

About the Iron Column

José Peirats Valls

1971

With respect to the Levante, the middle of October [1936] produced serious events. The confederal forces of the garrison at the Teruel front made a raid against the rearguard to clean it of the parasitic forces that endangered the revolutionary interests. The "Iron Column," a confederal and anarchist group, burst into the capital and had bloody encounters with the forces of the rearguard. With the situation restored, and before the campaigns of defamation by the communists and the government, the aforementioned column distributed the following manifesto:

The "Iron Column" which is made up of elements of the FAI and the CNT, and by others who, without belonging to either organization, are identified with the ideas and acts of the anarchists, before the origin of the events that were acted out in Valencia and faced with the accusations that certain groups make about it, feel an imperative need to explain their acts so that no one will make partisan work at our expense.

The men who under the name "Iron Column" fight against the clerical and military reaction on the Teruel front, as the Anarchists that we are, are equally preoccupied by the problems of the front and of the rearguard. By this, when we saw in Valencia that things hadn't gone as we would have desired, when we say that the rearguard, far from giving us security, was a source of worry and doubt, we decided to intervene by sending to the concerned organization the following requests:

1. the total disarmament and dissolution of the Civil Guard,
2. that all the armed forces of the state (Assault Guards, police [carabinieros], security forces, etc.) are sent to the front,
3. the total destruction of the archives and records of all the capitalist and state institutions.

We made these requests from two points of view: the revolutionary and the ideological. As anarchists and as revolutionaries we understood that the existence of the Civil Guard, clearly a reactionary body, was a danger that across time and particularly during this movement has so openly revealed its spirit and its procedures.

The Civil Guard was odious to us and we didn't want to see it because overwhelming reasons made us distrust it. Because of that we asked for its disarmament and that is why we disarmed it.

We asked that all armed bodies go to the front, because the front lacked men and arms. Given the state of things in the city there was more of a need at the front and their presence in the city was a hindrance. We have reached the half-way point and we will not stop until it is complete.

Finally, we asked for the destruction of all those documents that represented the tyrannical and oppressive past, before which our free consciousness rebelled. We destroyed the papers and thought to seize for ourselves those buildings that, like the court [Audiencia], served to entomb revolutionaries in prisons, which now that we have found ourselves in the dawn of a free society have no reason to be.

These objectives took us to Valencia, and this was that which we fulfilled with the procedure that seemed most fitting to us.

Furthermore, during our stay in Valencia, we saw that while negotiations to buy arms failed, for lack of cash, many institutions had a great quantity of gold and other precious metals; this was what persuaded us to seize the gold, the silver, and the platinum of several jewelers, insignificant amounts of which were handed over to the organization.

We did all that was just explained. Now we will see what we didn't do.

We are accused of sacking buildings. This is a lie. We defy he who would tell us the worth of our deeds and that would say that our men obeyed whims or made more disturbances than necessary. We are accused of assassinating people in disgraceful plots; this is a dirty lie. What have we done to justify these accusations? What crimes have we committed? An unfortunate accident, which we were the first to lament and condemn seems to be the accusers' proof. The death of the socialist comrade José Pardo Aracil is positively not our doing. This was demonstrated the same night by the fact that no member of our column intervened in this. WE HAVE NEVER THOUGHT OF ATTACKING THE SOCIALIST OR OTHER ANTI-FASCIST GROUPS, much less in the sly way that Pardo was assaulted. Without wanting to say that we renounce our purpose, which is the only reason for our struggle, we know that a fight among us would be criminal at this time. We have before us a formidable enemy; all our strengths must be directed to destroying it.

We believe that with this said that our operations will remain clear. We are revolutionaries and we have behaved as such: with uprightness and nobility. None but a cretin could see bad intentions or fickleness in our behavior.

Our position, during these decisive moments in Spain's development, is clear and final. With all our men, with all our energy, with all our enthusiasm, we will fight until this vile fascism is squashed forever. We fight to achieve the SOCIAL REVOLUTION. We are marching towards anarchism. For this, now and later, we will defend anything that tends towards living with more liberty, breaking the yokes that would oppress us, destroying the vestiges of the past.

We say to all workers, revolutionaries, and anarchists: at the front and in the rear, wherever you are, fight against the enemies of your liberties, destroy fascism. And also stop, by the fruits of your endeavors, the return of a dictatorial regime that would be the continuation, with all its vices and defects, of all those things that we've been trying to make disappear. Now with arms and later with the tools of labor learn to live without tyrants, and develop yourselves along the only road to liberty. This is the feeling of the "Iron Column" which we expose clearly and plainly.

Brothers [Compañeros], death to fascism! Long live the social revolution! Viva la Anarquía!

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A Translation of the "Iron Column" material from Jose Peirats, La CNT en la Revolucion Espanola, Ruedo Iberico, 1971. v1 p231-3
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