rivalled the CNT both on the trade-union front and through the use of violence. Hence a second terrorist phase opened in Barcelona, which was characterized by an implacable persecution of the CNT. During the autumn the Second Congress of the Spanish Employers' Federation, celebrated in the Palau de la Música in Barcelona, made clear the effectiveness of employers' unionism by announcing its intention to declare a lock-out in Barcelona. Its publicly stated aims could not hide its real motives: the destruction of the CNT and of the liberal system itself.[18]

The triumph of the sabre: from the lock-out to the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera

The lock-out was declared on 3 November 1919 in the headquarters of the Spanish Employers' Confederation in Madrid. This venue was favoured by the Barcelona Employers' Federation because it felt the repercussions of taking the decision in the capital were more likely to destabilize the political system. The aim was in the first instance to paralyse Barcelona, then the rest of Catalonia, and finally the whole of Spain. In Barcelona it met with only partial success at first, but by 1 December it had become totally generalized. It did not end until 26 January 1920. Workshops, businesses and factories remained at a standstill, while employers affiliated to the Federation came out onto the streets armed with clubs, forcing the shutdown of those businesses which refused to obey the closure order. Repression was also administered by the armed bourgeois militia, the Sometent (which consisted of 15,000 men in Barcelona and 60,000 in the whole of Catalonia), the police, civil guard, army and other para-security forces. The jails filled with syndicalists – even some republican labour lawyers were

detained – with the result that warships anchored at the port became impromptu prisons.

During the employers' congress and lock-out the leadership of the Barcelona and Spanish employers' confederations used a rather different language from that normally associated with the bourgeoisie. Both in the employers' meetings and in declarations to the press, these business leaders did not hesitate in expressing themselves in terms which recall those used by the authoritarian and radical New Right which was emerging in a number of European countries. Thus there were calls for an employer revolution. Indeed the context appeared ideal for the bourgeoisie to reconcile itself with the concept of revolution, if this was what it would take to detain the feared CNT insurrection.[19]

Anticipating later fascist rhetoric, the employers stated that their revolution would aim to remove the economy from the hands of the state. Throughout the lock-out, the Barcelona bourgeoisie called for the end of the liberal system, and its proposals for the future ordering of state and society foreshadowed those the extreme Right would later present in the 1930s, when they once again demanded that conflict be resolved through guild corporations and compulsory unionization.

In the tense atmosphere of 1919 the constant refusal of the Spanish Government to contemplate these proposals radicalized the discourse of the bourgeoisie and favoured the use of direct action rather than in parliament. During the lock-out most bourgeois opinion called insistently for a 'Milans solution' to the conflict, that is, the substitution of the constitutional monarchy for a military one, along with direct, corporate, representation in parliament. Indeed, with the streets of Barcelona under the control of the military, on several occasions Milans del Bosch and the Barcelona garrison, with the support of the generals and head of the General Staff, attempted to overthrow the Government. However, despite the efforts of the Spanish Employers' Confederation and a campaign launched by the far-right Madrid press, the lock-out had only limited success outside Barcelona. Furthermore, the army remained divided, and King Alfonso XIII refused to support the *pronunciamientos*, recommending instead 'moderation'. Hence Spain did not become the first post-war European dictatorship, Milans was forced to resign from his post and the threat of the industrialist-military alliance for the time being subsided.[20]

Thus at the beginning of 1920 the employers had to accept that the liberal system still had enough strength to overcome the lock-out more or less intact, although it remained fearful in the face of the power of Barcelona's industrialists, who were able to take advantage of this fear to pressure the Government into appointing Severiano Martínez Anido, a soldier with a reputation as a hard man (*hombre fuerte*), civil governor of Barcelona Province in November 1920. His statement on taking up his post makes further comment unnecessary: 'I have been in Cuba and the Philippines…. I should be in Africa. The Government has sent me to Barcelona, and I will work as if I were in the field.'[21] Under his rule the *ley de fugas* (through which *cenetistas* were executed while 'escaping') was established, and the Lliures experienced rapid growth as the CNT was persecuted

and made illegal. However, it soon became clear that the industrialists' worries were not over. Many CNT affiliates joined the Lliures, which began making their own demands on employers. Worse still from the employers' point of view, in October 1922 the Government forced Martínez Anido to abandon his post, and in the spring of 1923 the CNT began to reorganize. More than ever employers were convinced of the action needed in order to rid themselves of the CNT and the liberal governments which tolerated it. This was a road that in September 1923 again led them to the Captain General of Catalonia, in this case Miguel Primo de Rivera.

It should be emphasized that support for a dictatorship was, at that time, all-pervasive in Barcelona bourgeoisie circles. The consensus that greeted Primo de Rivera's coup can only be understood by reference to the dominance of anti-liberal discourse. Many employers applauded an authoritarian solution, and so did a great number of judges, civil servants, politicians and university lecturers, who also rallied to Primo de Rivera. Even the political elite of the Lliga was in favour of handing the country over to the dictator, the so-called 'iron surgeon'. They all supported a 'revolution from the above', which promised to neutralize the feared revolution from below.

With the Primo de Rivera *pronunciamiento* the CNT was forced into clandestinity and the party system abandoned. Additionally, although the regime did not immediately set up a corporatist system of labour relations – politically Primo de Rivera was no Mussolini – this would emerge as the regime stabilized. In 1926 it set up National Corporative Organization (Organización Corporativa Nacional–OCN), which operated through a pyramid of 'parity committees'. The lower tier of local committees was composed of an equal number of employer and worker representatives with a president appointed by the Government, and had as its goal the resolution, through compulsory arbitration, of collective or individual conflicts of each sector of production.[22] But the OCN did not put into practice either of the employers' proposals for the organization of workers and employers, each within obligatory unions, or their proposals for the establishment of a corporatist system inspired by the guilds. Instead of single unions the dictatorship created a single party, the Unión Patriótica, which integrated much of the UMN's membership. At a trade-union level it took up the suggestion in Spanish Catholic circles that unions should operate freely within an obligatory corporate system. Primo de Rivera admired the moderation of the Socialist UGT and allowed it to play a key role in the parity committees. This limited the growth of the Lliures, which, in any case, as during 1920–3, showed they were not simply the creatures of the employers. Furthermore, strikes were never made illegal – indeed, their number began to rise towards the end of the dictatorship – and the regime finally proved itself unable to prevent the establishment in 1931 of the Second Republic. After this chastening experience, when in July 1936 the Right again resorted to the sabre, with the goal of eradicating all traces of the organized labour movement, it knew that the model installed by Primo de Rivera was insufficient, in particular because it had not established an all-encompassing corporatist organization of a totalitarian character.

Towards a synthesis: the Vertical Syndicates

In Barcelona criticisms of the corporatist model imposed by the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera did not only come from sectors opposing the dictator. The regime was also questioned from within. An example of this are some of the articles published in *Revista Social*. This had been since 1902 the mouthpiece of the conservative social-Catholic movement in the city, and during the dictatorship was made the organ of the regime labour courts (*comités paritarios*) in Catalonia. The writings of the publication's leading figure, Antonio Aunós, show the growing frustration in some right-wing circles at the policies pursued by the Primo dictatorship. Aunós was a Carlist sympathizer who had written extensively on corporatism and who would later play a prominent role as representative of the single party of the Franco regime, FET y de las JONS, in Switzerland and France. Towards the end of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, as the number of strikes began once again to grow, Aunós began to doubt the efficacy of the regime's parity committees, which he saw as mistakenly leaving the resolution of conflict in the hands of the presidents, who were divorced from the process of production. He also questioned the wisdom of maintaining horizontal unions, that is to say, unions which organized workers and employers separately, which he perceived as carriers of the class struggle. Aunós argued for the need to find a joint body in whose midst bosses and workers would be 'producers'. This led him to formulate an alternative based on labour corporations (to which he gave the ancient name of guilds), in which the workers and employers would be united by common interests, and which would legislate obligatory labour contracts. As in the proposals Ferrer-Vidal had previously elaborated, in Aunós' corporatist model the unions would be outlawed.[23]

During the period 1931–9 Barcelona lived under a republican political regime. From the establishment of the Republic until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936 the city was again to live through an endless series of strikes and conflicts. During these years the political map of Europe changed dramatically, and parliamentary liberalism appeared seriously threatened both by fascism and the radical Left. Indeed, in several European countries fascist and authoritarian right-wing regimes were established. As a result, in Barcelona the political triumph of corporatist ideas was seen as feasible within sectors of the bourgeoisie and the army.[24]

The vehicle for this corporatist revolution would be the FET y de las JONS. Despite the fact that its forerunner, the Spanish Falange, was until the outbreak of the Civil War a party of minuscule proportions in Catalonia, after the April 1937 Decree of Unification, through which General Franco amalgamated the Falangist and Carlist or Traditionalist organizations and banned all other political parties, the FET began to grow rapidly amongst Catalans in the so-called 'National Zone' held by the rebels. During the Republic the Traditionalists had eclipsed the Lliga as the strongest movement on the Catalan far Right. However, the Barcelona Falangists, amongst whom were to be found many industrialists, were able to discredit them, accusing them of being Catalanists who were unable to connect with the proletariat, and prevented them from occupying the FET

presidency in Catalonia. At the same time, they presented themselves as the only group who had elaborated a doctrine – which they referred to as National Syndicalist – capable of integrating the Barcelona proletariat, and this would help Catalans affiliated to the Falange, who had fled to Burgos, the capital of the Nationalist zone, to go on to play a prominent role in the construction of the Francoist 'New State'.[25] As we have seen, industrialists had for years put the unions at the centre of their discourse, for they addressed themselves to a population used to mobilising precisely through unions rather than through political parties. Indeed, Falangist ideology rejected the existence of political parties and conceived of Spain as a huge 'union of producers' and proposed to organize the Spanish population corporatively through the establishment of a system of vertical unions – organized by sector of production – in whose ranks employers and workers would be amalgamated. This corporative model broadly coincides with that put forward by Ferrer-Vidal in 1919.

Many Catalanist traditionalists, like the aforementioned Antonio Aunós, joined the Falange at this time. Aunós applauded the National-Syndicalist organization proposed in Spain by Falangist fascism, for it took up corporatist ideas, elaborated from the end of the last century, which spoke of turning bosses and workers into producers. In 1940, many Barcelona corporatists viewed the establishment of the Organización Sindical Española (OSE), the Vertical Syndicates of the Francoist state, as comparable to the setting up of a renovated and modernized version of the mythical guilds of the Old Regime, and argued that, with respect to the organization of the producers, National Syndicalism and corporatism were in reality the same thing. With this formula they felt that they had found the definitive answer to the 'social question'.[26]

At the same time, while traditionalist corporatists saw the formation of the supposed new guilds as leading to an integration of the social classes, National-Syndicalist ideologues most closely linked to the Francoist New State feared that a corporatist model not based on the unions would prove unattractive to the Barcelona workers, who were accustomed to organizing through the unions. Hence the Falange developed a pseudo-revolutionary verbiage through which it sought to attract ex-trade unionists. Thus, not without internal tensions, under Franco the corporatist and syndicalist conceptions of the world of work were more or less formally represented in the new Vertical Syndicates.

Vertical Syndicalism during the Franco regime

Under Francoist Syndicalism both businessmen and workers were forced to join the OSE. However, their position was by no means equal. Workers were deprived of all possibility of independent association, their class-based unions were banned and persecuted and within the Vertical Syndicates they found themselves under the control of the Falangist bureaucracy. In contrast employers could in most cases keep their own organizations by integrating them into the OSE. Industrialists did not suffer Falangist intervention, with the result that the employers' half of the Syndicates – economic associations, businessmen's unions

and employers' councils – carried on representing employer interests. The most important changes the Barcelona industrialists experienced in terms of organization were the neutralization of the FTN, its most emblematic institution, and the disappearance of the Employers' Federation. The FTN remained in a state of hibernation, limiting itself to the administration of its estate (in general led by the same employers as before the Civil War). In fact, neither of the two great employer organizations could integrate within the new Syndical structures. In any case, the Franco regime made unnecessary the greater part of the functions of the employer organizations, as it guaranteed both social order and absolute control over the workers.

In general, for many years the Barcelona employers did not question the OSE – one of the cornerstones of the Francoist state – and its hegemonic role in labour relations. They raised objections only when, towards the end of the 1960s, it ceased to be an efficient instrument for ensuring social stability. Then they began to claim a greater freedom in collective bargaining, but also increased repression of labour agitation. Only during the 1970s, when the workers' movement gained a force that was impossible to ignore, did some employers pronounce themselves in favour of widening the channels of representation for workers outside the framework of the Vertical Syndicates. When the Franco regime fell, the majority of Barcelona employers returned to their traditional organizational structures within the FTN, defending from there the social pact, a key element in what would be the transition to democracy.[27]

Notes

1 It should be pointed out that although the main focus in this chapter will be the industrial entrepreneur, the term bourgeoisie often includes bankers, shopkeepers and traders, lawyers and other liberal professions. These sectors shared a common set of social values and a degree of property ownership that (direct or indirect) provided them with an income through rent.

2 See Z. Sternhell, M. Sznajder and M. Asheri, *Naissance de l'idéologie fasciste*, París, 1989. Corporatism was principally institutionalized by fascism, which established a correlation between the fascist and corporatist state.

3 On Catalan political thought see A. Balcells (ed.), *El pensament polític català (del segle XVIII a mitjan segle XX)*, Barcelona, 1988. The impact which French thinkers such as Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras had on Catalan nationalism is emphasized in J. Coll i Amargós, *El catalanisme conservador davant l'afer Dreyfus 1894–1906*, Barcelona, 1994. The formation of the Lliga is dealt with in B. de Riquer, *Lliga Regionalista: la burgesia catalana i el nacionalisme (1898–1904)*, Barcelona, 1977. It should, however, be stressed that together with this conservative Catalanism was to be found a more leftist, lay, republican and federalist Catalanist tradition, which attracted support amongst the lower classes.

4 As Ferrer-Vidal stated: 'Then the associations on both sides, corresponding to the same industrial specialism, could easily join together in guilds if the law, without obliging the associations, which should be free, made sure that it should not be of no significance to the interested parties, the workers and employers, whether they formed part of a guild or not….' 'Exposición dirigida por el Foment del Treball Nacional de Barcelona al Ministro de Agricultura y Obras Públicas, Excmo. Sr D. José Canalejas', in *El Trabajo Nacional (órgano del Foment del Treball Nacional)*, 15 April 1902.

5 Ibid.
6 *El Trabajo Nacional*, January 1914.
7 For more information see G. Ramos and S. Bengoechea, 'La patronal catalana y la huelga de 1902', *Historia Social*, no. 5, 1989, pp. 88–92.
8 For more details, see S. Bengoechea, *Organització patronal i conflictivitat social a Catalunya: tradició i corporativisme entre finals de segle i la Dictadura de Primo de Rivera*, Barcelona, 1994.
9 See *Memoria General del Primer Congreso Nacional de Federaciones Patronales*, Artes Gráficas, Madrid, 1914. However, despite the fact that by 1914 the Barcelona Federation of Construction Industries was calling itself the Barcelona Employers' Federation, it was in reality unable to integrate the majority of Barcelona employers' unions into a single association until the post-war social and political crisis (indeed the metallurgical employers seem to have left the Federation some time after 1910). At the same time, the Spanish Employers' Confederation remained weak and its ability to mobilize outside Barcelona was very limited.
10 A document signed by the employers which shows their backing for the paramilitary squads is to be found in *Real Academia de la Historia, Romanones Archive*, 'Carta de José Pallejá, secretario de la Federación Patronal de Barcelona a Milans del Bosch, Capitán General de Cataluña', 9 April 1919, L 96, C 38.
11 See the comments by the employers' ideologue, Felipe Pons Solana, in *Memoria del II Congreso de la Confederación Patronal Española*, Barcelona, 1919, pp. 117–8.
12 On this question see in particular J. Puy, 'La Unión Monárquica Nacional frente al catalanismo de la Lliga, 1918–1923', in *Estudios de Historia Social*, nos 28–9, 1984, pp. 467–73.
13 For the divorce between official life and social reality in Barcelona see B. de Riquer, 'Los límites de la modernización política. El caso de Barcelona, 1890–1923', in J. L. García Delgado (ed.), *Las ciudades en la modernización de España. Los decenios interseculares*, Madrid, 1992, pp. 21–60. On the dual military power, E. Ucelay Da Cal, 'La Diputació i la Mancomunitat 1914–1923', *História de la Diputació de Barcelona*, Barcelona, 1987, vol. II, pp. 36–177.
14 See P. Gabriel, 'Classe obrera i sindicats a Catalunya, 1903–1920', unpublished PhD thesis, Barcelona Central University, 1981, pp. 777 and 1107.
15 S. Bengoechea, 'La via sindical: una alternativa catalana al sistema', *L'Avenç*, no. 192, 1995, pp. 28–33.
16 L. Ferrer-Vidal, 'Sindicalismo, no. Sindicación, sí', *La Cámara Industrial*, Barcelona, March 1919, pp. 50–3.
17 *Memoria del II Congreso de la Confederación Patronal Española*, Barcelona, 1919.
18 This question is dealt with in more detail in S. Bengoechea, *El lockout de Barcelona, 1919–1920*, Barcelona, 1998.
19 This analysis of business attitudes is largely based on a reading of the press of the period.
20 Bengoechea, *El lockout*.
21 R. Xuriguera, *La repressió contra els obrers a Catalunya, Antecedents i Documents*, Barcelona, 1937, p. 12.
22 E. Guerrero, 'La Dictadura de Primo de Rivera y el corporativismo', *Cuadernos Económicos de I. C. E.*, no. 10, 1979, pp. 111–32.
23 See, for example, 'La Legislación corporativa italiana', *Revista Social*, 1930.
24 For the question of corporatism during the Second Republic see, E. Ucelay Da Cal, *La Catalunya populista: image, cultura i política en l'etapa republicana (1931–1939)*, Barcelona, 1982.
25 See J. M., Thomàs, *Falange, Guerra Civil, Franquisme. F. E. T. y de las J. O. N. S. de Barcelona en els primers anys de règim franquista*, Barcelona, 1992.
26 As Antonio Aunós put it: 'It is necessary to go farther, to find the formula for renewal that more than resolving the social problem, renders it non-existent. It is to this need that the Vertical Syndicates respond.' A. Aunós, *El problema social en el derecho moderno*

(conferencia pronunciada en el servicio Sindical de Industriales y Comerciantes de San Joaquín de Gracia el 8 de marzo de 1940), Servicio Social de Cultura Social, Barcelona, 1940, p. 30.

27 This interpretation of the industrialists' ideology and practice under Francoism is based on the works by Carme Molinero and Pere Ysàs, *Els industrials catalans durant el franquisme*, Vic (Barcelona), 1991, and *El règim franquista. Feixisme, modernització i consens*, Vic (Barcelona), 1992.

10 Workers and dictatorship

Industrial growth, social control and labour protest under the Franco regime, 1939–76

Carme Molinero and Pere Ysàs

On 26 January 1939 Barcelona was occupied by the Nationalist army. A few days later the conquest of Catalan territory was completed, and on 1 April the headquarters of Generalísimo Franco announced that, 'with the disarmament and capture of the red army, the National troops have reached their final objectives'. With their victory in the Civil War, the military and civilian forces who had risen up in 1936 against legality and Republican institutions could carry through their agenda to its ultimate consequences, especially the subordination of the working class, a vital prerequisite for the installation of the anti-democratic, anti-liberal and anti-socialist 'New Order' of European fascism.

Political repression and social control in the 1940s

The first acts of the rebels were the assassination and mass detention of republicans, Socialists, Communists and anarcho-syndicalists, together with the seizure of property belonging to labour and democratic political and union organizations (press, cultural centres, meeting places etc.). They then began to construct a dense legislative framework for repression, based on the declaration of 28 July 1938 (in force until 1948), which proclaimed martial law, described any action or attitude contrary to the rebels as military insubordination, and declared illegal all organizations integrated in the Popular Front and any others which opposed the so-called Movimiento Nacional.[1] In February 1939 the Law of Political Responsibility was promulgated, which confirmed the seizure of property of the Republican organizations. It was a retroactive law, with effect from October 1934, which punished even lack of active support. Other important repressive acts followed, such as the Law of Repression of Communism and Masonic Activity of March 1943, which aimed to ensure that 'from now on no one dares deviate from a rigid social discipline', and which classified participation in unions, or in illegal meetings or demonstrations, strikes and occupations, as military rebellion, subject to a summary trial.

Although we do not possess definite figures for the victims of Francoist repression during the Civil War and first years of the post-war period, it appears that the minimum number of executions must be around the 150,000 mark: until 1943 executions occurred regularly.[2] The figure would, however, be much higher

if we include those condemned to death whose conviction was finally reduced and prisoners convicted and deprived of their liberty. This repressive Francoist policy, especially the extreme violence it employed in the first few years, had the key long-term consequence of cowing the adult generations from the end of the Civil War years up to the end of the 1950s.

To guarantee 'public order' and 'social harmony' the dictatorship deployed a huge police apparatus which included sectors specialized in the vigilance and control of the population (the information and 'social investigation' brigades of the police and the information service of the Civil Guard); complemented by the information and investigation brigade of the regime's single party, the FET y de las JONS (often simply referred to as the Falange), and by the local authorities.[3] Workers also suffered a meticulous process of vetting which had the exaggerated and, ultimately, unviable aim of excluding all those with attitudes contrary to the Movimiento Nacional from public administration and from industry.

In Barcelona's private enterprises an order by the Ministry of Syndical Action and Organization of 5 May 1938 gave employers three months from the 'liberation' to draw up a list of workers they wished to sanction, typically through dismissal, which was presented for approval to the Secretary of the Ministry of Labour.[4] We are not sufficiently familiar with the purging process in Barcelona's firms, although everything points to significant differences. Many bosses carried out the purge as a vengeful settlement of scores with a working class that had rebelled against the established order and had even threatened it with destruction, and they did this with such enthusiasm that they often violated the rules of the process itself, obliging the authorities to bring the matter to their attention discreetly.

But the new regime, along with the objectives of restoring the social order and annihilating republican democracy and the labour movement, also looked to impose a definitive solution to the 'social question'. This would combine the subordination of the workers – suitably disciplined and controlled – to the proprietors of the means of production and to the authorities, in combination with a minimum level of social welfare (job security, sickness benefit and community housing) designed to generate a social consensus. To attain these objectives a union organization was required. It was set up during the Civil War with the promulgation of the Labour Charter (Fuero del Trabajo) in March 1938 (inspired by the Italian Carta del Lavoro), and took definitive shape in 1940 with the establishment of the Falange-dominated Spanish Syndical Organization (Organización Sindical Española, the OSE, often also referred to as the Vertical or Official Syndicates) (see also Chapter Nine).[5]

The compulsory affiliation of all business owners and workers (the latter referred to as 'producers' in the new official jargon) was not established until 1942, although workers suffered numerous direct and indirect pressures in the preceding years. The OSE had as its basic functions to control and organize the workers, to dissuade them from making demands and launching protests, and, in the last instance, to co-operate in their repression if persuasion failed. The party's secretary affirmed in a 1939 circular that 'the union must discipline,

contain and educate them in the new creed', without forgetting that 'the vast majority of them were Marxists or anarchists' and that one should not, therefore, 'lose sight of their tendency towards deformity'.[6] The Vertical Syndicates were, especially up to the mid-1940s, in charge of mobilizing great masses of workers each time the political machine required a demonstration of allegiance to the figure of Franco, and tried to maintain social control through such measures as the institution of labour exchanges and work record cards.

However, while the OSE may have carried out these basic functions successfully, in contrast it failed in its attempt to forge a consensus in favour of the New State through its participation in the elaboration and application of the regime's social policy, and in the development of welfare work within the Syndicates. This was due not so much to the inefficiency of the union institutions themselves as to their absolutely subordinate role to the governing apparatus, and, above all, to the general policy of the Francoist Governments. These provided only scarce budgetary allocations for welfare activities, and, more important, pursued a social policy that, while it introduced some minimal elements of worker protection (specifically job security and compulsory sickness insurance), encouraged the extreme exploitation for the labour force.

The authoritarian and repressive Francoist labour legislation deprived workers of any possibility of involvement in the negotiation of their working conditions and assured their subordination to employers. The Law of the Regulation of Work affirmed the fixing of working conditions to be a 'function exclusive to the state that will be exercised without possible delegation by the Ministerial Department of Labour'.[7] From the promulgation of this law, therefore, this department elaborated regulations for all sectors of the economy, establishing wage levels, the classification of professional categories, the length of the working day, and generally all aspects of the conditions of work. At the same time, the new Work Contract Law of 1944 modified substantially that of 1931 to adapt it to Francoist labour policies. References to the disciplining of labour were of particular importance. Thus, while the Republican law put much of the emphasis upon 'diligence at work', the new law of 1944 placed it on 'obedience' to the employer, referred to significantly as 'the boss of the firm' (*jefe de la empresa*). Other rules, and especially the interior regulation of firms, encouraged the growth of disciplinary regimes which sometimes took on an unmistakably military character. This was the case of the regulations of the great Barcelona metallurgical firm, La Maquinista Terrestre y Marítima, which stated that a worker 'will be obliged to provide his services where, when, and however he is ordered to by his superiors'.[8]

Ultimately, labour legislation deprived workers of all say in the determining of their conditions of work and assured their subordination to the employer. Additionally, the workers were the principal victims of the socio-economic policy of the early Franco era. Real wage levels of the mid-1930s were not regained until the mid-1950s, and in the decade of the 1940s wages were often half their pre-war levels.[9] The workers' predicament was further aggravated by the phenomenon of a vast black market, the consequence of the autarkic and

interventionist policies and generalized corruption of Francoist institutions. Poverty resulted in hunger, malnutrition, illness and epidemics, and the extension of child labour. In addition, the revival of internal migration to Barcelona from the end of the 1940s, and the absence of any policy to deal with it, increased the scarcity of housing and led to a growth of shanty towns (for this phenomenon in L'Hospitalet see Chapter Eleven), as well as provoking deficits in health and educational provision.

Rejection, passivity and worker resistance in the early Franco years

What were the attitudes of the Barcelona workers, who had a long trade-union tradition and a political culture with strong libertarian, republican and socialist roots, when faced with a dictatorial regime, and confronted by such a drastic deterioration in their working and living conditions? They were, in fact, not very different from those of the majority of Spanish workers. In the first place, they were fully conscious of the fact that they had lost the war and that they were therefore the vanquished. Thus their predominant attitude to the regime during the initial post-war years was one of passive rejection.[10] The Francoist authorities were totally aware of this attitude, although they publicly proclaimed the contrary. Gerardo Salvador Merino, first national delegate of the OSE, recognized in 1940 that the initial reaction of workers towards the Francoist Syndicates was one of 'manifest hostility'.[11] And the confidential political reports, compiled by the Information and Investigation Service of the Barcelona FET y de las Jons during the years 1939–41, admitted that the majority of the population of Barcelona and of the surrounding cities and towns continued to be largely 'red' and thus 'disaffected' with the Movimiento.[12] Some years later the attitude of a great part of Barcelona's workers had not changed, according to the reports on the referendum on the Law of Succession.[13]

This rejection and hostility did not translate itself into active and massive support for anti-Francoist groups. Together with the repression, other factors account for worker passivity. In the first place, we have to bear in mind the harshness of living conditions, which meant that most energy had to be channelled into the fight for day-to-day subsistence. Second, we must consider the memory of the Civil War, which was essentially negative for a large sector of the working class: violence, insecurity, hunger and all manner of privations were experienced, and thus anything which might risk reopening the conflict was also rejected – and naturally the Franco regime used the fear of civil war. Furthermore, the divisions and infighting which typified Barcelona's Republican political life also negatively influenced the morale of wide sectors of the popular classes, especially those least identified with the anti-fascist organizations and projects. Additionally, within the more politically active sectors a mutual mistrust remained. To this mistrust, at times even hostility, can be added the impact of the opportunistic actions and conduct, even dishonesty, of some leaders and activists of trade-union and political committees and organizations. Finally, the

disillusionment and disheartenment caused by the defeat of transformative projects with which, to a varying degree, wide sections of the working class were identified fostered resignation and even the fatalistic belief that 'nothing can be done'.[14]

However, this idea of passive rejection must be qualified. From 1945 to 1947 in Barcelona and the surrounding industrial areas there were worker protests which in some cases acquired a notable importance. Two factors explain them: the drastic decline in living conditions and, especially, the expectation of change brought about by the defeat of fascism in Europe. This combination led some sectors to emerge from their passivity and agitate in favour of wage rises and improvements in working conditions and rationing provision. These were semi-spontaneous movements. Affiliates and sympathizers linked to clandestine labour organizations participated, but they were not the result of orders given by their central committees. Significantly, in some large firms in Barcelona there were strikes in May and August 1945, when news arrived of first the German and then the Japanese surrenders, but it was during the following two years that important conflicts erupted in the textile, metallurgical and chemical industries, to the surprise of the authorities. Among these conflicts a general strike in Manresa, headed by the textile workers, should be highlighted. It was the first of its kind in Catalonia after 1939, and probably in the whole of Spain.[15] The workers' demands expressed the most urgent and immediate labour grievances, but it would be mistaken to minimize the political dimension of their actions. To call for wage rises was to confront the state's wages policy and wage determining mechanisms. Complaints about rationing also affected the politics and institutions of the dictatorship, whilst to halt production was considered a crime.

From 1948 the hope of a swift end to the dictatorship vanished and, with a hardening of repression, the labour protests fizzled out. The rejection and unease continued, however, often expressed through disputes between individual workers and the company, with workers taking their grievances to the state's Labour Tribunals.[16] In the decade of the 1940s the workers also learnt collectively to use the Francoist labour institutions and the OSE to defend their interests. Hence, complaints, often provoked by the employers' violation of labour legislation (even though it was enormously stacked in their favour), were presented before Vertical Syndicates and before the Labour Tribunals. The workers, it is important to note, used the OSE not to demand but to complain. Their use of the OSE, therefore, essentially represented a defence mechanism, and when they believed they could take more offensive action, as was the case in the later stages of the Second World War, they mobilized outside the legislative framework and organisms of the Francoist Syndicates. This duality of complaint/demand, and defensive/offensive actions is at the heart of the relationship between the working class, which retained a memory of the class organizations and great social struggles prior to Francoism, and Francoist legality and institutions.

From 1947, in some large enterprises, workers independent of the OSE hierarchy or members of clandestine worker organizations presented themselves and

were elected to the position of shop stewards (*enlaces sindicales*). These posts were created in 1944, with the result that the *enlaces* became the only representatives directly elected by all the workforce of each firm within the structure of the OSE. However, they had limited functions, which in any case were not to represent workers' interests but to collaborate in the necessarily harmonious relations between workers and employers. Whereas in some firms workers opted early for the opportunist usage of this elective level within the OSE, in many others worker rejection was expressed through the boycott of union elections, or the humorous vote in favour of famous personalities, such as artists and football players. This tendency notwithstanding, the tactic of using union representatives within the OSE was adopted by the Communist PSUC in 1948. It was to be a success, showing itself to be an effective way of encouraging affiliation and strengthening of the party. At the same time, Catholic militants in the Hermandad Obrera de Acción Católica (HOAC), an organization which was created in 1946 initially to evangelize the working class, but which soon became committed to the defence of worker interests, also participated in the electoral process of the OSE.

Simultaneously the PSUC and other workers' organizations, especially the CNT, made efforts, with a limited degree of success, to consolidate clandestine groups in Barcelona. However, they paid a high price in terms of repression – arrest, prison and executions – and had very little room for manoeuvre until 1944. The end of the Second World War gave a notable boost to the anti-Francoist organizations and actions. The Barcelona federation of the CNT managed to reorganize fourteen unions and attain the figure of 15,000 members by December 1946. It also published its mouthpiece, *Solidaridad Obrera*, regularly. However, as in the case of the worker protest movement, the loss of hope in the downfall of Francoism brought about, from 1948 onwards, the increasing passivity or extinction of the most active opposition groups. The anti-Francoist opposition's isolation, even in the period 1945–7, also contributed to its crisis, exacerbated because it found it difficult to come to terms with the vastly altered internal and international context. Fear, desperation and hunger limited worker resistance, while internationally the onset of the Cold War led to the acceptance of the Franco regime by the Western powers. In these circumstances the anarchists' violent struggle against the authorities and the Socialists' reliance on Allied intervention proved counterproductive. Only the PSUC managed to survive, by accepting that the Civil War was at an end and recognising that a new policy was needed, based on a wide anti-dictatorial front and the peaceful mobilization of the population; in so doing, it laid the foundation for a long-term strategy which would allow it to become the linchpin of anti-Francoist agitation in Catalonia.[17]

Continuities and change in the 1950s

The early 1950s brought growing popular discontent concerning the persistence of scarcities and restrictions of all kinds, with real wages still well below pre-war levels. The first and most striking expression of this discontent manifested itself

at the start of March 1951 with the mass boycott of the Barcelona trams. This forced the Government to abandon a rise in fares, which in any case were notably higher than those of the trams in Madrid.[18] The protest was massively supported, and had a popular and semi-spontaneous character which surprised and alarmed the Barcelona Francoist authorities. Catholics, anti-Francoist groups and even some Falangists took part in this campaign, but its mass following is only explicable in terms of the deep discontent felt by the population, the generalized sense of outrage, and the minimal risk of an action of this kind. The success of the boycott encouraged the continuation of protest actions. They culminated in a general strike, proclaimed by a meeting of *enlaces* in which the leadership of the Barcelona OSE was outnumbered and lost control, to demand the release of those detained during the boycott and a halt to the rise in the cost of living. The strikes of 1951 remained firmly fixed in the memory of Barcelona workers and became a point of reference for the labour movement and specifically for the anti-Francoist opposition. Moreover, by highlighting popular discontent the protest was also of importance in encouraging the first significant liberalization of Francoist economic policy from July of the same year.

Throughout the 1950s there were a number of other changes which conditioned the evolution of the working-class and labour movement in Barcelona. There were changes in the composition of the working class, with the incorporation into the workforce of young people who had not lived through the Civil War and who might not even have any memories of the hardest years of the post-war period. At the same time, the economic growth which took place from the beginning of the decade provoked an influx of non-Catalan immigrant workers into Barcelona and the surrounding areas – in the majority of cases living in very precarious conditions, in caves or huts, apartments or overcrowded flats. In addition, action in favour of the working class was pioneered by Catholic activists linked to the HOAC and the Juventud Obrera Católica (JOC), and there were timid but important changes in attitudes within the Church hierarchy, which until then had fully identified itself with the dictatorship. This was especially the case of young priests who began to open the doors of the Church to workers active in the protest movements. Finally, there was a series of important normative and institutional changes in worker legislation. From 1953 factory works committees (*jurados de empresa*) were set up. These were bodies presided over by the employer and formed by spokespersons elected directly by the workers.[19] Then, in 1958, as part of the further economic liberalization of the regime, the Law of Collective Agreements was approved, through which salaries and conditions were fixed by agreement between representatives of workers and employers within each union.

In the years following the strike of 1951, and in the context of these changes, in the larger firms of Barcelona and in a few industrial cities on its periphery, groups of workers affiliated to the PSUC and the Christian HOAC and JOC began to coalesce. These groups were generally composed of young people – some working as apprentices – who had recently been incorporated into the world of work, and who were much less conditioned than the older generations

by the trauma of the war, but who were also ignorant of prior union and political traditions. These groups constituted the driving force behind the growth of a new labour movement. It was characterized by several elements. First, it used the Official Syndicates, fundamentally through participation in the election of shop stewards and works committees. Second, it put forward very elemental demands, shared by the majority of the workforce, thereby permitting the achievement of small victories which in turn made it possible to overcome fear and demoralization. Finally, it habitually worked through existing legal channels to the limits of their possibilities. At the same time, however, actions beyond them were not rejected. Hence commissions were formed, directly elected by the workers, to put forward complaints or demands, which melted away once their purpose had been achieved.[20]

From the first months of 1956 up to the spring of 1958 the actions of these groups of worker activists – spurred on by the increasing worker discontent due to the maintenance of harsh living conditions and further aggravated by important price rises in basic necessities – contributed decisively to the appearance of a protest movement of considerable dimensions. Thus, in April 1956 the workers of the great textile and steel mills of Barcelona went on strike. The authorities reacted with speed, ordering the closure of factories and detaining the strikers. Important worker protests also took place in other industrial areas in Spain, forcing the Government to take action, but their combination of repressive measures and wage concessions was insufficient to neutralize labour protest, which continued throughout 1957. In January, additionally, another boycott of the Barcelona trams was launched. Then, in a climate of growing worker militancy, unofficial candidates were victorious in union elections in some of the larger enterprises. In this atmosphere of social tension strikes by Asturian miners stimulated a new strike movement in the great firms of Barcelona in March 1958, provoking a harsh repression with the detention of several hundred workers and subjection of a group of Communist affiliates to a war tribunal.

The strikes of March 1958 represented the culmination of a phase of cautious union activity led by Communists and Catholics of the HOAC and JOC. Their success, however, provoked such a wave of repression that their organizations were severely weakened. In this situation it is understandable that the one-day strike, the so-called 'day of national reconciliation', called for by the PSUC and PCE in May 1958 was an absolute failure. The 'peaceful national strike' called by Communist and Socialist groups in the following year suffered a similar fate. Both setbacks demonstrated, on the one hand, the errors of perception of the leaders of the anti-Francoist organizations and, on the other, that the workers would not undertake actions called for by the political leadership that were divorced from concrete demands over living and working conditions and that were, moreover, extremely dangerous and unlikely to be successful. Nevertheless, the labour agitation of 1956–8 in Barcelona and elsewhere contributed decisively to forcing the authorities to undertake further major economic liberalization of the regime in order to secure its survival. This was in turn to open a new phase in the life of Spanish society.

Economic growth and social change, 1960–73

During the decade of the 1950s, at the height of the Cold War, the Franco regime obtained international recognition, especially after 1953 when it signed both military and economic agreements with the United States. Thereafter, the availability of foreign currency allowed a rise in imports which spurred internal production with the result that, for the first time since the Civil War, macroeconomic variables – national income, income per capita, production per capita – regained their pre-war levels.

However, by the mid-1950s the Spanish economy again found itself in crisis as a result of the contradictory effects of some of the liberalizing measures taken, which had led to the exhaustion of foreign currency reserves. This situation contrasted with that of most of western Europe, where continuous economic growth was making possible an unparalleled rise in the standard of living of its citizens. Thus, in the middle of the 1950s the economic crisis, worker conflicts, and the first student mobilizations made the Francoist regime realize it was politically necessary to change its economic policy as economic failure threatened to erode its social base and with it the regime itself. To confront this need, the regime further liberalized the country's economy with the objective of reintegrating Spain into the western capitalist economy in order to take advantage of the rapid growth that the developed nations were enjoying. It was these measures which were to be at the root of the dramatic economic development of the 1960s.

Among the essential elements of this transformation, and crucial to the formation of a new working class and labour movement, was the rapid transfer of workers from agriculture to industry and services. These last two sectors grew rapidly in several regions, especially in Catalonia, Madrid, the Basque Country and Valencia. This revitalization of the migratory current was a socio-economic factor of the first magnitude which profoundly affected Catalan society at all levels. In Catalonia, the positive migratory balance has been a distinctive characteristic throughout much of the twentieth century: economic growth and a low birth rate has stimulated the arrival of a massive number of workers from other corners of the peninsula. The Civil War briefly interrupted this flow, but from 1947 immigration to the Catalan industrial cities, concentrated mainly in the province of Barcelona, was once again renewed. Thereafter, until 1975, immigration was the basis of Catalan demographic growth, as can be appreciated in Table 10.1. In this short space of time nearly a million and a half people arrived from different parts of the peninsula, largely from the rural areas of southern Spain, especially from Andalusia (approximately 50 per cent of the total). This signified an important change with respect to the pre-war situation, when the largest group of migrants came from the Mediterranean Levant (See Chapters Two, Four and Five).

This extraordinary demographic growth was accompanied by a process of population concentration. In 1950 the inhabitants of the province of Barcelona made up 68.9 per cent of the Catalan total, but by 1975 this had leapt up to 77.4 per cent. Within the province of Barcelona population concentration was

Table 10.1 Catalan population growth, 1951–75

Years	*Natural growth*	*Migratory balance*	*Total growth*
1951–5	93,994	199,877	293,871
1956–60	151,598	239,997	391,595
1961–5	213,466	354,162	567,628
1966–70	262,880	366,280	629,160
1971–5	308,393	231,831	540,224

Source: A. Cabre and I. Pujades, 'La Població: immigració i la explosió demogràfica', in *Història econòmica de la Catalunya Contemporànea,* vol. 4, Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana, Barcelona, 1988.

especially dramatic in the industrial areas (*comarques*) of the Barcelonès (outside the city of Barcelona), Baix Llobregat and Vallès Occidental, but was less pronounced in the city of Barcelona itself. Thus, while population growth in Barcelona decelerated from 1.8 per cent between 1950 and 1960 to 1.33 per cent between 1960 and 1970, in the other twenty-six municipalities which from 1974 made up, along with the capital, the Barcelona Metropolitan Corporation (all those within the Barcelonès *comarca* and those nearest the Barcelona municipality from the other two *comarques*) grew by 5.85 per cent and 8.09 per cent respectively (see Figure 10.1).[21]

Demographic concentration corresponded to productive location. In the municipalities and *comarques* around Barcelona, especially the Baix Llobregat, the Vallès Occidental and the important industrial towns of Sabadell and Terrassa, which were to form an urban continuum, industrialization was intense in this period, attracting hundreds of thousands of migrants.[22] This reflected the overwhelming degree to which Barcelona's economic development was based on its industrial sector. This is indicated by data for active population which show that throughout the 1960s over 50 per cent of the active population in the province of Barcelona worked in industry and construction.[23]

However, the municipality of Barcelona was to de-industrialize because of the movement of a significant number of factories to those municipalities above mentioned where ground rents were cheaper.[24] Thus, in Barcelona, there was a progressive fall in the relative importance of industrial workers in the active population; in 1965 it was 32.6 per cent, but by 1978 it had dropped to 25.1 per cent. This fall was made up for by a rise in the number of office workers and workers of low or intermediate qualifications in service or administrative sectors. As a result, by the 1970s there were a similar number of service and administrative as of industrial workers in the city. This great diversification within the working classes would influence the characteristics of the labour movement in Barcelona, as fragmentation and the heterogeneity of the problems faced made it more difficult for activists to achieve a generalized mobilization of the labour force (see also Chapter Twelve).

Along with rapid growth the Catalan industrial sector was to undergo considerable restructuring during the decade. This was in part reflected in the evolution of the industrial population classified by sector (see Table 10.2). Whilst

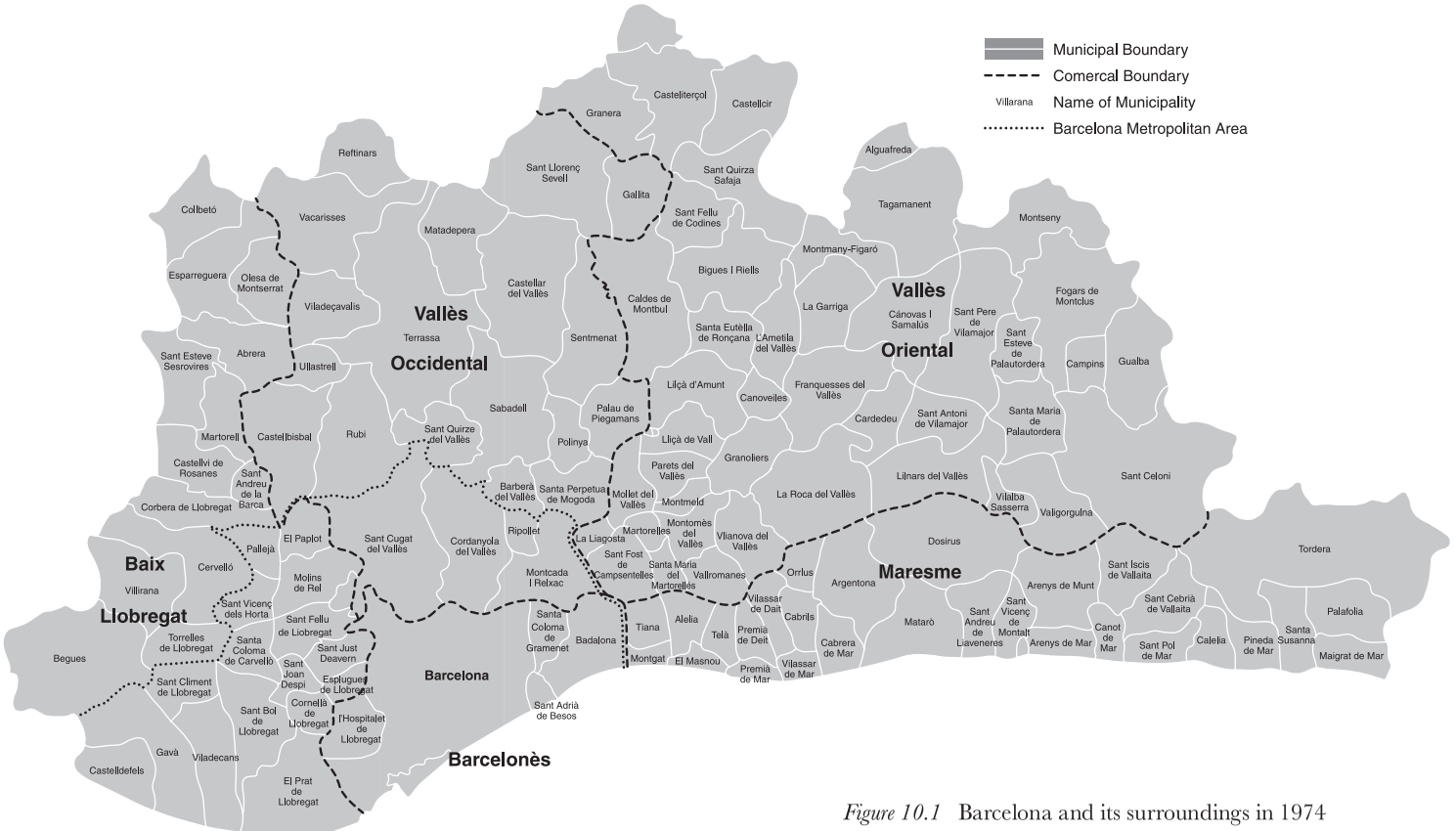

Figure 10.1 Barcelona and its surroundings in 1974

Table 10.2 Growth of industrial population classified by sector (workers affiliated to the Social Security Department in Barcelona Province), 1962–71

Sector	*1962*	*1971*	*% change (1962=100)*
Mining and quarrying	11,159	13,057	117
Food industries	28,067	50,978	182
Textile industries	228,065	247,485	108
Footwear, leather and clothing	20,138	45,602	226
Wood industries	19,530	33,754	173
Paper and graphic arts	26,198	40,785	156
Chemical industry	58,697	79,147	135
Metal and transformers	169,768	238,272	140
Construction	108,298	224,877	208
Electricity, gas, water, sewage	13,001	15,034	116
Total	682,921	988,991	145

Source: *Cataluña en Cifras*, Consorci d'informació i documentació de Catalunya, Barcelona, 1973, p. 39.

traditional industry represented by textiles hardly grew, the importance of the highly labour-intensive construction industry increased significantly. Employment in the steel and metallurgical industries also grew, but because of rapid technical innovation this did not match the rise in the industry's economic weight. In global terms, although with percentile variations throughout the period, metal, textiles and construction occupied more than 70 per cent of the industrial workforce. The first of these industries was the motor of the new Catalan labour movement.

The restructuring of Catalan industry was also accompanied by a process of homogenization and de-skilling that was a result of transformations within the production process. New industrial technology accompanied by conveyor-belt production did not require highly qualified workers, and as a consequence the divisions between the skilled and unskilled were reduced, in part by the rapid growth of a new intermediary category of 'specialists' (or, to use the English term, semi-skilled workers). The low skills required by the new technology were of great benefit to employers given that, in the context of expansion of the 1960s and 1970s, there was a plentiful supply of unskilled labour migrating from rural areas, but an insufficient number of skilled workers. These skilled workers were either of local origin or had arrived during a previous wave of migration, and they were able to take advantage of the economic boom to opt for better paid activities. This process of social ascent of the indigenous workers had as its consequence that in the Barcelona of the 1960s and 1970s the industrial working class was largely composed of recently arrived immigrants, a fact which doubtless conditioned the attitudes of the workers, both in the context of the workplace and the community.[25]

To put in context the changes lived through by the Barcelona workers, reference must be made to the rise of the purchasing power taking place in the 1960s

and 1970s. According to the Barcelona City Council, per capita income in the city doubled between 1960 to 1977. However, the rise in purchasing power was in large measure a consequence of the intensification of work. Apart from the role played by labour militancy in securing rising incomes, a number of factors were involved. In the first place, family incomes grew due to a rise in the number of economically active family members, as the great demand for labour allowed several family members to get permanent jobs. Second, these years saw a lengthening and intensification of the working day. An important element in workers' overall wage was overtime and production bonuses, and, in many cases, other jobs (*pluriempleo*). Under Francoism, before 1974 the maximum legal working week was fixed at forty-eight hours, but the real working week was considerably longer. A study conducted towards the end of the 1960s indicated that over half of Barcelona's workers had a working week of over fifty-five hours, mostly in their own firms, but an important proportion in another firm (over 35 per cent of those aged between 35 and 45, over 25 per cent of those between 25 and 55).[26] Only those with limited family commitments could afford to free themselves from such an exhausting schedule, as, without this supplementary income, a working family could not save enough to purchase a minimum of consumer durables and a small flat – the only option given the lack of rented accommodation.

Thus the increase in worker incomes fuelled the demand for consumer durables that sustained and stimulated industrial production. Most of the population changed its way of life and consumption patterns, especially those who had migrated from rural to urban areas. However, this change was far from idyllic in the conditions in the peripheral suburbs, which were built under the management of property speculators, and which in many cases lacked minimum basic services. This deprivation was to be at the root of the important neighbourhood-based militancy which grew up from the early 1970s (see Chapter Eleven).

Labour militancy and union organization, 1960–75

The social and economic transformation which the country underwent from the 1960s was accompanied by a rise in labour conflicts. The liberalization of economic policy made substantial changes in labour policy essential. These were embodied in the 1958 Law of Collective Agreements, which ended the long period during which wages and working conditions were fixed by the Government, and made them the object of negotiation between employers and employees.

Some sociological studies have seen the implementation of the Law of Collective Agreements as the beginning of a process of collective bargaining in Spain almost on the model of other western European countries. Nothing could be further from the truth. The collective agreements were negotiated within the OSE by commissions made up of representatives of employers and employees, but, as happened in all spheres of vertical unionism, representation of employers

and workers was radically unequal. The employers controlled all the structures of business representation in each productive sector without political interference, but it was nearly impossible for workers to participate in the upper echelons of the OSE bargaining machinery. This meant that some 'labour negotiators' came from the Falangist bureaucracy and, as a result, lacked representative legitimacy. Aside from this radical imbalance in representation, we must also bear in mind the continuous government interventions, which undermined wage settlements. From 1962 compulsory arbitration was introduced in cases of disagreement between representatives of capital and labour, and was until 1974 consistently used to favour the employers' position. Similarly, from 1965 maximum wage increases were fixed[27] and had to be observed because collective agreements had no legal validity until ratified by the Ministry of Labour.

Thus workers had to confront a set of adverse circumstances which obstructed the attainment of substantial improvements in their working conditions. In this context, they tended to radicalize their stance, because despite the repressive costs they incurred (strikes were illegal), they had learnt from experience that only by putting on pressure through mobilization could they obtain positive results. The breadth of such mobilizations decisively influenced the growth of labour organization from the 1960s, especially during the final five years of the Franco regime. In Barcelona, unlike the Basque Country or Asturias, workers' organization was almost synonymous with the so-called Comisiones Obreras (CC OO); the presence of the Socialist UGT and the Unión Sindical Obrera (USO – an organization which grew out of Christian socialist groups) was both limited and unevenly distributed. Between 1964 and 1976 CC OO became the primary instrument for the active and increasingly large minority of workers who looked to defend the socio-economic and political interests of the working class. But for large sectors of labour, CC OO also became an instrument of political socialization. It became a recruiting ground for the anti-Francoist parties, especially the PSUC, and a channel for the diffusion of the demands and proposals of anti-Francoist groups. Hence from 1971 it played a decisive role in the Assemblea de Catalunya, the most important unitary organization of the Francoist opposition, amongst whose demands were to be found, together with liberty, amnesty and an autonomy statute for Catalonia, 'the effective access of the people to economic and political power'.[28]

Unlike the process that brought about the birth of the CC OO in Madrid, Asturias or the Basque Country,[29] the central Barcelona Comisión Obrera grew out of various centres of labour activity. The creation of the first 'worker commission' took place in Barcelona on 20 November 1964 in the church of Sant Medir, after various preliminary meetings, the majority of which were held in the church of Sant Miquel in Cornellà del Llobregat. Some 300 workers in metal, textiles, construction, chemicals, graphic arts, woodworking and banking participated. Some were *enlaces*, others not, and the whole range of the leftist opposition to the regime was represented.

From the first the leaders tried to push out the boundaries of Francoist

legality. Hence they employed the tactic of open protest. For example, immediately after the meeting at Sant Medir a document was elaborated which was signed by 9000 workers, headed by the members of the Central Comisión Obrera – five PSUC militants, one from HOAC, one from Acción Católica Obrera (ACO), the workers' section within Acción Católica, and an independent – addressed to the National Syndical Delegate, in which they explained and justified their demands, and simultaneously denounced the lack of freedom: 'Without union freedom there can be no legitimate defence of the interests of workers,' the document stated. It also pointed out the contradiction between the universal declaration of human rights and the accords of the International Labour Organization on freedom for trade unions on the one hand, and Spanish legislation on the other. Until an adequate legislative framework was elaborated, the document argued, 'Comisiones Obreras which have spontaneously been created at or above the level of the factory' should be accepted as 'the authentic mouthpiece of the workers, without any kind of political interference'. Furthermore, it called for the right to strike, a bar on the entrance of police into the workplace, and for an end to violent repression of peaceful demonstrations.[30]

The CC OO appeared in a context in which the leaders of official syndicalism were immersed in an ambitious operation to revitalize the OSE. One of the ways they attempted to do this was by strengthening the mechanisms of participation within the Syndicates. The key test of this operation was the union elections of 1966, with the hierarchy's slogan 'Vote for the Best' insinuating that there was no obstacle or restriction on unofficial candidates. However, the new verticalist strategy in fact made possible the growth of independent labour organization. CC OO activists organized a large number of meetings and conferences, elaborated programmes including labour's most important political demands, such as union freedom and the right to strike, and put forward their own candidates. With high voter participation the candidates sponsored by the CC OO obtained important successes. This provoked unease within the Barcelona corporatist establishment, and obliged it rapidly to manoeuvre to avoid the loss of control of the Unión de Técnicos y Trabajadores (Union of Workers and Technicians).[31]

Once the public activity of labour activists appeared overwhelming, official perceptions that the OSE leadership might lose control ended tolerance. In March 1967 the Supreme Court declared the CC OOs illegal, considering them 'a branch of the Communist Party'. As a result repression, both from the police and employers, fell upon its activists, who were easily identified as they had acted openly. From then on expansion of the organization proceeded at slower pace. Nevertheless, growth was possible because a spiral had been set in motion by which conflict aided the growth of labour organization which in turn spurred worker mobilization. Moreover, in the 1970s the atmosphere of protest extended to white-collar groups, such as the banking sector, health workers and teachers, who until then had had no experience of union action. This extension of protest to social groups which in great measure had previously identified strikes with blue overalls broadened anti-Francoist attitudes.

This spiral – a rise in militancy, growth and extension of labour organization, and resulting new worker mobilizations – did not, however, indicate the existence of an important organizational structure. CC OO was a socio-political movement, not an organization whose diverse functions were neatly defined. This was a rational option for two reasons. On the one hand, the activists wished to act openly and so they had to confront permanent repression. On the other hand, they had to overcome the suspicion of any 'political' organization that Franco's regime had instilled in an important sector of the Spanish population, evidently including the working population. The CC OO activists had in these circumstances to remain in close contact with the rest of the workforce, and to back the demands and calls for mobilization advanced in the workers' assemblies in order to obtain the majority support of the workers, and in this way confront the hostile institutional machinery.

This process heightened amongst the majority of workers the perception that the assembly was the supreme mechanism and that the labour organizations' activists acted as delegates not as representatives of the majority. This served to increase popular backing for the activists, but did not lead to the growth of an important organization. Even within the largest factories there was for a long time an imbalance between the mobilizing capacity and organizational structure of CC OO, while in many small and middle-sized firms the organization as such only functioned during conflicts. Though this question has not yet been analysed fully, it is possible that the suspicion amongst Barcelona workers of hierarchical well-defined organizations stems from the presence of the anarcho-syndicalist tradition in Catalonia and Andalusia.

Table 10.3 indicates the evolution of labour disputes from 1966. It shows the spectacular increase in strikes from the beginning of the 1970s. All the evidence suggests that conflicts arose primarily from labour demands related especially to wages and working conditions or disagreement with employers concerning bonuses, productivity and timekeeping. However, an important proportion of the

Table 10.3 Strikes in the Province of Barcelona, 1966–76

Year	*Strikes*	*Strikers*	*Hours Lost*
1966	16	13,252	125,782
1967	34	14,762	73,350
1968	54	11,391	58,987
1969	65	16,060	274,400
1970	251	72,228	2,367,700
1971	239	119,332	3,971,700
1972	221	78,461	1,186,121
1973	248	167,613	1,738,644
1974	255	199,448	5,588,357
1975	169	116,095	2,494,692
1976	399	695,037	19,839,906

Source: Calculated from OSE Vicesecretaria de Ordenación Social, *Conflictos laborales y delegación provincial de sindicatos de Barcelona, memoria de actividades.*

conflicts became radicalized because protests required stoppages to be effective, and strikers then suffered employer and police repression. With great frequency the firms involved took advantage of the conflicts to sanction or dismiss those workers they found difficult. It was then that workers radicalized their position in solidarity with those punished, leading to the possibility that the conflict would extend to other firms. It was therefore common for strikes which were initially the result of economic demands to escalate into what the Ministry of Labour referred to as 'socio-political conflicts'.

This process became even more intense in the 1970s. The first years of the decade saw a radicalization of protest action within large firms where labour's capacity to act had grown considerably. In this respect the case of the car firm SEAT is especially important. In October 1971 the police entered the factory to expel striking workers, leading to the death of one worker and several injuries. From this time SEAT entered a process which has been labelled 'continuous conflict', which was maintained, although with varying degrees of intensity, until the end of the dictatorship in 1975.[32] During these years actions of solidarity with SEAT and support by SEAT workers for other labour conflicts constituted a typical element of labour protest in the Barcelona industrial area. SEAT, which employed nearly 30,000 workers, was during the early 1970s at the forefront of the Barcelona labour movement, but workers in other important metallurgical firms still to be found in the municipality of Barcelona, such as La Maquinista Terrestre y Marítima, Hispano Olivetti, Macosa and Pegaso, followed a similar line of action.

This radicalization was accompanied by a geographical extension of worker mobilization throughout all the industrial municipalities, and especially in the Baix Llobregat and the Vallès Occidental, with a consequent expansion of workers' organizations and of solidarity movements and anti-Francoist attitudes. It was in this context that general strikes of a political nature, such as those in protest at the trial of the ETA leadership in Burgos and 'trial 1001' against the imprisoned leadership of CC OO, acquired greater significance. The extension of labour organization and the linking of labour disputes with the wider political system led demands to take on a greater socio-political character. Thus, economic demands were increasingly accompanied by calls for the legalization of independent unions, the right to strike, and the re-employment of sacked workers.

The growth of labour conflict and the activism of CC OO finally provoked in 1975 the collapse of the Vertical Syndicates. When in the spring of that year union elections were called, labour militants expressed their determination to 'politically and physically assault the bastions of the Vertical Union; an assault that could be definitive, destroying this Vertical Union, which has been an instrument in the interest of employers and a spearhead of the fascist regime in its repression and exploitation of the working class'.[33] The 'unitarian and democratic' candidacies sponsored by the CC OO, in some cases in collaboration with USO, were successful across the board, and the perception of the qualitative change encouraged a permanent mobilization, which was further favoured by

the first signs of an economic crisis. The election results had an extraordinary impact, as much at the heart of the regime as within opposition ranks, an impact that some authors have subsequently largely overlooked, with the result that they have underestimated the importance of the popular classes in the attainment of democracy.

The labour movement and the anti-Francoist opposition

The last aspect we need to consider is the influence of the various political organizations on the Barcelona labour movement. The presence of Catholic militants in the first Comisiones Obreras progressively declined. Nevertheless, members of the Catholic organizations also constituted the nucleus of USO, a clandestine union with a presence in certain sectors such as banking.

In the final years of the 1960s and at the beginning of the 1970s there was also an extraordinary growth in far left groupings, born in the heat of the Third World national liberation movements, the Paris Spring and China's Cultural Revolution. These groups, amongst which the Front Obrer de Catalunya (FOC) and Bandera Roja were especially important in the 1960s, followed by other groups of a Maoist and Trotskyist character in the 1970s, achieved – locally and sectorally – an appreciable influence. They found it difficult to consolidate this presence, but nevertheless provided stiff competition to the PSUC, which they labelled 'reformist'. They saw their struggle as anti-capitalist, and considered the end of the dictatorship as only the first step in the disappearance of the bourgeois social order. However, the Franco years saw the organizational and political eclipse of the anarchist groups. The 1950s new labour movement led by a new generation was cut off from the political and cultural heritage of the pre-war years. Furthermore, the CNT proved unable to renew itself and adapt to the socio-economic and cultural changes the country underwent under the Franco regime. Its militants got older, the organization suffered from deep divisions, and it went into rapid decline.

The PSUC was the most active and influential force among the innumerable groups and factions into which the anti-Francoist opposition was divided. Its political strategy was based upon the construction of a wide-ranging social and political alliance, aimed at overthrowing the dictatorship and establishing a democratic system (this proposed interclass alliance was at least partially forged from 1971 with the foundation of the Assemblea de Catalunya). Simultaneously, however, the party maintained its aim of a socialist egalitarian society; in general, it tried to keep a balance between sustained attacks on the dictatorship, the defence of its ideology, and broad popular participation in the anti-Francoist mobilizations. This strategy (to be known from the mid-1970s as Eurocommunism) of forging a 'historic compromise' between the anti-Francoist social classes and groups – along with the party's analysis of workers' political attitudes – led it to oppose the more radical options proposed by the far-leftist organizations, which called for an immediate socialist revolution and more

violent forms of struggle, because it believed the only effect would be to alienate wide sectors of the working class. At the same time, the PSUC presented itself as a national party and made a sustained effort to ensure that immigrant workers would assume Catalanist cultural and political demands as an integral part of their call for democratic change. In this respect the policy pursued by the PSUC was of key importance in preventing the opening up of political and cultural divisions between immigrant and Catalan workers. Its activists brought to the factories the basic demands of the Catalan Assembly – liberty, amnesty, an autonomy statute for Catalonia – which became the axis around which the mobilization of Catalan society for democratic change revolved.

We can thus affirm that the distinctive characteristics of the democratic transition in Catalonia partly stemmed from the leading role of the Assemblea de Catalunya, a civic movement of sizeable proportions made up of political parties, union organizations, neighbourhood associations and cultural groups – and in the articulation of which the PSUC played a key role – which managed to secure the acceptance by the majority of Catalan society of anti-Francoist demands.

Without doubt Barcelona, the great Spanish industrial centre of the twentieth century, lived through an extraordinary process of transformation from the 1960s. After twenty years during which workers had suffered political, industrial and cultural repression and the deterioration of living standards and working conditions, from this decade they became recipients and agents of change. They experienced the consequences of modernization, but they also became a transformative force in their attempt not to be marginalized from the benefits generated by economic growth. The workers, as a result, managed to increase their purchasing power, but only through mobilizations and through an increase in the intensity of work and lengthening of their working day.

From a political perspective it can also be stated that the workers' struggles contributed decisively to the weakening of the Franco regime because the peace it credited itself with was synonymous with the absence of conflicts. Yet during the 1960s, and especially in the 1970s, the regime was forced to coexist with continuous and at times intensive protests, the very repression of which contributed to their becoming more widespread and radicalized, a fact which in turn served to stimulate rejection of the dictatorship. Given this discontent and opposition, the regime was forced permanently to show its repressive face and this served to increase its illegitimacy. These protest movements were, at the same time, the major recruiting ground for anti-Francoist political organizations, the vast majority of which were situated to the left of the political spectrum. Hence, while the actions of the labour, neighbourhood and student movements, and of the anti-Francoist political groups which stimulated these movements and, simultaneously, recruited from them, were not by themselves enough to provoke the collapse of the dictatorship, they did decisively erode it, thereby making its continuation impossible.

Notes

1 See A. Reig Tapia, *Ideología e historia: sobre la represión franquista y la guerra civil*, Madrid, 1984; J. Fontana, 'Reflexiones sobre la naturaleza y las consecuencias del franquismo', in J. Fontana (ed.), *España bajo el franquismo*, Barcelona, 1986, pp. 9–38.
2 For Catalonia see J. M. Solé Sabaté, *La repressió franquista a Catalunya*, Barcelona, 1985.
3 See C. Molinero y P. Ysàs, 'El Nuevo Estado. Nous i vells instruments de dominació', in D. Plácido, et al., *El poder de l'Estat: Evolució, força o raó*, Reus, 1993, pp. 213–41.
4 C. Molinero y P. Ysàs, 'Patria, Justicia y Pan'. *Nivell de vida i condicions de treball a Catalunya 1939–1951*, Barcelona, 1985, pp. 93–107.
5 Its essence, according to the Law of Bases for Syndical Organization, was that 'the National Union Delegation of the Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS assumes the command of this community (of producers) and exercises its organizational functions through the National Syndicates and the National-Syndicalist Headquarters in the diverse territorial spheres', *Ley de Bases de la Organización Sindical*, 30 December 1940. On the OSE see M. Ludevid, *Cuarenta años de sindicato vertical*, Barcelona, 1976; M. A. Aparicio, *El sindicalismo vertical y la formación del Estado franquista*, Barcelona, 1980; R. Sánchez López and M. E. Nicolás Marín, 'Sindicalismo vertical franquista: la institucionalización de una antinomia (1939–1977)', in D. Ruiz (ed.), *Historia de Comisiones Obreras (1958–1988)*, Madrid, 1993, pp. 1–46.; C. Molinero and P. Ysàs, *Productores disciplinados y minorias subversivas. Clase obrera y conflictividad laboral en la España Franquista*, Madrid, 1998.
6 Circular no 64 de la Secretaría Nacional del Movimiento del 23 de agosto de 1939, cited by J. Mª Lorenzo Espinosa, 'Elecciones sindicales de postguerra en Vizcaya', in J. Tusell, A. Alted and A. Mateos (eds), *La oposición al Régimen de Franco*, Madrid, 1990, pp. 51–61. See also C. Molinero and P. Ysàs, 'Productores disciplinados: control y represión laboral durante el franquismo (1939–1958)', *Cuadernos de Relaciones Laborales*, no. 3, 1993, pp. 33–49.
7 *Ley de Reglamentaciones de Trabajo*, 16 October 1942.
8 *Reglamento de Régimen Interior de Maquinista Terrestre y Marítima S. A.*, 1948, p. 6.
9 See Molinero and Ysàs, *Patria, Justicia*, pp. 123–74.
10 See F. Barbagallo et al., *Franquisme. Sobre resistència i consens a Catalunya (1938–1959)*, Barcelona, 1990; B. de Riquer and J. B. Culla, 'El franquisme i la transició democràtica, 1939–1988', *Història de Catalunya*, dirigida por Pierre Vilar, vol. 7, Barcelona, 1989; C. Molinero and P. Ysàs, *El règim franquista. Feixisme, modernització i consens*, Vic (Barcelona), 1992.
11 *Archivo General de la Administración, Delegación Nacional de Sindicatos*, Circular no. 96 del 21 de octubre de 1940, Caja 16,404.
12 Riquer and Culla, *El franquisme*, pp. 141–2. At the same time, they also reported the effects of the difficult living conditions: 'The desire abounds for a red return…. The hostility continues towards our glorious Movimiento Nacional, caused in large part by the restrictions and privations imposed on us by the post-war [situation].'
13 Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, *Documentación del Gobierno Civil de Barcelona*, c. 844, Parte de Referendum de la Zona IV, 18 de julio de 1947.
14 See Barbagallo et al., *Franquisme*, pp. 117, 187–8; Molinero and Ysàs, *El règim franquista*, pp. 73–4.
15 L. Ferri, J. Muixí and E. Sanjuan, *Las huelgas contra Franco*, Barcelona, 1978; C. Molinero and P. Ysàs, *L'oposició antifeixista a Catalunya (1939–1950)*, Barcelona, 1981.
16 These Labour Tribunals were created in 1938 after the promulgation of the Labour Charter, which stated in its article VII, 'a new labour magistrature will be created, based on the principle that the judicial function corresponds to the state'.
17 Molinero and Ysàs, *L'oposició*; Harmut Heine, *La oposición política al franquismo*, Barcelona, 1983.

18 See F. Fanés, *La vaga de tramvies del 1951*, Barcelona, 1977; G. Ramos, 'Tranvias y conflictividad social en Barcelona (marzo de 1951). Actitudes políticas y sociales de una huelga mítica', *Historia Contemporánea*, no. 5, 1991, pp. 203–17.
19 The works committees were created by decree in 1947 to, 'make effective the collaboration between capital, technicians and the workforce'. However, their functioning was blocked for seven years because of distrust within Francoist governmental circles, and especially because of the frontal opposition of the employers, who saw them as dangerous tools of 'worker control'. See C. Molinero y P. Ysàs, *Els industrials catalans durant el franquisme*, Vic (Barcelona), 1991, pp. 70–3. Initially they operated in factories with over a thousand workers, though this threshold was gradually reduced over the following years.
20 C. Molinero and P. Ysàs, 'Comissions Obreres', in P. Gabriel et al., *Comissions Obreres de Catalunya 1964–1989. Una aportació a la història del moviment obrer*, Barcelona, 1989, pp. 31–80.
21 Various authors, 'Canvi econòmic durant la crisi a l'àrea metropolitana de Barcelona: una aproximació territorial', *Revista Econòmica de Catalunya*, número extra, 1989.
22 J. Hortalà, *El desarrollo industrial de Cataluña*, Barcelona, 1970.
23 51.6 per cent of the active population worked in industry and construction in 1960 and 51.3 per cent in 1971. See J. Alcaide, 'Algunes puntualitzacions sobre el desenvolupament socio-econòmic català', in *L'economia de Catalunya avui*, Barcelona, 1974, pp. 119, 122.
24 The urban policy of the Barcelona local authority, aimed at removing factories and low quality housing from the city, had a decisive impact in the move by much of the industrial base to the municipalities around Barcelona. See, for example, J. M. Alibés et al., *La Barcelona de Porcioles*, Barcelona, 1973; J, Borja et al., *La Gran Barcelona*, Madrid, 1972; F. Martí and E. Moreno, *Barcelona ¿a dónde vas?*, Barcelona, 1974.
25 Sebastian Balfour pays special attention to the relationship between migrant workers and the new labour movement. See *Dictatorship, Workers and the City: Labour in Greater Barcelona since 1939*, Oxford, 1989.
26 *Estudio sociológico sobre el trabajador y su medio en la ciudad de Barcelona*, Madrid, 1969, pp. 97–9, 118.
27 See I. Cruz and A. Serrano, 'Aproximación a la negociación colectiva como sistema de regulación de las condiciones de trabajo. Condicionamientos históricos, contenido, evolución y problemática en España 1958–1972', in J. Muñoz, S. Roldán and J. L. García Delgado, *La economía española 1972*, Madrid, 1973, pp. 219–37.
28 Report by the first session of the Assemblea de Catalunya, 7 November 1971.
29 See Ruiz (ed.), *Historia de Comisiones Obreras*.
30 Arxiu Històric de la Comissió Obrera Nacional de Catalunya (hereafter, AHCONC), *Comisión Obrera*, no. 2, February 1965.
31 The UTT were workers' and technicians' representatives within the OSE, and organized on a sectoral basis within each of the territorial divisions of the OSE. Its leaders were elected by *enlaces* in controlled elections that were repeatedly manipulated by the Falange leadership. Hence the occupation of these posts by anti-Francoist militants signified the growth of conflict within the higher echelons of the OSE.
32 See F. Miguelez, *SEAT. La empresa modelo del Régimen*, Barcelona, 1977.
33 AHCONC, *Lluita Obrera*, no. 17, 1975, p. 6.

11 The associational movement and popular mobilizations in L'Hospitalet

From the anti-Francoist struggle to democracy, 1960–80

Joan Camós and Clara C. Parramón

From the 1960s within Catalan society a wide-ranging protest movement independent of the structures of the regime began to develop. The democratic opposition set about constructing a common front which, in the following decade, would show a great capacity for mobilization. One of the key elements of this opposition movement, which has until now largely been overlooked, was the popular associations, which fought against the lack of public services, and which would play an important role in the erosion of the Francoist state apparatus.

The years of 'technocratic development (*desarrollismo*)' in the 1960s profoundly altered the physiognomy of Catalonia (see Chapter Ten), and radically transformed L'Hospitalet. Its town council is separate from that of Barcelona but it came to form part of its Metropolitan Area and also of the urban continuum (see Figure 11.1). The old neighbourhoods (*barrios*) in the centre – Santa Eulàlia and Collblanc-Torrassa – had industrialized from the 1920s (see Chapter Four and Figure 11.2). Then, during the 1960s, the town became the focus of a new wave of immigration which transformed it into a paradigm of the massive industrial and urban expansion of Francoist *desarrollismo*. Thus, while between 1940 and 1960 immigration exceeded emigration by 60,176, between 1960 and 1980 this surplus leapt up to 148,781, with the result that the population expanded from 51,249 inhabitants in 1940 to 295,074 in 1981, and that by this latter year only 49.6 per cent of the inhabitants had actually been born in Catalonia. It was during these years that the so-called new neighbourhoods of Pubilla Casas, La Florida, Can Serra, Sanfeliu, St. Josep, Bellvitge and Gornal were densely urbanized.

The location of L'Hospitalet on the borders of Barcelona is the key factor explaining this rapid growth. From the old town of L'Hospitalet to the centre of Barcelona the distance is only seven kilometres. During the 1950s there was still a great deal of agricultural land which could be urbanized, and so the town became an ideal location for the overspill of immigrants flooding into Barcelona.

In the 1950s this provoked the rapid spread of shanty dwellings (*barraquisme*), especially along the road to Madrid and on the many unurbanized open spaces.[1] On the highest ground of the city people set up home in caves dug out of the hills, and in Florida and Pubilla Casas, areas which had begun to urbanize

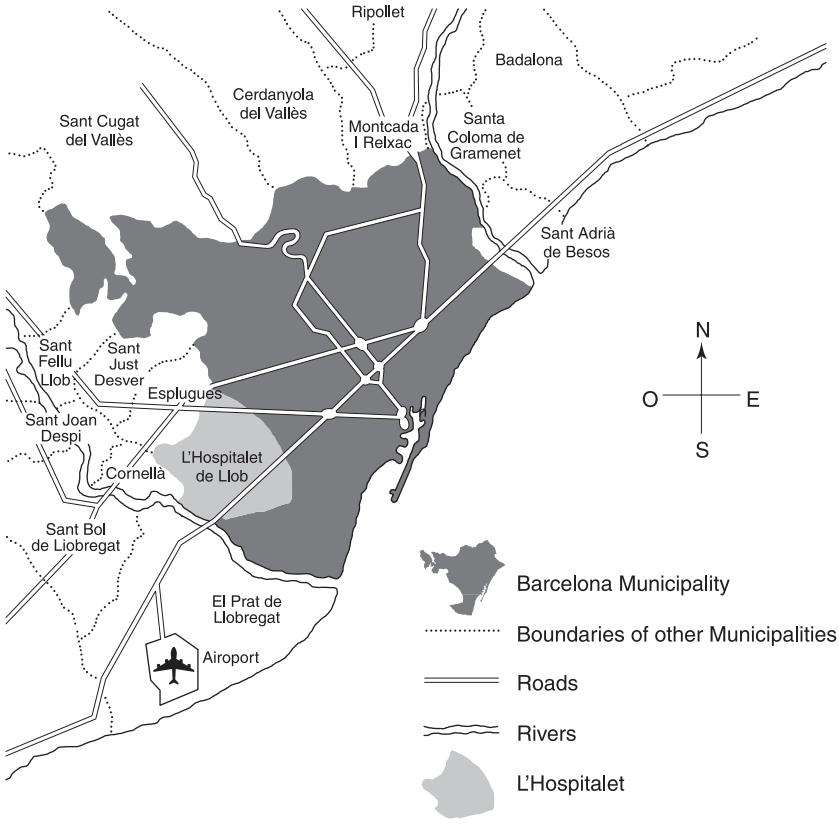

Figure 11.1 Position of L'Hospitalet with respect to the other municipalities surrounding Barcelona

during the Second Republic, they built their own homes. Practically the only tower blocks constructed by the regime during this period were 'El Caudillo', built in the neighbourhood of Collblanc-La Torassa, and 'Onésimo Redondo', put up in La Florida. In both cases the quality of the construction was appalling.

The 1960s, in contrast, were to see a building fever spread amongst contractors and real-estate agents, which rapidly led to the urbanization of the whole city. The result, especially under Mayor Matias España Muntadas (1962–73), was a frenzied wave of speculation which led population densities to rocket above legal limits, to the practical disappearance of space for public use, and to increasingly severe deficiencies in public services. Moreover, the Sectoral Plans (*planes parciales*) for the city's urbanization, elaborated between 1960 and 1975, sought simply to justify the status quo.

Within the political context of the 1960s and 1970s, in which the struggle against the Franco regime became increasingly broadly based, there developed

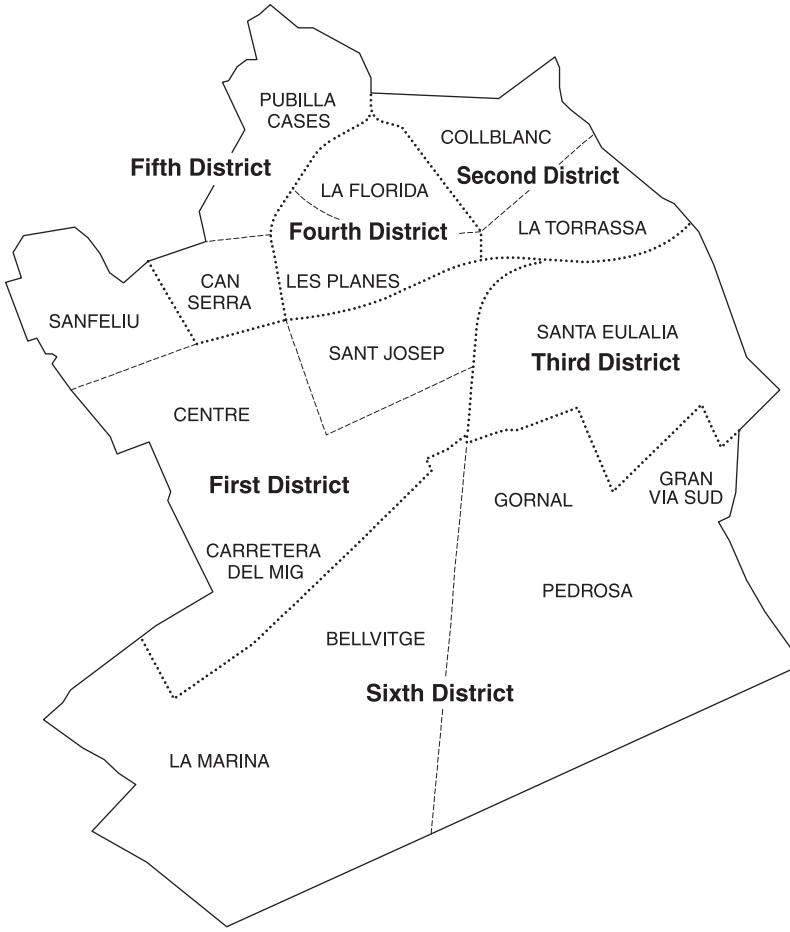

Figure 11.2 The neighbourhoods of L'Hospitalet

amongst the people of L'Hospitalet a growing awareness of their right to decent living conditions and a better urban landscape. From the early 1970s, there rapidly coalesced a movement of neighbourhood associations, joined subsequently by other associations, aimed at attaining improvements in public services and a commitment by the authorities to urban regeneration. The movement's goals, moreover, became intimately linked to the struggle for democratic local government.[2]

These neighbourhood associations (*associacions de veins*) were a new phenomenon, and through their demands and activities they were able to generate wider-ranging popular movements. Overall, the years from 1960 to 1975 saw the rise of a combative Associational Movement.[3] At first these associations were isolated and based on their own individual neighbourhood. However, from the

1970s, as we shall see, associations of the same type began to co-ordinate their actions, and these links were rapidly consolidated in the pursuit of common objectives. In a second period, during the transition to democracy in the second half of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, new associations were set up, and the associational and popular movement were consolidated. Sometimes this dynamic generated what may be referred to as a Citizens Movement which was able to mobilize wide sections of the population.[4] However, from the early 1980s the movement entered into crisis. It is the aim of this chapter to re-analyse, from a new perspective, the appearance, growth and crisis of the Associational Movement, and the role played by popular protest during this period in structuring new social realities and collective identities.

The antecedents of the Associational Movement

In L'Hospitalet, as in the rest of Catalonia, the Francoist victory and the brutal repression which followed signified a total break with the past, both with regard to cultural expression and labour organization.[5] Before the 1960s all the associations which had survived the Civil War were conservative and often under the tutelage of the local parish. In cultural or festive activities the use of Catalan was only permitted when it was presented as a expression of regionalism under the umbrella of Spanish patriotism. However, within the old neighbourhoods new hiking, artistic and cultural societies slowly emerged which were timidly critical of the Francoist status quo.

Then, in the 1960s, in the context of the rapid social transformations the town was undergoing, a broad range of new societies came into being, including sporting, cultural, recreational and ethnic associations. In the older neighbourhoods (L'Hospitalet Centre, Santa Eulàlia, Collblanc-Torrassa), in which there was an important native Catalan population, these new associations were sometimes founded on the initiative of youngsters, who were critical of the unrepresentative and reactionary associations of their elders, although some of the older associations were able to co-ordinate their activities with the new arrivals and later played an important role in the protest movements of the 1970s. Many of the cultural associations formed by Catalan natives, especially choral societies, at the same time often took up models developed within the Catalan cultural tradition from the turn of the century. On the other hand, immigrants within these old neighbourhoods did not in general become integrated within this associational milieu, but rather behaved in a fashion similar to immigrants within the 'new neighbourhoods'.

These new neighbourhoods grew massively in the 1960s and here the creation of new social and cultural relations could be based on a number of elements: immigration from the same rural area, the experience of finding new neighbours, a shared cultural heritage based on a common place of origin, the participation in religious practices within the new parish; it could even be the result of festivities organized by the Francoist authorities. In this milieu, there grew up a heterogeneous mix of associations, ranging from pigeon racing,

Francoist associations such as the 'heads of family', sporting clubs and flamenco circles, parish associations and cultural societies. They could also grow out of initiatives to collectively tackle basic problems such as the lack of running water or fraudulent house sales. In general these associations functioned in isolation and had no stable headquarters, often meeting in the local bar. They also initiated timid and often infrequent contacts with the local authorities in order to discuss participation in the cultural and sporting programmes and festivities organized by the town council. These initiatives provided the opportunity for a process of negotiation between the associations and the local authorities. Similar contacts could also be seen within the older neighbourhoods, though in this case the members had considerably greater experience.

In reality in the 1960s in the new neighbourhoods, social relations were as yet very imperfectly articulated and the result was weak associations that were not co-ordinated and took in only a minority of the inhabitants. These were neighbourhoods formed by immigrants who were undergoing a difficult process of settlement and adaptation to a new environment. However, within this context the immigrant collectives were able to reconstruct social relations and symbolic universes in order to buttress the redefinition of individual and collective identities inherent in all migratory processes. As part of this reconstruction of identity there would emerge, amongst other elements, a new territorial ascription: that of the neighbourhood. This was the immediate space within which the reconstruction of a new life was condensed. And it was, at the same time, a life space in the social construction – and, indeed, on occasion, material construction – of which the immigrant population played a prominent part.

The fact that the new territories in which the immigrant population settled were relatively isolated from each other contributed to the symbolic delimitation of the various new neighbourhoods as territorial referents of collective identity. However, it was not until the 1970s that neighbourhood identities were densely constructed,[6] and in this process the neighbourhood associations were to play a key role. It was still the case that for some sporting associations and flamenco circles the neighbourhood was not yet an identitarian reference point. However, from their inception the local parishes were based on the neighbourhood and, as a result, associations which grew up under the wing of the parishes easily adopted this territorial ascription.

In the old neighbourhoods such identities were already well established. Yet associations with a sense of social purpose still did not exist. One or two in L'Hospitalet Centre might aspire to play such a role, but the practical will was lacking. However, the new associational models which were to characterize the 1970s also had an impact in the old neighbourhoods. During these years the inhabitants of both the old and new parts of town would present a united front.

The origins of the Associational Movement

The appearance and rapid growth of the Associational Movement in the 1970s, and the neighbourhood associations themselves, are frequently related to the

deficient objective conditions in the neighbourhoods and the role played by pre-existing clandestine opposition groups. However, without denying the importance of these factors, it is our contention that a fuller explanation of the movement's origins and its impact is necessarily more complex.

In the first place, in order to be able to demand improvements in the urban environment a degree of stability with regard to employment and housing was necessary. By the beginning of the 1970s large sectors of the working population were acquiring such stability, in particular with regard to home ownership. Second, during the 1960s the labour movement had begun to organize (see Chapter Ten), and the union struggles at the turn of the decade would prove, for wide sections of the working class, a training ground in which they became both politically aware and accustomed to making demands. In L'Hospitalet the closeness of the SEAT factory meant that the workers' struggles would have repercussions throughout the town. The conflicts in some factories and in the construction industry, in Barcelona, the Baix Llobregat and in L'Hospitalet itself, also had a powerful impact on the wider working population. The carretera del Mig, an area of small factories and workshops, was by the early 1970s the focus for demonstrations by workers in support of strikers. It proved possible to transfer this discovery of a new organizational capacity within the world of work to the neighbourhoods.[7]

The links between the two spheres were soon manifested. For example, during the strikes in the SEAT factory in 1971, in the neighbourhood of Pubilla Casas amongst others, money was collected for the strikers from the local residents and commerce on a house-to-house basis. Despite the general low standard of living such a strategy was successful. The collectors were trusted and the strikers' actions seen as representative of the interests of wider sections of the population.

At the same time, in order for an Associational Movement to appear in the neighbourhoods it was necessary for networks of social relations between individuals to grow up. These were already in place in the older neighbourhoods, but established patterns of communication were disrupted by the mass arrival of new immigrants, and the structuring of new collective relations came about only slowly and was not without tensions and conflicts. It was in Collblanc-Torrassa, an area urbanized as a result of the first wave of immigrants in the 1920s and 1930s, and which developed a strong tradition of labour organization in the 1930s, that the first neighbourhood association was founded in 1970.[8]

It was, however, in the newer neighbourhoods that neighbourhood associations grew rapidly in the early 1970s. We have already noted that in the 1960s social networks were rudimentary and this raises the question of which factors accelerated processes of collective interrelationship. Two elements seem particularly relevant. First, the urgent need to bring order to the neighbourhoods in construction, which were characterized by ferocious speculation, forced the local authorities to act by introducing 'revisions of the sectoral urbanistic plans'. The implementation of each of these plans, which often affected an entire neighbourhood, stimulated and extended protest, and thereby became a focus for diverse sectors of the population to express their needs and demands, and develop networks of personal relations, making possible the growth of associative practices.

Second, newly created neighbourhoods such as Bellvitge, Can Serra and, later, El Gornal were made up of massive tower blocks, and their homogeneity favoured the identification of a common set of problems amongst the residents. The tower blocks were occupied by large numbers of families and they were identical, based on three or four general patterns of interior structure. This mode of construction also made it possible for residents to appreciate their similar socio-economic status. At the same time personal communication between the residents was easy, the urban environment faced by them the same, and its deficiencies obvious to all.

It was within this broad context that the various social and political groupings active within the community helped organize the Associational Movement in the 1970s. From the early 1960s sectors of the Church broke with the Franco regime and began to back the emerging protest movements.[9] Accordingly in L'Hospitalet many parishes came to play a part in the expanding associational culture of their neighbourhoods, giving their support, providing meeting places and, in some cases, actively participating in the protests.

Of great importance as well was the major clandestine anti-Francoist opposition party in Catalonia, the PSUC. In the 1960s the PSUC had developed a strategy of 'conquering spaces of liberty' within the Francoist system, and in L'Hospitalet PSUC activists, along with members of other clandestine political parties (Trotskyists, Maoists, socialists, libertarians, etc.), pushed for the creation and legalization of the neighbourhood associations. Integrated within small clandestine groups ('cells' in the language of the time) they were able to meet to co-ordinate their activities, and then go on to organize neighbourhood commissions – inspired by the workers' commissions organized by CC OO – which were the clandestine beginnings of the future neighbourhood associations. Amongst the members were both religious radicals and secular leftists, who were often university students, radicalized by their experience in Barcelona University and later by the events of 1968 in France, and who wished to integrate into the neighbourhoods and stimulate the fight against the dictatorship. Relatively few were actually affiliated to any parties, but they played a key role in the emergence of a highly dynamic opposition culture in the city from the early 1970s.

From the Associational Movement to the Citizens Movement: the role of the neighbourhood associations

Against this backdrop the neighbourhood associations grew rapidly in number and strength, with the result that by 1974 all the neighbourhoods of the city had their grouping. They represented the organizational crystallization of the previous growth of interpersonal networks, which had made possible the rise of associative practices in order to tackle such problems as the lack of basic social provision or new, unwanted, urban development.

Typically the neighbourhood associations would originate in a meeting called within the bounds of Francoist legality. This would be accompanied by the oral transmission of the news throughout the estates via personal contact, and by this

means the specific demands behind the call would become widely disseminated. Frequently the local parishes provided a meeting place, and the possibility of discussing problems in such an environment served as an antidote to the deeply internalized fear within the community. During the meeting, from the safety of the audience, specific complaints were made, and this then stimulated further interventions on the question at hand. The meetings would finish with calls to action which would then be passed by word of mouth to an ever greater number of inhabitants within the neighbourhood. In this way the basis for the protest movement was laid.

From these or similar origins new networks of inter-personal relations were forged, which extended throughout the community. It became easier to disseminate information and organize new meetings. In this process natural leaders emerged, who either formed part of the initial group or were subsequently incorporated, and who became intermediaries for one or other sector of the community. As a result of the new personal contacts, friendships were born and feelings of solidarity grew, in turn stimulating other models of communal functioning and relations.

This rise of the Associational Movement also promoted amongst the inhabitants the development of a deep-seated individual and collective belief in the justice of their demands, which were internalized as an inalienable right of the collectivity which inhabited a specific territory. It was in this context that the identity of the new neighbourhoods forcefully emerged. In the older neighbourhoods the renewed strengthening of social networks reinforced the boundaries already 'naturalized' by their longer-standing inhabitants.

The sense of forming part of a neighbourhood is usually seen solely in urbanistic and geographical terms. However, the configuration of the Associational Movements brings out the importance of socio-cultural factors in the construction of space.[10] The neighbourhood associations were, as has been emphasized, set up with a specific territorial reference point in mind. And in this process the associations gave the term neighbour (*veí/na or vecino/a*) new meaning. It became not just a person who shared the same block of flats and who lived close by but referred to all those people with whom one also had demands in common. At the same time, the associations gave new strength to neighbourhood identities. Territories which outsiders might describe in pejorative terms became a source of pride. The inhabitants praised the aesthetics of their own neighbourhood, laying emphasis on such elements as the virtues of an urban landscape made up of tower blocks in comparison with a more heterogeneous environment, the wide range of shops, or the improvements made to streets and squares and the inter-personal relations they facilitated. In this social and identitarian construction of space, in the context of the agitation for improvements, particular points within the neighbourhood acquired an emblematic significance. Thus, for example, in the neighbourhood of Bellvitge, the *veins* managed to put a stop to the construction of more tower blocks, and called the space saved The Passage (the name by which it is still known today). Similarly in other neighbourhoods collective pressure resulted in the conquest of urban

spaces with the consequence that the territory was marked with the names of new squares and parks.

The neighbourhood associations have often been referred to as 'schools of democracy'.[11] This term should not, however, simply be restricted to their internal mode of operation. Taking decisions was not restricted to the members. The associations' committees took their proposals to an assembly, but it was the assembly which discussed them – along with other questions and demands raised by those present – and which finally reached an agreement. These methods were not in general the result of any pre-established assemblarist ideology, but grew out of the desire that all residents should feel a part of a common struggle. Sometimes, in the course of a neighbourhood meeting, different courses of action were proposed, and these could lead to disputes between the various political tendencies, which would put in jeopardy the necessary unity or could lead to the withdrawal of some inhabitants. Yet despite these difficulties it was because of this model that the associations could present themselves as representatives of the neighbourhood, at the same time as the new meaning of the term neighbour was being consolidated. Democracy and participation were synonymous, and seen as the path to intervention in the potential transformation of the neighbourhood.

Within the context of the struggle against the dictatorship, press reporters – who had to evade Francoist censorship – and a large number of professional people such as architects, urban planners and lawyers played an important role in providing the urban protest movements with technical assistance.[12] These professionals did not in general come from L'Hospitalet, but they showed themselves willing to co-ordinate their actions and use the attributions of their professional bodies (*Col·legis Professionals*) in order to support the alternative projects of the neighbourhood associations in the face of the Francoist administration. In a whole series of areas this voluntary technical assistance was essential because it gave the associations the necessary information regarding the problems the neighbourhood faced, and allowed them to develop alternative plans to those of the local administration. Thus the professionals made it possible for the associations to advance from defensive positions to take the initiative in planning.[13] The professionals accepted the inhabitants' right to take the decisions, while the neighbourhood associations used their advice to question the decisions of the local administration. This control exercised by the associations made it possible to conceive of the territories' urbanization as a collective decision-making process, not a task to be delegated to external agents.

The fact that neighbourhood associations began to take the initiative in urban planning also consolidated the sense of neighbourhood identity. The inhabitants' sense of the lived space being collective property was enhanced. They could dream of the transformations they would like to see in the territory and even make collective proposals in this respect. Indeed, the associations intervened decisively in the physiognomy of their neighbourhood, both to stop projects which would lead to a further deterioration of the urban environment, and in formulating proposals which the future democratic local administrations could

make their own. Their demands and struggles covered all areas of urban development and planning: housing, health and schooling, provision of parks, cultural activities, speculative construction of more tower blocks, the need to decontaminate the city, complaints against the location of dangerous industries and of unprotected electricity cables. Examples of such campaigns can be taken from all the neighbourhoods. One of the largest was the successful campaign to shut down La Farga, a centrally located, highly polluting factory.

In this process of communal appropriation of the neighbourhoods the growth of solidaristic practices opened the door to a wide range of associative initiatives. Thus in most neighbourhoods as an alternative to the official municipal festivities, popular festivities (*Festes Majors Populars*) were organized by the neighbourhood associations. This led to the strengthening of social relations not directly related to demands for urban renewal and thereby served to reinforce the sense of collective identity.

As a result of these associative practices, collaboration between the associations grew, and in 1974 a L'Hospitalet-wide co-ordinating committee of neighbourhood associations was formed in order to share experiences and advance towards a common strategy for the city. The operation of this co-ordinating committee made it easier for the individual associations to get their messages across to the municipal authorities. With the Franco regime entering into crisis, under Mayor Capdevila (1973–5) local government had no alternative but to listen to the associations' demands, and this served further to enhance their standing within their own neighbourhoods. This co-ordination between the neighbourhood associations and their growing influence over municipal government made possible the creation of city-wide demands and the appearance of a Citizens Movement in the city.

However, it would be wrong to see the growth of the neighbourhood associations simply as a reaction to the decay of the regime and the inability of the authorities to respond to the people's calls for improved living conditions.[14] These associations not only called for public services but also questioned and proposed radical alternatives to the municipality's urban planning, social, cultural and educational programmes. Only by understanding the part played by the associations in the construction of their local communities, structuring of collective identities, and the links forged between labour and urban mobilization, can the fundamental importance of the urban protest movement in the crisis of the structures of the Franco regime be fully appreciated.

Community support for striking workers and the participation of activists from the clandestine opposition within urban protests served to politicize the neighbourhood associations and Associational Movement in general. Because of the dictatorial nature of the regime both the labour movement and the associations found that in order to operate freely they needed to achieve basic political freedoms, and so in both cases specific demands were combined with calls for democratization. Hence the neighbourhood associations backed the principal demands of the opposition for democracy, amnesty for political prisoners, an autonomy statute and, relatedly, the recognition of the historical rights of

Catalonia as a nation with its own language and culture. Within L'Hospitalet, amongst the adult population, non-Catalan immigrants formed a majority. However, as in the rest of the Metropolitan Area, Catalanist demands received the support of wide-ranging sectors of the immigrant population. In this respect the favourable position adopted by the major clandestine party of this period, the PSUC, was of fundamental importance.[15] Nevertheless, it is possible that the extent to which a Catalan national consciousness was consolidated amongst the immigrant population has been exaggerated. It is probably the case that Catalanist demands were not the subject of any detailed debate or reflection amongst the new urban population. What, on the other hand, did exist amongst many immigrants was a recognition of the repression to which Catalan culture had been subject, and an acceptance of the Catalan national struggle as a part of the struggle against the dictatorship.

From the 1970s the neighbourhood associations also became the centre around which new associations were formed: for example, the women's movement grew up linked to them. In 1974 there were women's groups in the majority of the neighbourhood associations. These groups organized an autonomous city-wide co-ordinating committee, and in some cases went on to set up their own separate bodies. More generally it should be stressed that women played a key role within the Associational Movement and came to hold a series of important posts. This needs to be related to women's primary role within the sphere of the home and neighbourhood, with the result that they suffered at first hand all the inadequacies of the new environment.

Parents' groups also grew out of the neighbourhood associations and combined specific demands for improvements in children's schooling with calls for the provision of school facilities for recreational and sporting activities which they would organize. They were joined by teachers' associations who voiced both their own professional demands and supported campaigns in favour of teaching in Catalan and the renovation of teaching methodologies. Adult schools also organized themselves autonomously and joined in the general protest movement. Pensioners also set up their own groups within the neighbourhood associations, and 1978 saw the founding of a pensioners' co-ordinating body covering the entire city. Nor was the city's youth left out. In 1977 groups of young people were behind the organization of a local marathon (*Cursa Popular de L'Hospitalet*). Taking as a starting point the key loci of geographical identity, their own neighbourhoods, they designed an itinerary which made it possible to reclaim the whole municipality, while also strengthening co-ordination between the various sporting associations and establishing links between these and the broader protest movement. By 1977 recreational centres for children and youngsters had also sprung up. Their greatest achievement was the construction of an infants' and children's play centre (*Club Infantil i Juvenil*) in Bellvitge, which then led to further initiatives in the majority of L'Hospitalet neighbourhoods. The 1970s also saw the growth of ethnically based groupings. On the one hand they looked to celebrate either Catalan culture or the culture of their place of origin (with a clear predominance of

Andalusian associations), but they also participated in broader initiatives aimed at the organization of festivities, and supported the neighbourhood associations' campaigns and protests.

Overall, then, the Associational Movement showed great dynamism in the mid- and late 1970s, and the diverse associations were behind a new and original restructuring of individual and social relations in the city. Under the aegis of the neighbourhood associations they were laying the foundations for the growth of a powerful Citizens Movement. They coalesced in a broad protest movement which, while respecting the autonomy of its various component parts, also elaborated all-encompassing programmes for action (*plataformes generals*) which the town hall was then pressured to accept. In this way very different segments of the population felt the associations represented their interests and therefore participated in the general mobilizations in the street and in front of the town hall. In the context of the crisis of the dictatorship, this general confluence of protest was further encouraged by the fact that the city's associations developed one general political aim in common: the constitution of democratic local administrations.

It is not our objective to magnify the importance of the associations. L'Hospitalet was a city with 300,000 inhabitants and not everyone participated in the movement. However, the associations reached wide sections of society, and for many people not directly connected they also became a point of reference. For this reason the Associational Movement in L'Hospitalet and in other Catalan and Spanish cities was important not only in deepening the crisis of the dictatorship but also in ensuring that it could not be tackled without reconstituting a democratic state. This could be seen at a political level. In order to press for democratic reform the various opposition groups formed the Assemblea de Catalunya in 1971 (see Chapter Ten). Platforms were then set up in many Catalan towns and cities. On 13 July 1976 the Democratic Assembly of L'Hospitalet was founded. It was based on the Associational Movement and, at the same time, provided a platform for the leaders of the clandestine political parties to make themselves formally known in public for the first time.

From dictatorship to democracy: the crisis of the Associational Movement

With the public appearance of the opposition political parties their leaders were to become the interlocutors of the crisis-ridden Francoist municipal government. In 1977 the Co-ordinator of Political Parties was created, its legitimacy based on the results obtained in the first general elections held during the year. This co-ordinating committee, which began to act as a counter-authority, was consulted by the municipal government on the majority of important decisions affecting the city. The city-wide co-ordinating committees of the various associative movements were also involved in many of these questions and spent considerable time discussing ways of building a more liveable and solidaristic city. However the newly emerging democracy, of which so much was expected, was based at all

levels on the political parties, which would in a future democratic local government represent the interests of all the men and women of L'Hospitalet. For this reason a process which could have been viewed critically as leading to the substitution of the associations was welcomed as signifying the definitive end of the dictatorship at local level.

Criticisms from some minor elements within the associations tended to be related to the lack of representation of a particular party on the Co-ordinator of Political Parties Committee, and rejected by party representatives on this body, who maintained they were the representatives of the majority and had the legitimacy of the general elections on their side. The co-ordinating committees of the neighbourhood associations and the other associational movements were still vital because without their participation the great popular mobilizations of these years would not have been possible, but from 1977 it became clear that any decision-making capacity they had possessed was slipping from their hands. At municipal level the political dynamic of these years, marked by the transition to democracy, was accompanied by the first signs that the representative model which the neighbourhood associations had built up was beginning to break down. In the early 1980s, after the election of the first democratic local administration, this resulted in a rapid decrease in mobilization and protest articulated around issues of urban planning.

It has repeatedly been argued that the crisis of the urban movement of the 1970s was a result of its decapitation, with the transfer of its leadership to the new democratic municipal governments formed in March 1979. Without doubt this is an issue which needs to be taken into account, but there were also more important factors at work. In the first place, the transfer of the task of negotiating with the Francoist authorities to the political parties had serious consequences. The associations had been based on direct citizen participation in decisions affecting the future of the neighbourhood. Before 1979 it was not that the parties premeditatedly wished to replace these forums, but there existed, in the febrile atmosphere of the transition, the sense that decisions needed to be taken with the maximum speed and urgency possible. Implicit in this stance could be the belief that the associations could not deal effectively with the problems which affected the city. Hence the 'time' of the inhabitants and the 'time' of their political representatives were diverging. However, this took place in a context in which the desire for unity and euphoria at the fall of Francoism hid the consequences of this growing distance. Furthermore, given the new dynamic of delegation into the hands of political parties, those not fully participating in the new model could be considered as 'being a nuisance' and their activities could be seen as hampering the consolidation of the incipient municipal democracy. If to this we add the intolerance which could affect relations between the political parties we can begin to understand the conflicts which arose in some neighbourhoods at the beginning of the 1980s, and which involved the new democratic municipal authorities on the one hand, and members of the associations who were in favour and others who were against their proposals on the other.

A key moment in this substitution of the associations was the approval of the Municipal Regulation of Citizens' Participation in 1981. It was proposed by the socialists and strongly criticized by the representatives of the PSUC within the administration. However, this did not prevent the maintenance of the leftist coalition Government established in the municipality after the first local democratic elections in 1979, as, at this juncture, the prime aim was the consolidation of the new democratic institutions.[16] From this date in particular the neighbourhood associations were left in a quandary as to their exact role. Pressure for improvements in living conditions had become the preserve of the political parties – with whom many of the associations' members identified. In addition, the 1981 decree undermined the role the association had de facto acquired in the management and control of municipal projects. As a result, it can be said that with the exception of the organization of festivities the neighbourhood associations were being emptied of functions. Elections and the direct affiliation to political parties seemed to offer an alternative model to participation and social control.

This simple substitution of direct democracy for indirect mechanisms of representation, without the elaboration of complementary forms of organization, led to a degree of social disintegration and hindered the processes of identitarian construction. The new democratic administration was able to carry through positive programmes of regeneration of public space not dictated by speculative interests. However, the inhabitants no longer felt intimately involved in the transformation of urban space, and hence their identification of this space as both their own individual and collective space was weakened. For example, the non-participatory re-elaboration of emblematic toponymic symbols led to a further weakening of lived identity and, therefore, also to a loosening of the social nexus within the neighbourhoods. This phenomena formed part of what, during this time, became known as the disenchantment (*desencanto*).

Another cause of the decline of the neighbourhood associations is to be found in the characteristics of the movement itself. From the 1970s it had combined two methods of struggle: on the one hand, it looked to use its own resources to achieve its aims, and on the other it petitioned the local authorities. Examples of the first practice were the cleaning and planting of gardens on waste land by the inhabitants themselves, the construction of a Reconciliation House – which served as both the parish church and a centre for the activities of the *veins* – in the neighbourhood of Can Serra, the organization of adult education classes, of festivities and sporting events, and the production of a local newspaper called *L'Estaca*. These were initiatives which at first might have seemed unrealizable given the extremely limited resources, but which unlocked great creative energy within the community. However, the second method of struggle was to become predominant through L'Hospitalet, with the Francoist municipal authorities being pressurized into taking action through such methods as letters of protest, the signing of petitions, sit-ins, demonstrations, etc.

These practices were not mutually exclusive. Often elements of both strategies were to be found in a particular demand, or rather, while the second type of

demand tended to condition the development of the struggle, there were also initiatives of the type described above. Such practices were aimed at extending the fight to the maximum number of inhabitants possible. Thus, there were in reality two philosophies within the movement: one which stressed self-realization and the other which emphasized delegation. But the experience of self-help was not incorporated as a central plank of the movement. This left the associations particularly vulnerable from the beginning of the 1980s. We do not wish to argue that such a shift in emphasis would have saved the neighbourhood associations from the crisis of the late 1970s, but it might have opened new doors which could have allowed them to renew the practices of participation and control they had developed within the new political context. The model of social representation developed in the 1970s was, we would argue, not at all incompatible with a democratic society.[17] The challenge – not taken up – was to establish new links and complementarities between the Associational Movement and democratic local government. This would, of course, have needed to be based on a profound belief that a wide-ranging, diversified and autonomous associative culture can only be positive for the political, social and cultural vitality of the community.

Finally, the crisis of the Associational Movement needs also to be seen within the context of a number of more general factors, a detailed consideration of which is outside the scope of this chapter. In the first place the economic crisis of these years hit poorer people particularly severely (see Chapter Twelve), and, therefore, an important part of the population of L'Hospitalet. Second, the policies pursued by the democratic central and autonomous governments encouraged individualistic and competitive modes of behaviour above collective and solidaristic values. These economic, political and ideological conditionings were reinforced by the international political climate in the 1980s. More specifically, the internal crisis and subsequent fragmentation of the PSUC at the beginning of the 1980s threw many of the most active members of the associations into confusion.

In the 1970s the neighbourhood associations began to emerge as an alternative popular power to the decadent Francoist institutions. In the case of L'Hospitalet their formation was not simply a response to the crisis of Francoism, as is sometimes portrayed, but needs to be understood in terms of the complex articulation of social networks in the city, within the context of the growth of opposition to the regime. Once they had taken off they were to play a fundamental role in undermining Francoism. The fall of the Franco regime is usually explained through the part played by the various political parties and the negotiations between the opposition and regime reformists. This, however, is seriously to underestimate the importance of the popular mobilizations, which led to the forging of new identities, created alternative forms of representation, and generated a widespread questioning of the dictatorship. During the mid-1970s the press constantly reported on its front pages the continuous mobilizations undertaken by the associations, a pressure which made it very

difficult to foresee anything but a democratic solution to the growing crisis of Francoism.

Notes

1 See C. Santacana, *Victoriosos i derrotats. El franquisme a L'Hospitalet 1939–1951*, Barcelona, 1994, p. 93.
2 It is important to realize this so as not to distort the significance of the Associational and Citizens Movements of the period. They cannot simply be considered a reflection of the protest movements which had grown up throughout much of western Europe in the 1960s. They were very much a symbolic expression of a cultural milieu marked by the fight against the Franco regime and the transition to democracy. Within Catalonia it was the student movement which was most influenced by events in the West.
3 Two important studies are J. Borja, 'Jerarquia d'espais i jerarquia cultural', *Visió de Catalunya, el canvi i la reconstrucció nacional des de la perspectiva sociològica*, Barcelona, 1987; and A. Alabert, 'Els barris de Barcelona i el moviment associatiu veinal', unpublished PhD thesis, Universitat de Barcelona, 1982.
4 Here we use the term 'Associational Movement' to refer to single issue associations which are able to mobilize outside the circle of their own members. This type of movement may result in co-ordination between associations of the same type. 'Citizens Movement', on the other hand, is used to refer to a movement which is able to co-ordinate and mobilize various Associational Movements, and, frequently, incorporate wide-ranging social sectors and independent associations behind it.
5 See Santacana, *Victoriosos i derrotats*.
6 This concept is taken from C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, 1973, pp. 19–41.
7 See T. R. Villasante et al., *Retrato de chabolista sin piso. Análisis de redes sociales en la remodelación de barrios de Madrid*, Madrid, 1989, p. 58.
8 For the 1930s see Joan Camós, *L'Hospitalet 1930–1936*, Barcelona, 1986. Because of this tradition of working-class militancy it is not surprising that the first organized protest movement should have been initiated there. See, S. Balfour, *La dictadura, los trabajadores y la ciudad*, València, 1994, pp. 127–57.
9 See J Casañas, *El progressisme catòlic a Catalunya (1940–1980)*, Barcelona, 1988, pp. 214–6.
10 It is worth emphasizing that the Francoist municipal administration was based on districts and that these never became spaces in which urban identities were articulated.
11 See J. Borja, *¿Qué son les Associacions de Veïns?*, Barcelona, 1977, pp. 32–6.
12 This collaboration must be seen within the context of the participation, by the early 1970s, of many within the professional middle classes in the anti-Francoist opposition front.
13 Some studies were of key importance in the elaboration of the associations' stance. This was especially the case of *Collblanc i La Torrassa: raons d'una lluita urbana*, elaborated by Raimon Bonal in 1974, and the 1973 report co-ordinated by J Miró, *Habitat y equipamiento en el polígono residencial Bellvitge*, which was essential in the decision to suspend further construction of flats.
14 See A. Gail Bier, 'Vox Populi: El desarrollo de las Asociaciones de Vecinos en España', *Revista de Sociología*, no. 11, 1979, pp. 169–83.
15 The writings of Cipriano Garcia, one of the best-known workers within the PSUC and CC OO, show the importance the leadership of these organizations gave to the national question. See 'Clase obrera y problema nacional' in *Miscelania d'homenatge i selecció d'escrits 1970–1988*, Barcelona, 1995, pp. 39–43.

16 The Left won an outright victory in these elections. The PSC gained twelve councillors and the PSUC eleven. In contrast CDS and the UCD had only two each.
17 Borja, *Jerarquia*, pp. 349–60, on the other hand, argues that the utopianism of these associations made their continuity impossible and that this was at the root of their crisis.

12 The working class and labour movement since the onset of democracy

Faustino Miguélez

City, metropolis and Catalonia

Today it is difficult to talk of Barcelona without taking into account the urban continuum known as the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, a far more extensive territory than the administrative city itself (see also Chapter Ten and Figure 10.1). There is not only an intense interaction in patterns of residence, work, and other multiple aspects of daily life, such as consumption, entertainment and friendship networks. It is also the case that although Barcelona is the 'capital of Catalonia', to a degree the industrial capital of Spain, and the country's most important city after Madrid, political problems and their solutions can only be tackled by taking into account this wider metropolitan area. Barcelona is special because of the city *sensu strictu*, but also because of its heavily populated and industrialized hinterland: Badalona, Santa Coloma and L'Hospitalet (see Chapter Eleven), and, a little further afield, the Baix Llobregat.

One has, therefore, to talk of an urbanized territory within which one can distinguish the central city nucleus and its peripheries. For this reason, in its practice and strategies the labour movement – like the employers' organizations and the centres of political power – has gone beyond the administrative city to encompass the entire Metropolitan Area. Yet, at the same time, one must also take into account the opposite phenomenon. In Catalonia one can also observe centralization from Barcelona; this phenomenon can be seen at work within the labour movement. Labour organizations operate from not only Barcelona, but also tend to transfer demands generated within the Catalan capital onto other areas.

The post-Francoist labour movement: new goals and new challenges

The Barcelona and Catalan social structure has undergone a profound transformation since the 1970s. The early 1970s saw the end of a twenty-year economic boom during which time, through mass immigration and high birth rates, the Catalan population had rapidly grown in size (see also Chapter Ten).[1] Henceforward, a new demographic phase was initiated, characterized by a

dramatic fall in the birth rate and the end of mass migration (replaced, in Barcelona itself, by a decrease in the size of the population), along with the population's progressive ageing. These factors, coinciding as they did, in the context of the transition to democracy, with the recovery of political liberties and the rebirth of nationalist demands, resulted in a shift from the previous socio-economic integration of the immigrant population to its political-cultural integration.[2]

At the same time, both the city's occupational structure and its socio-economic employment categories underwent rapid change. As a result of the oil price rises in the 1970s and, even more important, the economic restructuring which Spanish business had to undertake following integration in European and world markets, the country went through a profound economic crisis. Parts of the country's industrial base were destroyed, while, as in other European countries, capital was shifted into the service sector. Change was most striking in the city of Barcelona. There was a rapid growth of technical and administrative posts, while throughout the 1980s many traditional factories either succumbed to the crisis or transferred outside the Metropolitan Area, especially to neighbouring *comarques* such as the Vallès Oriental. This had two clear consequences. First, the industrial working class lost ground throughout the Metropolitan Area and in Barcelona in particular. Second, the distinction between the city, in which technical-administrative posts were of key importance, and the periphery, in which manual labour still predominated, became increasingly well defined (see Table 12.1).[3]

As a result of these changes the social presence of the industrial working class has declined. This has been further accentuated by a weakening of its organizational structures, the result of the above mentioned crisis and the decentralization in industrial production. This move out of Barcelona was most notable amongst the larger firms. Thus, between 1985 and 1990 the proportion of Barcelona workers occupied in firms employing 500 or more workers fell from 23 per cent to 12 per cent of the total[4] – precisely the category of enterprises that had been at the centre of union activity and strike action from the early 1970s. Finally, within the city of Barcelona, along with the decrease in the more traditional sectors of the working class there was a parallel rise of new middle-

Table 12.1 The occupational structure of Barcelona and Barcelona Metropolitan Area in 1990 (percentage of workforce in each category)

Category	*Barcelona*	*Rest of metropolitan area*
Technicians and professionals	25.0	12.0
Merchants, tradespersons and shopkeepers	17.0	18.0
Administrative workers	23.0	15.0
Industrial workers	21.5	38.5
Service-sector workers	13.5	15.5
Farmers and peasants	0	0

Source: *Enquesta metropolitana, 1990*.

class groups, who were to acquire – in part to the detriment of labour – a historically unparalleled cultural and political influence.[5]

In short, by the 1980s and 1990s the configuration of the working class would be far more complex than in the 1960s. It was made up of industrial workers, but also of large numbers of workers in low-qualified service-sector jobs and employees at the bottom of the administrative scale. The level of class identification of these latter two groups was, in general, lower than amongst industrial workers, both because of the lack of tradition of union organization, and because of their highly diverse integration within the labour market.

A number of political consequences of these transformations soon became apparent. Within Barcelona the decline of the left-wing vote was paralleled by the rise of the nationalist Right. At the same time, other factors have militated against the quantitative growth of the industrial working class or any strengthening of its political position. The strategies designed to consolidate Barcelona as a major modern city have not, in general, contemplated its re-industrialization and the creation of jobs for the unemployed. Rather, projects such as the Olympic Games and Barcelona 2000 have aimed at boosting Barcelona's role as a major service entrepôt of Mediterranean Europe. This has been accompanied by the configuration of an urban structure which has produced the 'expulsion' of workers' children, who have been unable to pay the high rents, to the periphery and to other *comarques*. All this has taken place within a context in which middle-class patterns of leisure and consumption have become hegemonic. It is not our intention to be overly pessimistic: the labour movement has been able to intervene in many of the projects elaborated for the city. What is essential to note, however, is that structural changes within the city have led to a new correlation of social forces, and that if the labour movement wishes to renew itself and respond to the new realities it cannot ignore them.

The 1980s and 1990s were to throw up a number of additional key challenges and difficulties for labour. With the fall of the Franco regime the labour movement needed to build new, independent unions, enter into free collective bargaining (recovered after the demise of Francoism) and influence economic policies in order to defend the interests of its rank and file. In order to pursue these goals, along with direct negotiations with employers it also entered into a series of tripartite pacts (*concertación social*) with employers and central or regional state institutions. Furthermore, Spanish unions were also directly involved in the overtly political task of consolidating democracy, a vital goal if after years of clandestinity and illegality the unions themselves were to prosper. Indeed, this was to become a central, if not always explicit, goal of union negotiators in the tripartite talks themselves.[6]

This new role has in itself provoked problems for the labour movement. As a result of the participation by organized labour in the country's economic and political decision making its union structures have become quite centralized. The pacts and labour's intervention in the consolidation of democracy have – in consonance with the well-known effect of neocorporativism – led to an organizational and functional strengthening of the top levels of both workers' and

employers' organizations. Nevertheless, within Catalonia there have been a number of countervailing tendencies. On the one hand, the assumption of independent action has been seen as necessary in order not to leave questions of Catalan national identity in the hands of the right-wing Catalan autonomous Government. Moreover, though weakened at times, the belief that one has to respond to the local needs of workers has never been abandoned. Thus the Catalan and Barcelona labour movement has been powerfully moulded by the impact of economic crisis and political transformation, and has moved between the contradictory pressures of assuming, in quite a subordinate fashion, centrally negotiated agreements, and the need felt to create its own autonomous spaces to negotiate not only economic but also political issues.

Finally, from the mid-1970s labour has had to assume these challenges while coping with division in its own ranks. This division, primarily between CC OO and the UGT, has centred not so much on political objectives as on economic policy and on the question of political alliances. Thus in the early 1980s the PSOE Government could count on the fervent support of the UGT while CC OO adopted a highly critical stance. Nevertheless, within Spain it was probably in Catalonia where the divide was least dramatic, no doubt because the nationalist Right and not the PSOE was in charge of the Catalan autonomous Government, the Generalitat. It is on the struggle to construct a new labour movement in this rapidly changing climate that the rest of the chapter will centre.

Labour organization in Barcelona

In late 1975, at the time of General Franco's death, the labour movement in Barcelona and the Metropolitan Area was both highly combative and strongly united. The two major labour fronts, CC OO followed at a distance by USO,[7] put forward Democratic and Unitary Candidacies for the elections of shop stewards and works committees to the Vertical Union in June and September 1975, and their 'entryist' tactics proved massively successful (see Chapter Ten).[8] This would make it possible, in the following years, to retain a high degree of united action despite the appearance of new trade unions. These successes also allowed the unions to attain high rates of affiliation, pursue economic demands aggressively (as shown by the collective bargaining agreements of 1976 and 1977), and encouraged them to maintain the 'assemblyist' internal structures developed during the Franco regime.

At this time CC OO was, within the Catalan labour movement, totally hegemonic. This explains more than any other factor why some leaders tried to call a Constituent Trade Union Congress during 1975 and 1976 in order to set up a single labour confederation. CC OO, which had been forged in the struggle against the Franco regime and for the recovery of democratic and Catalan liberties, was, at this time, highly politicized. This was to be both its strength and its weakness. It was its strong point because it ensured the union a key role in negotiations on both economic policy and political reform in Catalonia during the

transition. However, it also meant that CC OO tended to a degree to neglect its working-class base. This was one of the reasons why, after the fall of Francoism, other unions, some of them totally new, were able to capture part of its rank and file. The UGT in particular, which enjoyed strong political support and could count on old militants linked to the Catalan Socialist tradition, grew rapidly, and this made impossible CC OO dreams of a single union.

The diverse origin of CC OO and the UGT were to an important degree behind the strategies they pursued. CC OO was born as a co-ordinator of factory and local committees, and these 'horizontalist' origins would very much condition its structure and actions for many years. This could be seen in the importance CC OO gave to the workers' assembly. Until 1978, CC OO trade-union militants maintained that in collective bargaining, delegates directly elected by the shop floor should be present along with union representatives, that the workers' assemblies should decide whether collective agreements were acceptable, and that the factory works committee should be placed above the local branch of the union. As a result, CC OO referred to itself as a 'Union of a New Type' (*Sindicato de Nuevo Tipo*), though in reality it took up the strong 'assemblyist' and participatory tradition of the CNT, to which was added the experience of the Communists under Francoism.

On the contrary, while the UGT was able to take advantage of a certain Socialist sympathy in sections of the working-class, it was born from above. Hence, it was centralized in Barcelona, and as it extended its influence to other areas paid less attention than CC OO to the dynamics of labour within a city-specific context. Furthermore, the industrial federation, which was seen as an instrument to achieve concrete demands, was the focal point of union organization. And though works committees were by no means neglected, the union branch was given more importance than in CC OO.

There were also more specifically political differences between the unions. CC OO's origins and the role it came to play in Catalan politics resulted in it paying more attention to the question of Catalan national identity than the UGT. A large part of CC OO's union leaders also formed part of the PSUC, which during the dictatorship was at the forefront of demands for the restoration of Catalan liberties (see Chapters Ten and Eleven). For CC OO it was of key importance that non-Catalan Spanish immigrant workers be both socially and politically integrated into Catalonia. This was seen as vital if a consensus of wide sections of Catalan society in favour of the overthrow of Francoism and the consolidation of democratic institutions were to be achieved. Hence, CC OO believed that it was important to recognize the political specificity of Catalonia within Spain, and to convince the new immigrant population of this.[9]

This emphasis on autonomy and organizational decentralization in CC OO would also allow the Catalan CC OO play a more independent role with respect to its Spanish counterpart than was the case in the UGT. The centralization of both CC OO and the UGT at the level of the Madrid-based Spanish leadership, noted above, has led to tensions with the Catalan organizations. This has been especially notable in the case of CC OO. Within CC OO the Catalan

federation, the Comissió Obrera Nacional de Catalunya (CONC), has frequently entered into conflict with the Spanish leadership, particularly, until the mid-1980s, as a result of its more critical response to the negotiation of pacts with the employers and the state. These criticisms grew out of the perceived inefficacy of these accords to halt the massive loss of industrial employment in Catalonia, and were encouraged by two factors. First, much of the Catalan CC OO leadership, in Barcelona in particular, was to the Left of the Spanish leadership, and supported the wing of the PSUC critical of what it saw as the excessively 'pactist' stance of the PCE.[10] Second, the Catalan federation was also able to mobilize a rank and file which had grown accustomed to undertaking militant action when required. On the other hand, until recent years the Catalan UGT has had less autonomy vis à vis its Spanish counterpart. This resulted in serious division in the early 1980s, though as the autonomy of the Catalan UGT has grown so its relations with the CONC have improved. These tensions between the Catalan labour organizations, and the fact their leadership has not been based in Catalonia, may also be one of the reasons why Catalan nationalism has in recent years been hegemonized by the Right.

As the unions grew they also faced serious financial problems. In the case of the UGT this was in part overcome by the return of premises confiscated by the Franco regime. In both cases, however, the first years of the new democracy were to see a febrile recruiting drive and the launching of great mobilizations in favour of improved working conditions. This led to a rapid increase in union members, whose dues were used to finance the renting of new headquarters, setting up of printing presses and employment of a limited number of permanent staff. Affiliation grew particularly rapidly in the industrial sector, especially in large and medium-sized enterprises, while it remained insignificant in low-skilled service occupations. Yet, as we shall see, it was to decline rapidly from the end of the decade. However, unions were also to consolidate their position through intervention in works committees. The new regime retained – albeit in a more democratic guise – the structure of direct shop-floor representation established under Francoism (see Chapter Ten). It is vital to take account of this dual representativeness of the new unions. They were able to present their candidates for factory elections, and in successive elections increased their share of the vote. In order to vote, workers did not have to be affiliated to any particular union, and so for many workers these elections became a easy way of showing their trade-union preferences. For the unions themselves the works committees were also of great importance because their strength in them determined their weight in collective bargaining. It is not surprising, therefore, that the elections have ended up being called 'union elections'.

In Catalonia, from the first union elections in 1978, CC OO has throughout been the most voted union, followed, at some distance, by the UGT. This is rather different from the situation in the rest of Spain where the UGT was to overtake CC OO in 1986 (see Table 12.2). Clearly the prestige gained during the struggle against Francoism has been an important factor in allowing CC OO to maintain its ascendancy in the more traditionally unionized sectors, such as

Table 12.2 Union elections in Spain, 1980–94

Union	*1980*	*1986*	*1994*
CC OO	30.8	34.5	37.8
UGT	29.2	40.9	34.7
USO	8.7	2.5	2.2
ELA-STV	3.2	3.3	3.6
Others and independents	28.1	18.7	21.

Source: Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, Madrid.

metallurgy, textiles, construction (where, however, the UGT has recently taken over), banking and transport, and, in general, in medium and large enterprises, and the centres of strongest union organization, especially Barcelona and the Metropolitan Area. The UGT, on the other hand, as we shall see, has done far better in areas where there was less of a tradition of union organization, and, more generally, it has fared particularly well amongst immigrant workers. This plurality reflects the workers' diverse experiences and the divergent strategies pursued by the various labour federations. However, it is just as important to realise that in the second half of the 1970s union organization encompassed only a limited sector of the working class; typically those in industry (especially in the large and medium-sized enterprises) and in manual occupations. Union candidates had far less impact amongst technical staff, and the unions' presence was very limited amongst service and female workers. This weakness was, of course, increasingly serious in the city of Barcelona, given the rise in the number of technicians and female workers, and the growth in the percentage of small enterprises, especially within the service sector.

Affiliation and disaffiliation

To add to labour's problems, from 1979 unionization rates began rapidly to decline. Unions in Catalonia and Barcelona have suffered the same problems of affiliation as those in other areas of Spain. However, the process of deindustrialization which Barcelona has undergone since the early 1980s has accentuated some of these characteristics.

Between the death of Franco and April 1977 the growth of union organization in Barcelona was slow. The Civil Governor and police exercised a degree of repression over labour organization, especially in the case of CC OO, and this dissuaded many workers from affiliating. This changed with the legalization of democratic unions in April 1977, and between this date and the end of 1978 union membership expanded massively, particularly in the more traditional industrial sectors. This was facilitated by a number of factors: the closure of the Vertical Unions; the decision of many labour lawyers – who had played an important role in previous years – to collaborate with the democratic unions; the positive left-wing performance in the June 1977 general elections; the mobilizations which accompanied the first open factory elections; and the first major

tripartite pact between the Left, employers and the state, the Moncloa Pacts, which led to some hope that it would be possible to deal with the economic crisis.

Membership figures are scarce but those that are available indicate that in Catalonia over 50 per cent of industrial workers were affiliated, and that affiliation rates were also high in some branches of the service sector.[11] However, in comparison with those European countries in which union organization and traditions had been consolidated in the decades after the Second World War, membership in Barcelona, as in other parts of Spain, proved to be highly volatile and unstable. This became clear with the rapid decline in unionization rates from 1979. They reached their lowest point at the end of the 1980s when only about 15 per cent of workers were unionized. The impact was particularly dramatic in the case of CC OO because it was most noticeable in the more traditional industrial sectors.

In declining order of importance three major factors contributed to this fall: those of a structural nature, questions related to social relations within the world of work and, finally, more generically political reasons. First, from the late 1970s thousands of jobs were lost and the situation was most serious precisely in the more traditional industrial sectors of the economy. Most affected were the heavily unionized, low-skilled manual workers. The unions, and especially CC OO's Barcelona branch, attempted to organize the unemployed, or, at least, to participate in the so-called assemblies of the unemployed. They had little success. After a certain time the unemployed, finding that the unions could not give them any hope of work, tended to abandon the movement. Furthermore, from the mid-1980s a further structural factor also adversely affected membership. After the changes introduced in employment law in 1984 the number of temporary contracts grew exponentially, especially in small but also in large firms. In ten years between 1984 and 1994 the percentage of temporary contracts rose from 15 to 35 per cent in the whole of Spain, and by 1990 in the Barcelona Municipal Area 40 per cent of workers were employed on some kind of temporary contract.[12] Union membership suffered greatly. Workers on temporary contracts not only had and have less union and other rights than those employed on a permanent basis, but there is still considerable hostility to unions amongst industrialists and such workers are often afraid of their employer's reaction.[13]

Second, in contrast with the situation in other European countries, the trade-union movement did not develop the necessary resources to offer its membership adequate services. It has provided labour lawyers and some after-work activities, but this is generally inadequate. This obviously discouraged affiliation. Moreover, this occurred in a context in which many workers – obligatorily unionized under the dictatorship – looked to the new unions to improve their working conditions. However, as has been mentioned, under the new system of collective bargaining, contracts negotiated by labour representatives have covered all workers. Hence one of the major benefits of unionization has been open to everyone. Moreover, when faced by individual problems such as sackings, sanctions or other disputes and demands, the union's lawyer services are, for a modest price, open to the

non-affiliated. Hence, the new system of labour relations does not favour union organization, and, as a result, many workers have declined to unionize.

Finally, a number of complex political causes operated. Many workers had put excessive hopes in the ability of the new democratic system and democratic unions to solve their problems. Yet, democracy was only slowly consolidated and the economic crisis led to widespread unemployment. This led to disillusionment, individualism and the weakening of collective and solidaristic values. Moreover, employers, especially in small firms, have remained hostile to the unions, and this has led many workers to deal with the employer on an individual basis for fear of reprisals.[14]

Barcelona and the Metropolitan Area, which had one of the largest concentrations of working-class population in Europe, has been more affected than the rest of Catalonia and Spain by the structural factors outlined above. The economic crisis and subsequent restructuring led, as noted above, to an important change in the area's occupational structure. In the construction industry, employment declined by about 60 per cent,[15] and in the metallurgical industry many factories either shut down or moved out. Thus the unions lost an important part of their rank and file, without immediately being able to reach out to new social groups. In the 1990s, however, the situation has begun to change. The Catalan unions have begun to widen their appeal to take in groups of workers previously outside the ranks of the unions. CC OO and the UGT now have almost as many affiliates in services as in industry, they have managed to affiliate increasing numbers of technicians and are making inroads into small industry. Nevertheless, the major omissions remain female workers, youngsters and those whose conditions of employment are precarious.[16]

Unity and division

Perhaps the most dramatic element characterizing the Catalan and Spanish labour movement has been its division, a key factor in explaining the limited class identification of many workers. During the last years of the Franco regime there was, in fact, a considerable degree of unity, centred on demands for political liberties, workers' rights, re-employment of union activists dismissed, and the right to form independent unions. In this context economic demands were not forgotten but they tended to be seen in the context of broader political goals. This unity of action was greater in Catalonia than in the rest of Spain because of the limited presence of the old labour federations, the UGT and CNT. The bulk of the labour movement was in favour of a dual strategy aimed, on the one hand, at the overthrow of the Franco regime, while, in the meantime, working within the structure of the Vertical Unions to attain all possible benefits (see also Chapter Ten).

This explains why, in early 1976, the creation of a single independent labour federation was seen as a real possibility. Even when the growth of the UGT made this impossible it was still the case that, until the elections were held between October and December 1978 to elect workers' representatives onto the

factory committees, there was a high degree of collaboration between the representatives of the three main unions, CC OO, the UGT and USO. They were all involved in collective bargaining, and in the mobilizations called to consolidate democratic institutions and protest at the effects of the economic crisis. Nevertheless, even then a number of smaller unions remained outside. The CNT refused to endorse any elements of the others' strategy, the Confederación Sindical Unitaria de Trabajadores (CSUT) and Sindicato Unitario (SU) broke away from CC OO in order to maintain what they saw as its original 'assemblyist' ideology, while there were also unsuccessful attempts to construct Catalan-only unions.

However, it was after the 1978 'union elections' that divisions would deepen, in particular as a result of direct confrontation between CC OO and the UGT. These elections were to see a clear victory of CC OO over the UGT. This was a consequence of CC OO dominance in and around Barcelona; the UGT would actually be victorious in Girona and Lleida, and in Tarragona the results would be quite even. The reasons for this divide are to be found at a Catalan and Spanish-wide level. In Catalonia, given the UGT's practically non-existent role during the Franco regime, it did far better than it could reasonably have expected. Many CC OO leaders, especially those in 'intermediate' positions in the organization, saw this as unjust and the result of external political support.

Reality was much more complex. In Catalonia the UGT had upped its profile from 1976, and it was able to connect with many workers who identified for historical or more purely political reasons with the Socialists. It did particularly well in sectors which had a limited tradition of union affiliation, such as hotels and commerce, in small firms and in areas which had industrialized in more recent times. As we have seen, in the large Barcelona enterprises prestigious CC OO candidates maintained their support. But in small firms in particular the workers tend to vote for a specific political option rather than for particular candidates, and this favoured the UGT because of its links with the PSOE, the increasingly dominant party of the Left. The UGT also did well amongst immigrant workers. Here a similar set of criteria could be seen. For historical reasons many immigrants from the South and other parts of Spain identified with the Socialists, and, as a result, supported the UGT in the union elections. A similar phenomenon could also be observed in the first general elections in June 1977 when, despite the fact that the PSUC had seemed to represent the whole of the Catalan Left, the Catalan branch of the Spanish Socialist Party, the PSC-PSOE, gained a unexpectedly high percentage of votes.

From this date the UGT, which was still considerably weaker in Catalonia than in the rest of Spain, tried to differentiate its position in order not to be seen as falling in line behind CC OO. This could, for example, be seen in the UGT's opposition to the CONC's proposal in 1980 for a tripartite agreement between the unions, the Generalitat and the Catalan employers' association, the Foment del Treball National (FTN), to elaborate a Plan of Urgent Measures to combat unemployment, and CC OO Barcelona branch's support for the creation of an unemployed workers' assembly.

Furthermore, divisions at a Spanish level also had an impact in Catalonia. After a brief period of relative unity in 1977, during which both the UGT and CC OO formed part of the Coordinadora de Organizaciones Sindicales (COS), relations deteriorated. They reached their lowest point during the first years of the new Socialist Government between 1982 and 1985, when the UGT in both Catalonia and Spain openly supported the PSOE's economic policy while CC OO remained highly critical of, and on occasions mobilized against, measures aimed at restructuring industry and the economy. Behind this division was the attempt by the Socialists and Communists, who were ideologically close to the UGT and CC OO respectively, to enlist trade-union support in their battle to attain hegemony over the Spanish Left. This is not to say that the relations between party and union were purely instrumental; on occasions the unions could influence party strategy, and the party leadership was well aware that in order to maintain a wide working-class base the unions had to retain their autonomy. However, the atmosphere in early 1980s Spain was highly charged, and politically motivated union activists knew that through their actions they were in a position to favour one or other of the parties on the Left.

A radical change took place in 1984 when the PSOE's decision to allow more extensive use of temporary contracts (see above) further undercut the union rank and file, leading the UGT to distance itself from the Government. There followed a new period of understanding between CC OO and the UGT, which in both the field of labour law and broader questions of economic policy would lead to joint action in subsequent years. In Catalonia relations between the two unions would rapidly improve. In this process there were two key factors. First, and most important, workers were often more in favour of united action than their political and trade-union representatives. This was shown by the fact that they viewed the factory works committees more positively than they did the unions themselves.[17] Second, the Catalan and Barcelona union leadership actually began to work for unity. This has produced a number of joint actions and agreements.[18] Even more important, it has facilitated the spread of the feeling in working-class circles that though the unions may be organizationally divided they represent a common set of interests.

Union strategies

Catalan trade unions have developed in a context of economic crisis and, as we have seen, this helps explain many of the problems they have encountered. The Spanish economy has faced a general crisis, but there have been certain specific characteristics peculiar to Catalonia. Nevertheless, until the mid-1980s the major Catalan unions tended to operate through their Spanish leadership. And the major questions of these years, industrial restructuring, wage moderation, inflation, the labour market, were all discussed in a Spanish context. Thus the principal tripartite pacts covered the whole of Spain, with no agreements specifically related to the Catalan ambit. The Catalan CC OO did make some effort but with little success. The CONC tried, on several occasions, to strengthen the

Labour Council (Consell de Treball), a tripartite body formed by unions, employers and representatives of the Generalitat, which had consultative powers in the areas of economic and social policy and labour relations, but it faced the opposition of the employers and the Generalitat Government itself. Indeed, the FTN was for many years so opposed to any measure which might break the 'unity of the Spanish market' that it was even suspicious of the rise of Convergència i Unió (CiU), the right-wing Catalan nationalist coalition.[19] Within the CONC itself there were industrial federations which supported the elaboration of collective agreements for Catalonia (though not disconnected from state-level accords) and others which opposed them. The UGT was, for its part, during these years significantly less interested than the CONC in consolidating a Catalan ambit of labour relations.

The result of this state of affairs was that union collective bargaining was very much bureaucratized and negotiations became distanced from local concerns and the demands of particular workers' collectives. Moreover, they were in general unsuccessful; none of the over-arching goals of creating jobs, improving working conditions for the most disadvantaged, and maintaining the wages and working conditions of the majority were achieved. However, since the mid-1980s, without forgetting the necessary Spanish dimension, there has been a more serious attempt to build a Catalan space for dialogue. At the root of this change was the recovery of the Catalan economy in the second half of the 1980s. This reactivation was more rapid than in the rest of Spain, and the downturn in the early 1990s less prolonged. The reasons are probably to be sought in its more export-orientated nature, along with the repercussion of specific projects such as the preparation of the 1992 Olympic Games. As a result, both the Generalitat and the FTN have paid more attention to specifically Catalan forums and policy initiatives. The unions have followed suit, in part because the initiative responded to demands they had already made, and in part because the problem of mass unemployment has become less dramatic. This explains why, between 1991 and 1993, a whole series of agreements were reached between unions and employers, and between these and the Generalitat, aimed at strengthening Catalonia's industrial base, encouraging technological innovation, improving technical education, and introducing new measure in the fields of safety and health in the workplace. These agreements have led to the belief amongst union representatives that dialogue with state and employers is easier in Catalonia than in the rest of Spain. Yet, it is also the case that such initiatives once again became paralysed from 1993 as a result of the institutional agreement between the PSOE Government and the CiU, which led to an emphasis on state-wide reforms, especially as regards new modifications to the legislation regarding labour contracts.

Overall, it is the case that in the fields of collective bargaining and state-employer negotiations the need felt to develop common strategies under the impact of the economic crisis has led to a down-playing of the specificities of Catalonia and, even more, Barcelona. Yet, from the early 1990s, within the city of Barcelona we have concomitantly seen the development of what could be

referred to as a 'limited microcorporatism'. A number of institutions have been set up and agreements reached over economic and social policy between a diverse range of local groups (unions, employers, professional bodies) and the local administration. Their deliberations may be referred to as 'micro' because they affect only Barcelona and the Metropolitan Area, and they are 'limited' because they address only a part of the issues which affect the economic and social life of the Area.

Such bodies were particularly active during the preparation of the Olympic Games and the putting into practice of the so-called Strategic Plans Barcelona 2000. In the first case the agreements were designed to guarantee the employers and financiers good returns, the politicians political recognition and the unions employment (though it proved temporary and less than hoped for). The second set of accords have had the object of securing the urban restructuring and renewal necessary to assure Barcelona a place as one of the most dynamic cities of the twenty-first century. In this case the administration has sought both recognition and success, employers have particularly wished to secure improved infrastructures, and unions and other popular organizations (like the neighbourhood associations) have looked to ensure the restructuring does not generate the disintegration of communities and social marginalization.

Until now, it must be said, the Plans have tended to favour the interests of employers and the local administration. However, they have proved of key importance in reaching agreements – often through informal discussion – between the representatives of the various social and professional interests. Yet, at the same time, these relations have developed very much on an institutional level, and have hardly involved the people of the city, either as citizens or workers. Moreover, with the exception of the unions and neighbourhood associations the professional groups tend very much to represent the interests of the middle classes. This to a degree reflects the transformation Barcelona has undergone.

Unions and the Right

In the last period of Socialist rule the general pattern was that of conflict between government and unions. The unions reacted to new legislation in the areas of employment policy and social security with two general strikes, the first in 1988 and the second in 1993. The 1988 strike was very successful but it did not lead to any change in direction by the Government. After the second strike, relations did not improve, as shown by the fact that in 1994 the Socialists elaborated a new reform of the labour market without reference to the unions. This introduced new measures aimed at 'flexibilizing' the labour market, most notably reducing the costs of terminating workers' contracts, stimulating part-time work and legalizing Temporary Employment Agencies (Empresas de Trabajo Temporal). Unions accused the Government of fomenting less stable employment through these reforms. Yet it was difficult to form alternative political alliances. The fact that CiU, which ran the Catalan autonomous Government,

had allied with the Socialists, meant that any accord between it and the unions was impossible, despite the fact that the latter made a number of attempts in this direction.

After the 1996 elections the Popular Party was able to form a government thanks to external support by the CiU. As against the PSOE, in order to counteract its conservative image, after several months of confrontation the new Government entered into dialogue with employer and worker organizations and showed its willingness to accept agreements reached by them. The result of this new conjuncture was a number of accords, chief amongst them the 1997 Stability of Employment Pact. In it the negotiators agreed to make the termination of contracts easier in exchange for greater contractual stability of employment. This was made possible by new government subsidies for some specific types of stable contract. This was combined with accords aimed at revising regulations, principally affecting contracts and the organization of work, left over from Francoist times. In addition, a more cohesive negotiating framework was put in place, which encompassed collective agreements from the level of the state to that of the factory, and made it possible for regional and state negotiations to be better co-ordinated (in Spain most collective agreements are reached at a lower provincial level, despite the fact that the province is of little importance both politically and economically). These agreements were followed by regional accords – including one in Catalonia in 1998 – which, through government subsidies for some of the social costs of employment, aimed at both job creation and greater stability of employment.

Even more important than this, stimulated by the favourable European conjuncture, the Spanish economy began to grow faster than at any time in the previous twenty years. This led to a rapid rise in vacancies and fall in unemployment. Yet although the number of permanent contracts offered grew from 4 per cent in 1996 to almost 10 per cent in 1999, the great majority of new contracts were still temporary, with the result that about 30 per cent of the workforce is still employed on a temporary basis. These workers are poorly paid, work for very short periods and suffer easily the highest percentage of accidents at work in the European Union. Youngsters and women form the majority of this group. This is the greatest present-day economic and social problem. Unemployment is continuing to fall yet the unions are seemingly unable to confront the issue.

It is in this context that at the end of the 1990s, both in Spain as a whole and in Barcelona more particularly, tensions have reappeared between policy making and collective bargaining at the centre, and the implementation of policies and agreements at a local level. The unions' central concern has been to tackle the employment crisis and this has led to the strengthening of state-wide bodies based at the centre. But lower down there has been a great expansion of local and regional employment pacts. This tension, which is reflected in collective bargaining structures, is once again a key question in the labour movement. Perhaps the major underlying cause of this development has been stronger role taken by the central Government in developing labour policy, and also the

opposition of the employers to any measures which might endanger the 'unity of the market'. With the generation of employment the key objective, many more local demands have taken a back seat. However, the reality is that companies are profoundly restructuring their businesses, and their new characteristics are closely intertwined with the concrete area in which they are located.

The challenges for labour

As in other territories and states, the union movement in Barcelona and Catalonia has to come to terms with a series of transformations in the world of work which are the result of the tension between the locality and globalization. Trade is increasingly global, businesses can move throughout the world with ever more ease, and some workers are also globally mobile (though most remain local). Yet at the same time many important niches in the market, related to specific cultural and political factors, are local (dependent on the city or the region more than the state). These trends have enormous implications for labour power and organization. On the one hand, at a global level workers cannot establish any control over the great economic movements (through regulations regarding wages, working hours and minimum standards in their conditions of work); on the other, at the local-regional level they can intervene in economic and social policies, often by signing pacts. The enormous changes affecting workers and work are impacting at this dual level and it is here that the great problems affecting unions and organized workers have to be faced.

The first set of changes relates to the transformation of the structure of production, with the decline of industry and agriculture and the growth of services. But within this latter sector a reorientation of the labour process is taking place, in which some workers are losing their independence and becoming more subordinate to their employers, while their jobs become de-skilled and repetitive, while others in fact enjoy greater flexibility and independence. In many cases the workers' links to the business are less defined than in the past, either because the companies are small, the workers are subcontracted or work for a host of different employers. In all these instances the union finds it more difficult to elaborate a common platform than in the past, and the territory, rather than just the enterprise, becomes the best setting for mobilization.

Other changes are linked to the sexual division of labour. In Catalonia, and in Spain in general, the last twenty years have seen a rapid incorporation of women into the world of work. Yet discrimination has continued in the sphere of paid labour, in such areas as wage levels and promotion and, above all, in the domestic sphere, where women have continued to do the domestic chores and hence have had to undertake a double working day. And while unions have made some progress in achieving equality in the labour market, they have done virtually nothing to redistribute domestic work and hence ensure real equality of opportunity. This is one of the key challenges for the next century, and it seems clear that the local and regional level is the most appropriate in order to work – both within the cultural and political fields – in favour of equality. However, this

will not be easy. Levels of female affiliation to unions are low and, above all, there are few women within the union structures.

Yet the great problem the Catalan and Spanish labour movement faces at present is the high number of workers who have little job stability, both because of temporary contracts and poor working conditions. As a result, the union movement is faced with a dual challenge of great significance. First, these workers find it difficult to voice their demands. Hence they should be given priority by the unions. Yet because they fear for their job they are difficult to organize, with the result that unions have to 'work for them but without them'. More broadly, the union movement needs to find ways to integrate non-traditional workers – who are not employed by a clearly identifiable business or subject to collective agreements – if they wish to avoid an irreversible social schism.

All this serves to emphasize that new structures are needed to give all workers, of whatever type, greater opportunity to participate more directly in discussions, either in their working environment or through the associations to which they belong. The distance between the world of work and that of the community, and between the worker and the citizen, has become less marked. For this reason general demands – relating to health care, education, housing and human rights for all (one needs in this respect to think only of immigrant workers in Europe) – should be supported along with demands more specifically related to paid labour. And for this to be possible citizens' associations – like consumer and neighbourhood associations – need to elaborate joint strategies with unions. Unions and professional bodies remain important, but they cannot be as isolated as in the past. Demands for dignified living conditions need to come from a range of diverse but complementary institutions.

Notes

1 L. Recolons, *La població de Catalunya*, Barcelona, 1974.
2 L. C. Solé, *La integración socioeconómica de los inmigrantes en Catalunya*, Madrid, 1978; A. Pascual and J. Cardelús, *El marc social dels desplaçaments de població a Catalunya*. Visió de Catalunya, Barcelona, 1987.
3 F. Miguélez and T. Torns, *Treball, condicions econòmiques i consum*, Barcelona, 1992. This differentiation has been particularly marked because, as in the rest of Spain, the skill level of the workforce has, in general, been low. Overall, small firms have predominated and, consequently, technological innovation has been stymied. Thus the technification of the workforce has been a phenomenon very much limited to Barcelona.
4 Ibid.
5 M. Subirats, 'Professionals i tècnics, "nous senyors" de la societat catalana', *Metròpolis Mediterrània*, no. 7, 1987, p. 90.
6 F. Miguélez, 'Las organizaciones sindicales', in F. Miguélez and C. Prieto (eds), *Las relaciones laborales en España*, Madrid, 1991, pp. 226–7.
7 Until June 1976 one of them, CC OO, did not even refer to itself as a trade union but as a movement. Its transformation into a union signified the abandonment of the idea of creating a single union.
8 I. Boix and M. Pujadas, *Conversaciones sindicales con dirigentes obreros*, Barcelona, 1975.

9 F. Frutos, 'El significado de la reivindicación del Estatuto de autonomía hoy en la lucha de los trabajadores', in *Els treballadors per la autonomia*, Barcelona, 1977.
10 They either formed part of the Partit dels Comunistes de Catalunya (PCC), when it broke away from the PSUC, or formed part of the Left of the PSUC or Catalan Initiative (Iniciativa per Catalunya), the left-wing coalition formed at the end of the 1980s.
11 Secretaría de organización y finanzas, *Afiliación a CC OO en Catalunya*, Barcelona, June 1978.
12 Miguélez and Torns, *Treball*.
13 R. Alós, F. Miguélez and A. Recio, *El trabajo precario en Catalunya: la industria texil-lanera del Vallés occidental*, Barcelona, 1989; R. Alós, F. Miguélez and A. Recio, *Trabajo y relaciones laborales en la construcción*, Barcelona, 1991.
14 A. Bilbao, 'Trabajadores, gestión económica y crisis sindical', in Miguélez and Prieto, *Relaciones laborales*, pp. 264–5.
15 Grup d'estudis de vida quotidiana i treball, *El impacto económico, social y laboral de los Juegos Olímpicos de 1992 en Barcelona ciudad y su entorno*, Barcelona, 1993.
16 O. Rebollo, A. Martín, F. Miguélez, *La afiliación sindical*, Barcelona, 1993.
17 Ibid.
18 Anuari sòcio-laboral de Catalunya, Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Laborals, Universitat de Barcelona, 1991, 1992, 1993.
19 S. Aguilar, 'El asociacionismo empresarial en la transición postfranquista', *Papers*, no. 24, 1985, pp. 77–8. However, the FTN would later fully support CiU.

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