

An Evaluation of the Success of Anarchist Collectives during the Spanish Civil War – a Case Study of Barcelona and Mas de las Matas

History

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Tämä tutkimus käsittelee Espanjan sisällissodan anarkistikollektiivien menestystä. Sisällissodan alussa espanjalaisilla anarkisteilla oli mahdollisuus järjestää yhteiskuntaa anarkokommunistisen ideologiansa mukaan, työläisten kollektiiveihin. Tämä tutkimus arvioi, kuinka menestyksekkäästi anarkistien tavoitteet toteutettiin Barcelonassa ja pienessä Mas de las Matasin kylässä.

Tutkimus vertailee anarkistien tavoitteita ja ihanteita siihen, mitä käytännössä tapahtui. Anarkistien tavoitteiden määrittäminen on kuitenkin vaikeaa: miten juuri espanjalaiset anarkistit halusivat järjestää yhteiskunnan? Tämän selvittämiseksi tutkin yksinkertaisesti Espanjan suurimman anarkistijärjestön CNT:n dokumenttia vuodelta 1936, jossa määriteltiin järjestön tavoitteet. Tutkimus Mas de la Matasin ja Barcelonan historiallisista tapahtumista sen sijaan perustuu ensisijaisten lähteiden lisäksi myös historioitsijoiden tulkintoihin. Mas de las Matasista ei tosin löytynyt kuin muutama silminnäkihavainto ja haastatteluihin perustuva lähde, mikä saattaa rajoittaa tutkimuksen luotettavuutta.

Vaikka lähteiden puute johtuu Mas de las Matasin pienestä koosta, oli kylän pienuus myös syy sen valinnalle. Halusin vertailla kollektiivien toimintaa maaseudun kylässä ja suuressa, teollistuneessa kaupungissa kuten Barcelonassa, sillä tämä antaa anarkistien toiminnasta laajemman kuvan kuin vain toisen tutkiminen.

Mas de las Matasin ja Barcelonan tulosten erot johtivat myös johtopäätökseen, että anarkistien ihanteet sopivat yleisesti ottaen parempiin pieneen kylään kuin kaupunkiin. Mas de las Matas menestyi Barcelonaa paremmin lähes kaikissa tutkimuksen osa-alueissa, vaikkei sekään toteuttanut kaikkia anarkistien ihanteita. Vaikka niin Mas de las Matas kuin Barcelonakin osoittivat suurta muutoksenhalua, ei kummassakaan lopulta saatu aikaan pitkä-aikaisia tai pysyviä yhteiskunnallisia muutoksia.

Abstract

This investigation is about the success of anarchist collectives in the Spanish civil war. At the start of the war Spain's anarchist movement had a chance to organize society along their anarchist communist ideals, into workers' collectives. This essay investigates how successfully anarchist ideals were put into practice in the collectives of Barcelona and Mas de las Matas, a small village in Aragon.

The investigation compares anarchist aims and ideals to what happened in practice. One limitation of the essay is the difficulty in determining Spanish anarchist aims. A simple approach was used: anarchist ideology was determined mainly through one document, Spain's largest anarchist organization CNT's resolution from 1936. The sources on historical events in Mas de las Matas and Barcelona include historians' interpretations and different primary sources, however no secondary sources on Mas de las Matas were found. Therefore another limitation of the essay is the research on Mas de las Matas, which relies on eye-witness accounts and oral history.

Although these difficulties arise from the small size of Mas de las Matas, this is also the reason why the village was chosen for the investigation. I wanted to compare the collectives of a rural village a large, industrialized city such as Barcelona, because this gives a broader view of anarchism in practice than studying only one of them would.

The differences between Mas de las Matas and Barcelona also led to the conclusion that anarchist ideas were often more suitable for a small village than a city. Mas de las Matas was more successful than Barcelona in almost all of the aspects studied, however it did not realize all anarchist goals either. Although both displayed great enthusiasm for change, no long-lasting changes in society occurred in either Barcelona or Mas de las Matas.

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1. Introduction

With the military rebellion of 17 July 1936 and the ensuing breakout of civil war in Spain, the Spanish anarchists saw the chance had come to realize their dreams of libertarian society. The Republican government had lost control of many of the areas that had resisted the Nationalist rising, making conditions for revolution optimal for the anarchists – once “in control”, they began to organize society along the lines of anarchist communism,¹ with workers’ collectives at its very core. This research attempts to evaluate how successfully anarchist ideals were realized in the 1 of Barcelona and the small village of Mas de las Matas,² both of which were anarchist in the beginning of the war.³

First it is necessary to determine what is meant by Spanish anarchism and the collectives’ aims – this allows the creation of an analytical framework for my study. The method I have devised is to first determine the aims and ideology of Spain’s largest anarchist organization, the CNT.⁴ This will be done by examining the resolution of the Zaragoza Conference of May 1936, where at last revolutionary strategy and aims were outlined.⁵ In short, the resolution aimed to abolish 1) capitalism, 2) the state, and 3) class distinctions.⁶ It must be remembered, however, that these were only considered the means to the ultimate end of liberty and freedom – thus the question of whether people lived freely and voluntarily in the collectives becomes another aspect of study.

The collectives are an interesting subject of study because they are one of the only large-scale attempts to put anarchist ideas into practice – for this reason they have been used to measure the soundness of anarchist ideology. The collectives are not only significant as a social experiment, however: they were also important in their own time. Collectivization was very controversial and most other political parties opposed it as hindering the war effort. As such it contributed to the

¹ This term was used by Spain’s largest anarchist organization, the CNT, in 1919.

² Mas de las Matas: a village of 2300 people, situated in rural Aragon.

³ These collectives are often considered to be among the most successful. The success and nature of collectivization varied widely in different towns and cities. To make the results more reliable, two specific towns instead of whole regions were chosen for study.

⁴ National Confederation of Labor. An anarcho-syndicalist trade union founded in 1910.

⁵ Previously the movement had been very divided and no one ideology had existed. Thus the resolution is vital for a simple definition of Spanish anarchist aims. Because it was made just before the outbreak of the war, furthermore, the resolution can be considered to give a truthful view of the CNT’s aims for the war situation.

⁶ See Appendix 1 for a more detailed view of anarchism and its aims.

internal divisions of the Republican side, and played an important role in the “civil war within the civil war” in both Barcelona and Aragon, where Mas de las Matas was also affected.⁷

Because of the political hostilities surrounding the anarchist collectives, their success has also been hotly disputed: a wide range of conflicting accounts have been given by people with varying political sympathies. While the anarchists have lauded the rural collectives as a utopia come true, their arch-enemies, the communists, often portrayed them as almost forced labor camps in which coercion was widespread.⁸ This problem exists for sources on Barcelona, but is especially difficult for Mas de las Matas, on which only three eyewitness accounts were found. It must be admitted, therefore, that any evaluation of the success of the collectives cannot be entirely conclusive, and uncertainty remains.

2. Voluntary Membership?

2.2. Use of Violence in Establishment of the Collectives

One of the most important questions concerning the success of collectivization is whether it was voluntary or forced. This was key because of the anarchists’ emphasis on freedom, and their denouncement of dictatorship and authority. Although it would seem that a peaceful process was the anarchists’ ideal, the CNT regarded violence as necessary and unavoidable in establishing the collectives: “...a violent act is needed to lead into the truly evolutionary phase of the revolution.”⁹ This probably meant clearing away the obstacles to collectivization, such as smallholders and capitalists, who would certainly oppose giving away their property to the collectives. Perhaps more important to the CNT, then, was that the process was spontaneous and without leadership – a situation in which *everyone* wanted revolution would never exist. Nevertheless, publicly the CNT denounced violence: according to one CNT-FAI pamphlet for peasants, “In order to cut back on your exertions, or to ensure that you produce is at least doubled, you must, comrade peasants, work the land in common. Which does not mean that we want to impose this [collectivization] by force ... We know that, over time, as they see the improvement in results, those who start out as doubters

⁷ Communist troops ended collectivization in Mas de las Matas in August 1937, and they were also involved in the 1937 Barcelona May days which ended collectivization there.

⁹ CNT. *The Zaragoza Resolution*. May 1936. Available from the World Wide Web [22.9.2008] <http://recollectionbooks.com/cs/spain/cntZaragozaResolution1936.htm>

will later be won over.”¹⁰ Similarly, the CNT later attempted to distance itself from the violent collectivization in Barcelona.

For in Barcelona the establishment of the collectives was not peaceful. Following the defeat of the insurgents after the military rebellion, the streets were filled with the victorious militias of various parties. Workers burnt, pillaged, or took over churches, hotels, and public buildings, turning them into barracks and storehouses. Most factory owners and managers had either fled or were shot, and their enterprises were taken over by workers.¹¹ This, however, happened in a general atmosphere of violence and the perpetrators were not only anarchists; perhaps it was the only way that collectivization could be achieved in such a large city, just as the CNT resolution of Zaragoza had predicted. The movement was successful, however, in the sense that it was very spontaneous, and did not have any central leaders: “We of the CNT hadn’t set out to make the revolution... which needed the whole Spanish proletariat behind it, [and] would take another ten years at least, we believed.”¹²

In the countryside entirely peaceful collectivization would seem at least possible, as in theory all members of a village could be in favor of it – in fact, this could have been the case in Mas de las Matas, which already had some libertarian traditions.¹³ Also, smallholders could be, in theory, left undisturbed despite collectivization; this was more difficult with factory owners and managers, who had to be gotten out of workers’ self-management’s way. In Mas de las Matas collectivization was not begun with terror or church burnings. According to Gaston Leval,¹⁴ in mid-September 1936 a group of anarchists proposed establishment of rural collectives, which was unanimously agreed at a village assembly. Those 50 smallholder-families who did not want to join were left undisturbed as long as they “[did] not infringe on the rights of the collective.”¹⁵ Other accounts, however, describe how before this, CNT militia columns had arrived in the village and established an Anti-Fascist committee. It was only as more militia forces arrived and disorganization grew that the village assembly was held and collectivization agreed upon.¹⁶ Although no force seems to have been used,

¹⁰ CNT-FAI. *Comrade Peasant Listen!* 6 December 1936. Available from the World Wide Web [17.8.2008] <http://robertgraham.wordpress.com/2008/05/10/comrade-peasant-listen/>

¹¹ Hugh Thomas. *The Spanish Civil War* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977), p. 295

¹² Andreu Capdevila, a worker and CNT militant, as quoted in Ronald Fraser. *Blood of Spain: An Oral History of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), p.72

¹³ The village had, for example, declared for libertarian communism already in 1933, although this attempt failed. *ibid.* p. 351

¹⁴ His account should be read carefully, as Leval was an anarcho-syndicalist.

¹⁵ Leval, as quoted in Sam Dolgoff. *The Anarchist Collectives: Workers’ Self-management in the Spanish Revolution 1936-1939* (Quebec: Black Rose Books, 1974), p. 161

¹⁶ Fraser, p. 352

the vote's atmosphere was probably affected by the presence of the militia – such militias were elsewhere known for arbitrarily shooting any “fascists” they came across.

Mas de las Matas also experienced violence a little later, when a CNT militia marched there, burned the church, shot six people and arrested the Anti-Fascist Committee apparently for being too lenient on right-wingers. Undoubtedly this event convinced some more individualists to join the collective.¹⁷ Although this could be considered part of the inevitable “violent phase” of the revolution, it would seem that the effects were more far-reaching. People who joined for fear of the militias were not necessarily instantly converted to anarchism, but continued to be members of the collective because they feared a new, similar attack. Thus the use of violence in the early stages of collectivization could have compromised the true voluntariness of the collective's members in the future. The situation is the same in Barcelona, where the presence of anarchist militias was without doubt one reason for the opponents of collectivization to comply with it throughout the revolution. Therefore we cannot dismiss these violent beginnings as an inevitable stage before true anarchism would emerge, even though the Zaragoza resolution seems to do so.

2.2. Other Means of Coercion

There also existed other means of coercion besides violence – these were significant mainly in the countryside,¹⁸ and were used in Mas de las Matas. Although such subtler forms of coercion gained less attention, they were very effective in getting unenthusiastic peasants to join the collectives. Smallholders were forbidden to use outside labor in working their land – sometimes trouble would arise from even asking a neighbor or relative to help.¹⁹ They could also be denied the right to trade their surplus, or be excluded from the benefits of the collective, which in some cases made life almost impossible.²⁰ As even anarchist-minded Augustin Souchy writes: “Membership in the collective is voluntary. Those who wish to remain outside the collective are not condemned... However, the individualists do not have the privilege of hiring people to work for them... Collective work, collective economy offers advantages to the members of the collective. Compared with the

¹⁷ Fraser, p.353

¹⁸ These questions were not as relevant to Barcelona, which was not solely under anarchist control – private enterprises remained, and the embargoes described below were not as powerful as in small villages.

¹⁹ Fraser, p. 355

²⁰ Obtaining food supplies from communal stores, using communal transport or the ovens of communal bakeries were among the most vital services that could be denied the individualists.

collectives, the situation of the individualists is poor.”²¹ A CNT-leader of the village admits: “We obliged all the right-wingers to join. Coerced them morally, not physically, but coerced them all the same.”²²

3. The Stateless Society

3.1 Abolition of the State

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of anarchism is its insistence on the abolition of the state, which is seen as the ultimate evil and greatest obstacle to human liberty. In its place the Zaragoza resolution envisioned a federal structure of society based on the “triple base: individual, commune, and federation”, in which the individual collectives would be “autonomous and... federated at regional and national levels to achieve their general goals.”²³ In the cities the equivalent would be the individual, factories and workshops, trade unions, and their federations. To what extent did Mas de las Matas and Barcelona manage to escape the authority of the Republican government, and how well did the replacement institutions realize these goals?

In Aragon, in general, the central government lost its power after the military rebellion as militias roamed the countryside. In October 1936 the Defence Council of Aragon, consisting of CNT members, was established by delegates of the region’s collectives – in structure, at least, it resembled the outline of the Zaragoza resolution. It now replaced the central state, and exercised power over revolutionary Aragon.²⁴ There is little information available about the Council’s relation to Mas de las Matas. It seems, however, that the village was to a large extent autonomous, and had little to do with the Council besides exchanging its produce through it.²⁵

It may seem that the loss of government power in Barcelona was almost absolute in the early months of the war, however the situation was much more complex. Companys²⁶ told CNT and FAI leaders: “Today you are the masters of the city and of Catalonia...”,²⁷ and offered to resign to them

²¹ Augustin Souchy Bauer: *With the Peasants of Aragon: Libertarian Communism in the Liberated Areas*, 1982, trans. Abe Bluestin. Available in the World Wide Web [23.8.2008] <http://www.anarchosyndicalism.net/archive/text/aragon#Mas>

²² Ernesto Margelli, as quoted in Fraser, p. 353

²³ CNT

²⁴ Thomas, p.430

²⁵ Fraser, p. 357

²⁶ The president of the Generalidad, the semi-autonomous government of Catalonia

²⁷ Luis Companys, as quoted in Fraser, p. 111

his place in the Generalidad. They refused, and instead a CNT-dominated Central Anti-Fascist Militia Committee was formed – its tasks included re-establishing public order and organizing the militias, and in effect it had all executive power.²⁸ The Committee did not bring closer the abolition of the state, but was rather “a government in essence if not in name.”²⁹ Likewise the real Catalan government, the Generalidad, was not beaten although it seemed powerless: it still controlled the treasury and banks, giving it power in foreign enterprises and trade.³⁰ Government intervention developed as the anarchist factories needed capital and materials from these state-controlled enterprises – in addition cooperation was vital to organize the war industry. “Thus compromise, even centralization, began even in the first days of the revolution”,³¹ even if it wasn’t yet apparent. The role of the government would only grow, however: in September 1936 the CNT itself controversially joined the Generalidad and in November the central Madrid government. Although collectivization was legalized in October, government influence started gradually increasing in collectivized enterprises, as officials sought to gain control over them.³² Thus the Zaragoza dream of a stateless society never became a reality in Barcelona.

3.2 Workers’ Self-Management

It is easier to deal with the realization of the anti-authoritarian structure of society on a smaller scale, in the internal workings of the collectives and factories. According to the Zaragoza resolution, each collective should appoint a communal council which could call assemblies to discuss the affairs of the collective.³³ Factories would have equivalent factory councils, elected by workers.

This principle was put well into practice in both Barcelona and Mas de las Matas. In the latter 32 groups of workers were set up to work the land.³⁴ These groups – and the other collective shops and enterprises – each chose a delegate for the Administrative Committee, which met weekly to plan and organize future work. Village assemblies were held only to discuss “special matters, like fixing

²⁸ Raymond Carr. *The Spanish Tragedy: the Civil War in Perspective* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977), p. 92

²⁹ Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: Revolution and Counterrevolution* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 393

³⁰ Felix Morrow. *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Spain* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1938), p. 89

³¹ Thomas, p. 296

³² Bolloten, p. 224

³³ CNT

³⁴ Leval

the bread ration, or schools.”³⁵ Leval also describes how the collective functioned without written rules or a constitution: “all business is simply conducted at monthly membership meetings...”³⁶ In Barcelona there were three main types of management in collectivized industries: in some enterprises the old proprietor was still in place theoretically, but business was run by a worker-elected committee; in others the proprietor was directly replaced by such a committee; and lastly, in “socialized” enterprises unions had control.³⁷ Regardless of type, however, most enterprises had workers’ councils and assemblies similar to Mas de las Matas’.

4. Abolition of Capitalism

4.1. Abolition of Private Property

Abolition of private property (including money) was a fundamental aspect of the anarchist goal of eliminating capitalism, and the Zaragoza resolution also clearly cites it as one main revolutionary aim. In Mas de las Matas this generally meant that joiners pooled their land, farm implements, and stock. The owner of a cabinet-makers’ workshop also put his business and tools into the collective, and other firms were collectivized in the same way – people could get free haircuts, for example, at the collectivized barber’s shop.³⁸ In Barcelona this was not as simple, as factories and firms were not owned by single people who could decide to collectivize their property. Collectivization often meant merging small, previously private, businesses of the same industry together into large collectives. In the barber shops industry, for example, 905 shops were closed and production was concentrated into the 212 largest establishments.³⁹ While the property of such large enterprises was collectivized, private ownership in consumer goods and small industry was allowed.⁴⁰ In Mas de las Matas, also, there remained a degree of private ownership as people were allowed to keep private plots of land, and chickens and rabbits. This was meant to reconcile peasants to the new system.⁴¹

4.2. Abolition of Money

But how were goods to be rationed? The traditional anarchist principle “to each according to his need, from each according to his ability” was the basic idea. The Zaragoza resolution suggests

³⁵ Frazer, 1979, p. 357

³⁶ Dolgoff p.159

³⁷ Thomas, p. 529

³⁸ Fraser 352

³⁹ Bolloten, p. 58

⁴⁰ Robert Alexander, *Anarchists in the Spanish Civil War, Volume I* (London: Janus Publishing Company, 1998) p. 367

⁴¹ Fraser, p. 356

“producers’ cards” to replace money; these would be issued by workshop or factory councils, and would “constitute the basis of exchange. The cards would record “labor value in working units, a value which will be valid for the acquisition of products...”. Despite the detailed description, however, the resolution also emphasizes that no “hard and fast norm” is being prescribed, and that the autonomy of the collectives should be respected.⁴²

The abolition of money was much more complete in Mas da las Matas than in Barcelona, even though it did not adopt the producers’ cards. Money and wages were abolished immediately,⁴³ and a rationing system was introduced: each family was given a ration card with daily quotas of basic goods (per head).⁴⁴ Even trade with different villages was conducted without money.⁴⁵ In Barcelona money was abolished after the military rising, however this lasted only two weeks: once labor resumed, it was reintroduced.⁴⁶ During this brief period free food was given out by supply committees formed for the purpose, and the promise “to each according to his need” seems to have been fulfilled. Unlike Mas de las Matas, Barcelonian industries adopted no family ration cards, but stuck to individual wages. The differences between workers’, technicians’ and managers’ wages were abolished, and for workers wages increased significantly from July 1936 to December. Inflation, however, largely ruined the effect.⁴⁷

The rising costs of living in Barcelona led to hunger, and by winter 1936-7 people certainly could not consume according to their need.⁴⁸ Similar problems occurred in Mas de las Matas; however, the situation was under control when rations were reduced, and there was no hunger. The whole concept of consuming according to one’s needs, however, was found impossible, as wastage occurred.⁴⁹

⁴² CNT

⁴³ Fraser, p. 352

⁴⁴ Fraser, p. 354

⁴⁵ Dolgoff, p. 161

⁴⁶ Alexander, p. 358

⁴⁷ Thomas, p. 528

⁴⁸ Fraser, p. 376

⁴⁹ Marcario Royo, a CNT leader, as quoted in Fraser, p. 354

5. Social Equality

5.1 Abolition of Class Distinctions

The abolition of money, private property and wages were steps to another main goal of the Zaragoza resolution: abolition of class distinctions. Although it was most important, economic equality and abolition of wages was not enough: the social differences between different types of workers were also considered undesirable distinctions: “...producers are not to be divided into toilers or intellectuals, but [our aim is that they] may all be simultaneously toilers and intellectuals.”⁵⁰ An important aspect of this was ensuring that all people had access to education, arts and sciences in their free time (itself a luxury which ordinary workers could now afford).

In Mas de las Matas efforts were made to move towards workers’ greater equality. Leval describes how groups of land laborers, for instance, would take turns working pleasant and poor plots of land, where work was harder.⁵¹ Similarly, motorbikes confiscated from smallholders were given to shepherds, whose work and life was hardest.⁵² Although this concern for other workers seems genuine, otherwise little of the social changes described in the resolution took place. Although most workers now had more free time than ever, there is no mention of any attempts to cultivate or educate them. Perhaps further measures to achieve such intellectual or social equality were not made simply because there were no great differences to begin with: in so small a village, the few richer landowners still had opportunities very similar to those of ordinary workers. The village’s anarchist background must also be remembered. Perhaps the most significant step towards social equality was therefore the special attention given to educating all children, regardless of background. This the collectivists of Mas de las Matas did with great zeal: a new school was built, for example, for children from surrounding areas who had never attended one because of the distance.⁵³

Education was also one important aspect of the social revolution in Barcelona. One anarchist source estimates that the number of schoolchildren more than tripled from July 1936 to July 1937⁵⁴. Adult

⁵⁰ CNT

⁵¹ Leval’s accounts must always be read with care, however a detail such as this one might be counted upon to have at least some truth behind it. Dolgoff, p.162

⁵² Fraser, p. 214

⁵³ Fraser, p. 357

⁵⁴ Thomas, p. 536

illiterateness was also attacked with, for example, militia schools for illiterate militiamen.⁵⁵ Yet the effort for equality was more obvious in other ways: George Orwell describes how bourgeois forms of behavior, like tipping, had disappeared and “comrade” had replaced “señor”.⁵⁶ The CNT’s red and black stripes were everywhere, and no well-dressed people were in sight – “in outward appearance it was a town in which the wealthy classes had practically ceased to exist.”⁵⁷ Although Orwell was impressed, in truth the revolution had already begun to fade – Borkenau⁵⁸ had already noticed the decrease in revolutionary spirit in September.⁵⁹ By April 1937 it was clear even to Orwell that the “division of society into rich and poor, upper class and lower class, was reasserting itself.”⁶⁰ The wealthy classes had not disappeared, therefore; they had only disguised themselves. Perhaps more profound than the actual abolition of class divisions was therefore the change in attitudes and the emergence of a real belief that equality was possible.

5.2 Status of Women

The Zaragoza resolution also put some emphasis on equality between sexes and the status of women: “both sexes are to enjoy equality of rights and duties alike and the economic inferiority between man and woman will thereby disappear.” Free love was also endorsed.

In Barcelona radical changes in this direction took place. Women were made the legal equals of men in Catalonia and, more radically, abortion was legalized in January 1937.⁶¹ The idea of “marriage by usage” was also adopted: now cohabitation of 10 months, or even less if there was pregnancy, was considered marriage – although this policy was reversed in April 1937.⁶² But economic equality was not achieved: “no effort was made to equalize wages between men and women.”⁶³ Whether any other major changes were achieved is also disputable: “Despite these considerable gains, the revolution did not fundamentally alter the traditional roles or – but rarely – the customary inequalities of pay. Women continued to launder clothes, cook, keep the house and look after children; they continued to get paid less than men.”⁶⁴

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 536

⁵⁶ George Orwell: *Homage to Catalonia* (Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd, 1938), p. 3

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p. 3

⁵⁸ Franz Borkenau was an Austrian writer who travelled and kept a diary in Spain during the civil war.

⁵⁹ Franz Borkenau: *The Spanish Cockpit* (London: Faber & Faber, 1937), p. 169

⁶⁰ Orwell, p. 95

⁶¹ Carr p. 104

⁶² Fraser p. 287

⁶³ Thomas, p. 530

⁶⁴ Fraser p. 287

In Mas de las Matas some attention was given to the equality of sexes, but no fundamental changes occurred there, either. Some gains were made: for example, women were allowed to attend village assemblies,⁶⁵ – this was not an obvious privilege in the traditionally backward Spanish countryside. Leval also describes how bread-baking was transferred from individual housewives to communal bakeries;⁶⁶ Fraser accounts how the women themselves, however, resisted this and preferred baking themselves.⁶⁷ This could imply that traditional attitudes persisted even among women. Leval's description of the collective's life also mentions women only in connection to traditional tasks such as sewing, cooking, and teaching – another indication that the slight changes in the roles of women were mostly superficial, and as in Barcelona, no profound change in attitudes or roles occurred.

6. Conclusion

The collectives of Mas de las Matas and Barcelona realized many of the general aims of the Zaragoza resolution, although Mas de las Matas was often the more successful. There collectivization was more complete, as it was put into practice everywhere in the village, whereas in Barcelona there remained private enterprises even when anarchist influence was greatest. The success of the collectives can be evaluated according to how well they followed the Zaragoza resolution, and on the other hand, to how well things actually worked in practice.

In both Mas de las Matas and Barcelona there was great revolutionary spirit and enthusiasm to make the kinds of reforms described in the Zaragoza resolution. Perhaps this was most obvious in the social changes and workers' self-management, even if no long-lasting changes were made. The abolition of capitalism was a reality in Mas de las Matas, but not in Barcelona. Similarly the power of the state never disappeared in Barcelona, while in Mas de las Matas it did not affect village life, although sources on this aspect were limited. Collectivization was violent in both cases, although this was envisaged in the Zaragoza resolution.

This was one of the contradictions that the collectives showed about the Zaragoza resolution: violence in the beginning compromised the collectives' voluntariness in the future, too. Other limitations also came up: workers' self management and workers' committees were not always efficient, although there is much debate about whether production levels increased or decreased. Undoubtedly the Zaragoza resolution was more realistic for rural areas anyway: how could anyone

⁶⁵ Fraser, p. 357

⁶⁶ Leval

⁶⁷ Fraser 357

imagine only two months before the civil war that cities could function without any government or money? The prerequisite for this would have been that anarchists would be the only ones in power – an unlikely thought even given the CNT's mass support.

Some have claimed that the civil war prevented the collectives from reaching their full potential. This is not true, however: even if war-conditions were poor, they also justified collectivization for many of its opponents – people were willing to put up with it as a war-sacrifice. The communists have also been blamed for the failures of the collectives, and with reason – they destroyed the collectives in Mas de las Matas, and were a major force in ending the revolution in Barcelona, too. It is impossible to know how long the system in Mas de las Matas would have lasted, or whether the aims of the Zaragoza resolution would have been met better in Barcelona if anarchists hadn't had rivals. Perhaps even then they wouldn't have been completely successful. Mas de las Matas, on the other hand, realized to a great extent the aims of the resolution in the given circumstances.

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Appendix 1

The term “anarchism” encompasses quite different political theories, and includes many subdivisions. The CNT identified as their aim “anarchist communism” in 1919, which can be defined as “a form of anarchism that advocates the abolition of the State and capitalism in favour of a horizontal network of voluntary associations through which everyone will be free to satisfy his or her needs.”⁶⁸

The Zaragoza resolution summarized their aims as follows: “Once the revolution has moved beyond its violent phase, the following will be abolished: *private property, the state*, the principle of authority and, consequently, *the classes which divide humanity* into exploiters and exploited, oppressors and oppressed.”⁶⁹ The following table lists the aspects studied of each of these main aims, and the ultimate aim of freedom which is a basic principle of anarchist communism.

Aim	Aspects studied
Maximizing personal freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Were people free to join the collectives or was coercion and violence involved?
Abolition of the state	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Destruction of state power• Federal structure of the new society• Anti-authoritarian structure of collectives: workers’ self-management
Abolition of capitalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abolition of private property• Abolition of money
Abolition of class divisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equal access to education• Miscellaneous attempts to achieve equality• Equality between sexes

Some of the ideals of the Zaragoza resolution, such as abolition of religion, the correctional system of justice, and jails were not studied because information on them was limited.

⁶⁸ Anarchist Federation: *Anarchist Communism – an Introduction*. 2006. Available from the World Wide Web [23.10.2008] <http://libcom.org/thought/anarchist-communism-an-introduction>

⁶⁹My italics. CNT

