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Industry, Labour and Politics in Catalonia
1897-1914

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the development of trade unionism and working class political organisations in Catalonia between 1897 and 1914. Our study of the labour movement has been put within the context of both the structure of Catalan industry, and the response of the state and employer associations to the challenge of labour. The beginnings of the industrial revolution in Catalonia can be traced to the first half of the nineteenth century, when there grew up an important factory-based cotton textile industry. However, Catalan industry was faced with a serious difficulty. Outside Catalonia the Spanish economy remained backward and agrarian based. Demand for capital goods and manufactures was, therefore, low. This handicap slowed the rate of growth, and held up the technological transformation of Catalan industry. None the less, Catalan workers were not unaffected by the advance of capitalist relations of production. In order to cut costs and increase productivity cotton textile industrialists tried to replace male by female labour. Furthermore, in metallurgy and the artisanal trades new machinery was introduced piecemeal, and efforts were made to transform apprenticeship into cheap labour. Strong working class opposition was mobilised against such schemes. However, Catalan unions were faced with state repression and employer intransigence. This made it difficult for the workers to form stable bureaucratic unions which could enter into collective bargaining with employers. This fact had important political implications. It has been argued that the trade union practice of the Socialists was geared to the existence of such federations. The difficulties faced in organising them, therefore, hindered Socialist penetration. Unions in Catalonia were often unstable, and social conflict in much of Catalan industry was severe. This, together with the unwillingness of the state to carry through a serious programme of social reforms, increased working class support for the anarchists and syndicalists, for both anarchists and syndicalists rejected conciliatory wage negotiations and state intervention, and instead favoured the use of direct action and the revolutionary General Strike. By 1914 the Catalan working class was still poorly organised. However, within the unions, it was the supporters of direct action who were in the strongest position. This provided a springboard for the rapid growth of the anarcho-syndicalist labour federation, the CNT, between 1916 and 1919. On the other hand, the inability of the Socialists to gain a strong union base in Catalonia also prevented them from becoming an important political force. As a result, left wing politics remained dominated by middle class led republican parties.
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A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

All Catalan personal and place names have been written in Catalan. Similarly, the names of all bodies which operated specifically in the ambit of Catalonia have been written in Catalan. The names of those bodies which operated in other parts of Spain or throughout the Spanish state have been written in Castilian. Thus, for example, we would refer to the anarcho-syndicalist Catalan regional labour confederation as the Confederació Regional del Treball, but we would refer to the Spanish national confederation as the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo.
INTRODUCTION

This work is a social and political study of the Catalan working class during the first decade and a half of the twentieth century. The first part of the study analyses the social structure and economic development of urban Catalonia, working conditions in Catalan industry, trade union organisation and strikes. Its principal aim is to understand the pattern of labour relations in the various industrial sectors, and in particular the causes behind the proverbial militancy of the Catalan working class. Over the past twenty years historians of the British, French and German labour movements have undertaken a large amount of work on the social history of their respective working classes. In Catalonia, however, this type of work is still in its infancy. As a result, the background and class of workers most commonly involved in social protest is still unclear. Research into these questions is, therefore, urgently needed. This study aims to take a first step in this direction.

The work was conceived of as a general study of the Catalan working class. Nevertheless, three geographical areas have been singled out for special attention. First and foremost, of course, Barcelona. During the first decade of the twentieth century there were some 145,000 workers in the Catalan capital. Numerically this represented nearly half the entire Catalan working class. Barcelona was, therefore, the metropolis of Catalonia. The industrial and semi-industrial towns around the city had only a few thousand workers each. In these circumstances, most attempts to form craft, industrial or general labour federations had to count on the support of the Barcelona workers. Indeed, on most occasions it was the Barcelona working class that was behind such initiatives. Furthermore, Barcelona was then as now the political and cultural capital of Catalonia. Accordingly, any political movement which wished to have an impact on the national political stage needed strong support in the city.

However, by the late nineteenth century much of the region’s largest industry, cotton textiles, was located outside Barcelona. The second area to which special attention has been given are the textile towns which grew up on the banks of the rivers Ter and Freser in the North-East of Catalonia. There were about 16,000 thousand workers employed on the Ter and Freser. This represented about 20 per cent of the region’s cotton textile labour force. More important, it was in the largest of these towns, in the Ter and Freser valleys, that the region’s strongest cotton textile unions were formed, and where many of the industry’s most protracted labour disputes were to be fought. Moreover, the cotton textile industry was an exception to the rule that most labour federations were founded from Barcelona. Indeed, during the first decade of the twentieth century the Ter and Freser valley workers played a leading role in attempts to integrate all textile workers into a single industrial federation. Around Barcelona, as has been noted, there were several
industrial towns. The largest of these was Sabadell, and this town is the third area singled out for detailed study. By 1914 the town was second only to Barcelona in size, and had a workforce of about 12,000. About half of these workers were engaged in the manufacture of woollen textiles. Woollen textiles was the second largest of the region's textile industries. Sabadell was the largest producer of woollen textile fabrics. The Sabadell woollen textile workers were able to unionise, and in 1899 and 1910 were involved in major conflicts with their employers, which were to have repercussions throughout the Catalan labour movement. Furthermore, the Sabadell woollen textile workers were also to play a very active role in attempts to set up textile and general labour federations in the region.

All in all, then, the workers on which our study focuses represented about 60 per cent of the Catalan working class. The real importance of these workers was, however, that they formed the backbone of the Catalan labour movement. In addition, with very few exceptions the major labour disputes of the period 1897 to 1914 involved workers from one of these areas. The study of union organisation and labour protest in Barcelona and Sabadell, and on the Ter and Freser, is therefore vital for a clear understanding of the development of the Catalan labour movement as a whole.

As an aid to our study of labour relations in Catalan industry the concept of the labour process has proved especially useful. The labour process refers to the technical organisation of work in a unit of production. This includes the technology employed, the division of labour which operates, payments systems and the pace and intensity of work. In recent years historians have drawn attention to the importance of conflict between employers and workers for control of the labour process. In the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century skilled workers were in a strong position on the shop floor. Through apprenticeship restrictions they were able to limit entry into the trade. Moreover, in artisanal workshops little or no machinery was used and the division of labour was rudimentary. The product's manufacture was, as a result, totally dependent on the skill of the artisan, who could therefore dictate both the method and pace of work.

However, the development of a market economy encouraged manufacturers to intervene in the labour process in order to rationalise production and reduce costs. Often technological innovation reduced the skill content of a particular occupation. Employers were then tempted to introduce new work practices aimed at maximising profits. These goals, however, could easily lead manufacturers into conflict with their workers, who feared new divisions of labour which might make their skills worthless, and could either result in their unemployment or push them down to the same level as the unskilled proletariat.¹

The manufacturers control over the labour process was greatest within modern industry. Industrial establishments usually enjoyed a greater use of machinery and the division of labour was more sophisticated. The industrial worker typically operated no apprenticeship system. In addition, he was not usually highly skilled and could, therefore, easily be replaced. Nevertheless, the process of deskillling associated with the development of modern capitalist manufacture was by no means unilinear. Capital and labour often reached a compromise over the technical organisation of production, and even unskilled workers were not automatons who could totally be dictated to by their employers. Indeed, on occasion industrial workers were able to carve out a strong position for themselves at the point of production. The classic example is that of the English self-acting mule spinners in the second half of the nineteenth century. They were factory workers employed in large mills. Work on the self-acting mules was not intrinsically highly skilled, yet the spinners were able to impose informal apprenticeship restrictions. Each mule spinner supervised two machines, and worked with four young assistants or piecers. Only when the spinner retired could the piecer take his place. Recruitment into the trade was thereby severely restricted, allowing the mule-spinner to earn the equivalent of a skilled craftsman's wage. The intensity and outcome of conflicts over the labour process is, therefore, contingent upon the specific historical conjuncture. Our study of the Catalan labour movement, then, will need to be set within the context of such factors as the pattern of Catalan economic development, the attitudes of employers towards organised labour, and the nature and policies of the Spanish state.

However, the causes behind labour militancy are not usually studied in isolation. Historians are interested in such matters to the extent that they aid our understanding of the reasons for which workers adopt specific trade union and political options. In this sense all social history is at the same time political history. The present work has two closely related political questions very much in mind. First, the causes behind the relative success of anarchism within the Catalan labour movement since it was first introduced into Spain during the years of the First International. In the second place, the explanation of the inability of the Spanish Socialists to play a leading role in Catalan politics despite the fact that it was the most industrialised region in the country.

There have been a large number of attempts to explain the success of anarchism in Catalonia. These can be divided into several categories. The first set stress the impact of rural immigrant labour from Southern and Eastern Spain. A second set of explanations emphasise the importance of the small-scale disperse nature of Catalan industry. A third set may, finally, be

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grouped under the title “populist” explanations of Catalan anarchism, as they treat anarchism as an interclass popular rather than as specifically working class phenomenon, and usually dwell on the close relationship between the anarchists and republicans.

Interpretations which try and explain the phenomenon of anarchism in Catalonia through the immigrant labour argument have in mind the rapid growth in anarchist influence in Andalusia since the 1870s. There has in fact been considerably more work done on rural anarchism in Southern Spain than on its urban counterpart. Much of this work has seen anarchism as particularly suited to the latifundia agrarian structure of Andalusia. Anarchism was, it is usually claimed, rooted in the vast inequalities of income and wealth in the region with half-starved landless labourers on the one hand, and rich and powerful landowners on the other. The power of the local political bosses or caciques, made local elections a farce, hence the popularity of anarchist antipoliticism. The isolation of the local villages from the state, with only the hated rural police or Civil Guard and tax collectors as evidence of its existence, lent credibility to anarchist calls for its disappearance. This isolation also formed the basis of support for the anarchists' totally decentralised vision of the society of the future, with the commune or collective as the centre of social life. Finally, the peasants' protest is often seen as millenarian in that no attempt was made to organise the take over of power. In this respect the mythical anarchist revolutionary General Strike is thought to have substituted other more rational forms of struggle.4

Anarchist inspired labour organisations have, on the other hand, often been seen as unsuited to the needs of urban workers. These workers, it was felt, tended towards reformism, and were more at home in the more centralised trade unions and political parties of the Socialists. This left the tricky problem of anarchist success in Catalonia. The simple answer was to argue that it was a result of massive immigration from Southern and Eastern Spain into urban Catalonia, and in particular Barcelona and the surrounding industrial towns. The idea that non-Catalan rural immigrants formed the backbone of the powerful anarchist or anarcho-syndicalist trade union confederation, the CNT, set up in 1910, found favour with middle class Catalanists, who felt that its radical tactics must be in contradiction with Catalan seny (i.e., good sense), and with some Marxists struggling to explain the anarchists' continued success in working class circles.

The idea has, in fact, since been extended and it has been argued that all peasant immigrants have had a radicalising influence on the Catalan labour movement. Thus the prestigious Catalan historian, Jaume Vicens Vives, maintained that from the 1830s immigrant unskilled workers and subproletarians (not necessarily, in this case, from outside Catalonia) were the insurrectionary elements in the popular struggles of the period from 1833-1868, and that they thereafter formed the backbone of Catalan anarchism. The theory, therefore, attempts to explain both labour militancy

and the success of anarchism. It has since been uncritically accepted by a large number of historians, although it is often not clear whether these immigrants were anarchist because they were “uprooted”, because they had brought anarchist ideology with them from their rural homelands, or because their semi-peasant nature predisposed them to embrace anarchist ideals.\(^5\)

The “uprooting theory” was, until comparatively recently, adopted by many historians to explain worker militancy in nineteenth century Western Europe. Recently, however, historians have shown that there was an important time lag between immigration into an urban environment and integration into working class protest movements, and that unskilled labour was not an important element in the labour movement until the First World War.\(^6\) As shall be seen, Catalonia was no exception in this respect, with skilled workers representing the mainstay of trade union organisation and labour protest through to 1914.

The second line of inquiry, which tries to establish a link between anarchism and small-scale industry, has at its origin the Marxist claim that anarchism was an individualist petty bourgeois phenomenon and that whereas Marxists attracted support amongst the industrial factory proletariat the anarchists could only gain that of workers employed in small-scale industry.\(^7\) Thus the leading trotskyist theoretician, Andreu Nin, stated in the 1920s that “petty bourgeois” anarchism had prevailed over Marxism in Catalonia as a result of the predominance of small-scale agriculture and scattered nature of its industry.\(^8\) It may immediately be noted that there was a logical slippage between the claim that anarchism was petty bourgeois and the statement that it found support in small-scale industry, given that its supporters would not then presumably be petit bourgeois (clerks, office workers, shopkeepers etc.), but skilled workers and artisans. This was the result, perhaps, of the fact that the term petty bourgeois anarchism was more a form of abuse than a fully worked out analysis.

The idea that anarchism and small scale industry went together has, nevertheless, been developed by historians. Recent interpretations have maintained that the anarchists' ideal of decentralised labour federations, with each individual union retaining a large degree of autonomy,


\(^8\) Andreu Nin, “¿Por qué nuestro movimiento obrero ha sido anarquista?” Reproduced in, Albert Balcells (ed.), *El Arraigo de Anarquismo en Cataluña* (Barcelona 1973), pp. 106-108.
was well suited to the small-scale artisanal nature of much of Catalan industry. This is again compared to the more centralised, bureaucratic, nature of the Socialist UGT (*Unión General de Trabajadores*), whose strength it is often stated lay amongst the industrial workers of Northern Spain. 9

Such an analysis fits in well with claims that the success of French syndicalism - a movement closely related to Spanish anarchism - was based on the small-scale artisanal nature of much of French industry. 10 Nonetheless, a closer look at the actual distribution of Socialist and anarchist support in Spain tends to throw the existence of this relationship into doubt. The UGT was from its foundation in 1888 until the turn of the century not a confederation of industrial workers but, largely, of artisans. The only labour federation to function within the UGT through to 1898 was the Typographical Federation, and the printers were the epitome of a highly-skilled, craft-based, artisanate. From the late nineteenth century through to the Second Republic the centre of Socialist strength in Spain was Madrid, and as the Spanish labour historian Santos Juliá has shown, their strength in the capital was based on the relatively cordial relations between masters and men in the almost pre-industrial structure of Madrid industry. This fact fitted well with the Socialists cautious approach to industrial relations, which placed a premium on negotiations and saw the strike weapon only as a last resort. It was only during the Second Republic that the CNT was able to gain a foothold in Madrid. This was the result of the appearance of a large-scale construction industry in part a consequence of a massive public works programme undertaken by the Republican government. There followed a great influx of unskilled labour into the construction industry, and the CNT was given its opportunity when it became clear that the high level of industrial conflictivity in the large new companies could not be solved through existing negotiating procedures. In this case, therefore, anarchist success was actually based on the breakup of small-scale artisanal industry. 11

The Socialists also gained increasing support in the northern Spanish province of Biscay during the 1890s. Given that during these years the region's iron and steel industry was experiencing rapid industrial growth this has often been taken as a sign that the Socialists were mobilising the support of these industrial workers. However, as Juan Pablo Fusi has demonstrated, the Basque Socialists had little support from the iron and steel workers of Baracaldo and Sestao until the years 1915-1916. Until then their constituency was made up of workers from the small and medium-scale industry of Biscay's urban centres, and the open cast miners of the

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Somorrostro iron ore field. After 1910 support for the Socialists amongst industrial workers increased, with the Asturian coal miners and Spanish railway workers at the fore. But, there again, the war years also saw the Socialists for the first time gain some support amongst the rural labourers of Southern Spain. The increase in this support was especially rapid during the first years of the Second Republic, and by 1932 38 per cent of UGT affiliates were landless labourers.

It is perhaps because of the difficulties of this approach that many recent studies of anarchism have developed what we have termed a "populist" interpretation. These studies have focused on the development, in nineteenth century urban Catalonia, of a popular, interclass, cultural milieux. The ideology which bound workers, masters and petty bourgeois together was based on freethought and anticlericalism. These ideas formed part of the bourgeois rationalist tradition, which opposed progress, education and science to the church and tradition. Nevertheless, during the nineteenth century they penetrated deeply into working class culture, and formed the basis of the large number of free-thinking clubs, lay schools, masonic and spiritualist societies which sprang up during the second half of the nineteenth century. Bourgeois rationalism was the staple of republican ideology. In addition, it has been claimed that the anarchists laid far more stress on this question than did the Socialists. Thus, it is argued that the anarchists shared many of the same presuppositions as the republicans and that for their supporters the differences between them were often very blurred. Enric Ucelay de Cal has, moreover, given the argument a socio-economic twist by claiming that the disperse nature of Catalan industry provided the economic underpinning to this interclass alliance.

An offshoot of this interpretation is that developed by a group of historians formed around the student of labour and nationalist movements, Josep Termes. Termes has argued that there was a close relationship between popular protest movements and the national question in nineteenth century Catalonia. He maintains that with the Catalan bourgeoisie linked, albeit in a subordinate position, to the dominant Castilian-Andalusian ruling oligarchy, the fight against an alien centralising state was conducted by the "popular classes". It was in the context of this struggle that these classes developed a national identity, and therefore tended to form specifically Catalan unions and political parties. This remained a crucial feature of Catalan political life through to the

twentieth century and a party which, like the Socialists, did not take it into account was doomed to failure.¹⁵

On a number of occasions in the late nineteenth century the Spanish Socialists did, indeed, argue that the anarchists and republicans indirectly aided each other, and were united in their attacks on the Socialists.¹⁶ However, for the populist view to stand it would be necessary to prove there existed an “anarcho-republican” cultural milieu from which the Socialists were actually excluded. To do this it is not enough to quote Pablo Iglesias on the primacy of the class struggle. What is needed is a study of the actual practice of the Socialists within Catalan social and cultural life. Once this is undertaken, as shall be seen, many of the claims listed above are called into question. Furthermore, underlying the debate is the question of the extent to which anarchism can be regarded as in some ways an interclass rather than a specifically working class movement. This is also a question to which considerable attention will be given.

The arguments put forward by Josep Termes serve to highlight the importance of the state in shaping middle and working class protest. It is certainly true, for example, that the most strongly supported current of republicanism in nineteenth century Catalonia, the federalists, shared with the anarchists a common distrust of central government. Nevertheless, the attempt to link the anarchists to Catalanism would appear dubious. The Catalan anarchist labour federations found no difficulty in joining up with workers’ unions from the rest of Spain. Furthermore, within both anarchism and republicanism there were important anticatalanist currents. In the case of republicanism, indeed, the dominant group in Barcelona politics between 1901-1923, the “Lerrouxists” were strongly anticatalanist.

As to the interpretation advanced by Ucelay de Cal, it tends to presuppose relatively cordial relations between masters and men in much of Catalan industry. Yet the main aspect of anarchist trade union strategy from the late nineteenth century was precisely its radicalism, with emphasis placed on the need to generalise individual strikes to the rest of the labour force, culminating perhaps in the revolutionary General Strike. The problem here is, perhaps, the widely held belief that small-scale industry necessarily implies class harmony. In nineteenth century Europe this was by no means the case. It is a well established fact that attempts to undermine established work practices and degrade the skilled status of journeyman artisans resulted in a high degree of industrial militancy and political radicalism. It is, for example, often held that such workers were at the root of the militancy of French labour in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. On


the other hand, large-scale industrial enterprises often had the necessary resources to maintain labour quiescent through a mixture of strict labour discipline and paternalism. This was the case of much German heavy industry through to 1914. Finally new categories of industrial worker, even if able to unionise, would not necessarily have a radicalising influence. One needs, in this respect, only to think of example of the English cotton mule spinners who, as has been noted, were a relatively high paid group of workers, and played a key supervisory role on the shop floor on behalf of their employers. Hence they formed an important part of the conservative “aristocracy of labour” which emerged in Britain during the second half of the nineteenth century. 17

What, therefore, emerges from these conflicting sets of explanations is in the first place the need for more detailed research on the composition of the Catalan working class. All too often the terms artisan and industrial worker are used in too loose a fashion, with insufficient regard for their actual content. More detailed studies are needed on the labour process in Catalan industry, placed within the context of the overall development of the economy. This would put us in a stronger position to analyse the causes behind the high level of industrial conflict visible in much of Catalan industry. In order to see how these conflicts were articulated at a political level it is, moreover, necessary to study the political and trade union policies of the anarchists, and Socialists. Only by so doing will it be possible to consider how successfully they related to the day to day struggles of the workers they purported to represent.

However, the political activity of the workers was not merely a result of conflicts at the workplace being translated into the wider political arena. Labour politics needs also to be related to the whole question of state formation in nineteenth and early twentieth century Spain. Thus it was in opposition to the state that many aspects of working class and popular ideology in Catalonia were forged, and it was in their totally different views on state intervention and participation in electoral politics that many of the fundamental differences between members of the Spanish Socialist party and anarchists were to be found. This thesis is intended as a contribution to the debate on these questions.

PART ONE

THE ROOTS OF LABOUR MILITANCY
CHAPTER ONE

CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT, INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE AND THE LABOUR PROCESS. PART I: THE TEXTILE INDUSTRIES

As in a number of parts of Europe the first half of the nineteenth century saw the beginnings of an industrial revolution in Catalonia. As in Britain the “leading sector” of this revolution was the cotton textile industry. Catalan industry was, however, almost unique in that had to try and prosper within the context of a backward agrarian economy, and a state bureaucracy which until well into the nineteenth century showed little interest in the country's industrial future. This fact is of fundamental importance for our understanding of nineteenth and early twentieth century Catalan history, for it conditioned both the pace of Catalan industrialisation and the structure of the emerging industrial sector of the economy. Indirectly, it also conditioned the policies industrialists adopted with respect to the emergent labour movement. It is to an analysis of these questions that this first chapter will, therefore, turn.

Over most of continental Europe in the early nineteenth century feudal impediments to capitalist development were swept away by the state, even though this remained in the hands of the old landed ruling classes. The paradigm example of this process was Germany, where an alliance was forged between the new middle classes and the land-holding aristocracy. Through this “pact of iron and rye” the middle classes proved happy to intermarry with representatives of the old order and adopt many of their mores and customs as long as their interests were safeguarded, and the landed aristocrats retained power but were willing to carry out the policies advocated by triumphant liberal ideology. This should not perhaps be too surprising. Once all feudal remnants had been swept away, and the factors of production could be bought and sold freely on the open market, agrarian and industrial interests, after all, came to represent two fractions of the same bourgeois class.1

In Spain the years 1833-1856 also saw lands held in mortmain disentailed and sold off to the highest bidders. After the loss of the greater part of the country's colonial empire at the beginning of the nineteenth century Catalan cotton textile industrialists looked to the internal market to sell their manufactures. They, therefore, also accepted a political system which protected Spain's landowners from foreign competition through high protective tariffs, as long as equally high duties on foreign manufactures reserved them the lions share of the Spanish market.

The great difference between Spain and the leading industrial states was, however, that throughout the nineteenth century it remained an overwhelmingly agrarian country. This is illustrated by Table 1.1, which outlines the percentage of the active population of Barcelona Province and Spain employed in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy between 1860 and 1920. As the table makes clear until the 1880s industrial development was limited to Catalonia. Indeed, up to the war years of 1914-1918 Spain's relation with the European core states was typical of the underdeveloped periphery: it supplied minerals and foodstuffs and imported manufactured products in return.

Table 1.1. Distribution of the active population in Spain and Barcelona Province by sectors, 1860-1920

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<th>Spain</th>
<th>Barcelona Province</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>21.9</td>
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* Catalonia


Moreover, Spanish agriculture was in European terms highly inefficient. In much of northern Spain where landholdings were very small production was at little more than subsistence level. In the southern provinces of New Castile, Extremadura and Andalusia, landholdings were very large. The typical units of production were the latifundia. These were vast tracts of land, normally specialising in the production of grain, and worked by great numbers of landless labourers or braceros. Productivity on these estates was very low, and the distribution of wealth in these areas, with a few rich landowners on the one hand and the half starved braceros on the other, was hardly calculated to stimulate demand for manufactures. Catalan industry was, therefore, set apart from its European counterparts in that it found itself dependent on a backward agrarian economy, whose demand for industrial products was generally low and, furthermore, fluctuated wildly according to the state of the harvest. 2

The continued predominance of agriculture, and the fact that Madrid rather than Barcelona was the political capital of Spain, ensured that during the whole period under study it was the large scale landowners who were most effectively able to influence government policy. This fact was to have a profound influence on Spain's economic, social and political development. On the economic front the years 1860-80 saw an important growth in agricultural production. However,

2. For an overview of Spanish agriculture see, Joseph Harrison, An Economic History of Modern Spain (Manchester, 1978), pp. 5-10.
this was due more to an extension in the area under cultivation than to increases in productivity. In the late 1870s falling transport costs and the opening up of virgin land for grain production in Russia and North America led to the European market being flooded by cheap imports of grain. Spain was affected later than most European countries because its duties on imported grains were already amongst the highest in Europe. The reprieve was nevertheless to be short lived, and from the mid-1880s the country's agrarian interests began ceaselessly to campaign for an increase in tariff levels. Their demand were answered at the end of 1890, and in the following years the tariff was raised still further.  

Perhaps the Government had to take some action. Indeed, all European governments with the exception of Britain did take measures to stem imports of foreign grain. Behind the towering tariff wall there were improvements in the productivity of Spanish agriculture, and an increase in the purchasing power of the rural population was visible, especially after 1910. However, these improvements were largely limited to newer, export oriented sectors, such as fruit and garden produce, in which Spain enjoyed comparative advantages. The main effect of the new prohibitive duties was to consolidate the inefficient structure of most Spanish agriculture. The major impediment to the country's industrial development, therefore, remained. Moreover, the decline in grain prices which had begun in 1880 was halted at the end of the decade, and from 1895 the depreciation of the Spanish peseta on international markets provoked an increase in the price of foodstuffs. As a result grain prices in Spain remained amongst the highest in Europe. The high cost of living acted as a further break on demand for manufactures. Furthermore, the high price of foodstuffs made it difficult for industrialists to keep down wage costs. Thus coton textile manufacturers maintained the somewhat exaggerated belief that wage-costs were amongst the highest in Europe, and this despite the fact that the level of wages were often little above the bread line. This fact has obvious social implications and will be discussed in more detail later.

As table 1.1. indicates the social structure of Barcelona Province, which saw a modern cotton textile industry grow up between the years 1830 and 1886, was very different from the rest.


of Spain. After mid-century the industry experienced sustained economic growth, and the decade between 1876 and 1886 became known as the gold fever or *febrem d'or*. Yet Catalonia's drive to industrialise was beset by a number of problems. Not only was growth limited by the nature of the Spanish market, but the lack of any high quality coal reserves also served to increase production costs.

Asturias was the only region in Spain with large coal fields. However, these were not developed until the late nineteenth century. Moreover, the coal was generally of poor quality, and underdeveloped transport facilities greatly increased its price. This lack of native coal at a time when the steam engine had become the key source of energy of the new industrial age was indeed a serious handicap. During the nineteenth century most coal was imported from Britain through the port of Barcelona. Consequently, those industrialists who set up steam powered factories moved to the coastal plain in order to minimise transport costs. The city of Barcelona proved too cramped to accommodate the rapidly growing new industry, and it was the surrounding area known as the Pla which attracted most of the factories. Two districts in particular, Sant Martí de Provençals and Sants, became centres of cotton textile manufacture. In 1897, along with the other outlying districts, they were incorporated into Barcelona. Weaving in particular thrived in the towns around Barcelona - the so-called Mitja Muntanya - and in towns located near the coast, both to the north and south. (see Fig 1.1.)

Imported coal, nevertheless, remained expensive. From the 1850s, an increasing number of industrialists adopted a very different solution. They moved their establishments to the banks of rivers in order to take advantage of cheap hydraulic power. This solution was particularly attractive to the owners of relatively large spinning and integrated spinning and weaving mills for whom energy requirements were an important part of total costs. They congregated in two basic areas. In the first place along the rivers Llobregat and Cardoner in the districts or comarcas of the Baix Llobregat, Bagés and Bergueda. The greatest congregation of factories in this area were to be found between the towns of Manresa and Avià in the so-called Alt Llobregat. In the second place large number of factories were to be found on the banks of the Ter and Freser further to the north-east, in the Ripollés, Osona and Garótxa comarcas. The greatest concentration of factories was to be found between the towns of Ripoll and Roda in an area known as the Ter Valley. The whole area outside Barcelona and the surrounding towns was known as the Alta Muntanya, and this term was particularly used to refer to these river bank factories.

These factories proved economically viable, for the disadvantages of higher transport costs and a lack of trained personnel were more than made up for by cheap power and, in most areas, by lower labour costs. Thus, in 1913 of the 1,800,000 spindles employed in the industry, 1,200,000
were to be found in establishments along the river banks of the *Alta Muntanya*. However, it should be emphasised that costs were only lower in Catalan terms. The rivers on which these factories operated were of the typical Mediterranean variety. They carried little water most of the year round and were liable to dry up in Summer and ice up and on occasions flood in winter. In Catalonia the cost of both steam and hydraulic power was high by international standards. 7

The difficulties faced by the cotton textile industry became more acute in the 1880s. Growth in the previous period had been dependent on the expansion of Spain's agriculture, and hence the growth in internal demand. The crisis of Spanish agriculture, provoked by the flood of cheap imported grains onto the home market seriously affected production. The febre d'or, therefore, ended in the economic depression of 1885-86. Industrialists reacted in two ways. In the first place, they made serious efforts to reduce costs through technological modernisation and the reorganisation of work structures in their plants.

The first reaction was justified by the claim that wage costs in Catalan industry were the highest in Europe. Thus in the 1870s the leading manufacturer Josep Ferrer Vidal stated that the yearly cost of a spindle in Catalonia was 150 per cent greater than in England and 37.8 per cent greater than in France. Of this difference 27.9 per cent and 31.8 per cent respectively was made up by wage costs. This was no doubt an exaggeration. In 1889, F Alzina, the director of one of Catalonia's most famous factories, the Vapor Vell of Sants, calculated relative costs for a similarly sized Catalan and English factory. He began with the premise that the Catalan plant used steam power and operated in the Barcelona Pla. He reached the conclusion that the Catalan factory's total costs would be 17.46 per cent greater, and that this difference divided in the manner indicated in Table 1.2.

Compared to the estimate made by Ferrer Vidal, F Alsina considerably reduces both the total difference in costs, and the percentage of that difference taken up by wage-costs. However, it should be noted that Alsina's calculation refers to two similarly sized factories operating at the same technical level. As shall be seen, most Catalan factories did not match their English equivalents on either score, a fact which served to further widen differentials. It may, however, be surprising that wage costs were at all higher in Catalonia than in England. As has been suggested the cotton textile industrialists probably overstated their case. Evidence for other Catalan industries for the first decade of the twentieth century indicates that wage costs in Catalonia were in general low in comparison with those of her main industrial rivals. Nevertheless, two factors did keep wage costs up. First, the high level of food prices, which made Barcelona one of most expensive cities in Europe. The chief cause was the high duties on imported grains, but the situation was worsened by governments' reliance on indirect taxes on basic consumer goods. In these circumstances wages tended to be set at rather higher levels than would otherwise have been the case.

Second, the cotton manufacturers claimed that the productivity of Catalan labour was considerably lower than that of its European counterparts. Thus they maintained that Catalan workers were, in general, less disciplined and that a single worker was not able to mind as many

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8. Cited in Jordi Maluquer de Motes, "La Revolució Industrial", p. 120.
power-looms or spinning machines. It does seem that the slow pace of economic development in Catalonia made the task of forming a disciplined industrial labour force a difficult process. This was admitted by a group of Catalan trade unionists who visited England in 1889. Yet they also pointed out that the main reason for the English worker’s higher level of productivity was the “greater specialisation (of the workforce), better organisation in the factories, and high technical preparedness”.  

### Table 1.2. Relative costs of a Catalan and English Cotton Textile Mill 1889

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Difference in Costs (percentage)</th>
<th>Percentage of total costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depreciation, Machinery,</td>
<td>21,629</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>23,102</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>27,798</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>20,776</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Costs</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest on Capital</td>
<td>70,281</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages</td>
<td>17,863</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Nonetheless, it was to the reduction of wage costs that the industrialists turned their attention in the 1880s. F. Alsina, for example, maintained that by reforming internal work structures in the Vapor Vell, he could reduce wage costs to significantly below the English level, and thereby cut the difference in total costs between the Catalan and English factories of his example to 7.4 per cent. In the mid-1880s a leading representative of the Catalan manufacturers, Guillermo Graell, had indeed been commissioned to make a study on ways to reduce costs in the industry. Many employers were, therefore, thinking along the same lines as Alsina.  

There were several ways in which wage costs could be reduced. The first was through technological innovation; the second by speed ups and the intensification of labour; the third though the substitution of male by cheaper female and child labour; and the forth simply by cutting wages and lengthening working hours. Often all four methods were very closely linked. Technically Catalan industry was near the level of its European competitors. Weaving had largely

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9. *Memoria Descriptiva Redactada por la Comisión Obrera Catalana Nombrada para Estudiar el Estado de las Fábricas de hilados y Tejidos de Algodón en Inglaterra...y sus Relaciones con el Obrero Inglés Ocupada en este Ramo de la Industria de dicha Nación en lo que Tiene Referencia a la Organización de las Fábricas, con el Organismo Societario y con las Leyes del Trabajo que los mismos Disfrutan* (Barcelona, 1889), pp. 24-28.

been mechanised and in spinning the modern self-acting mule predominated. Yet there was room for improvement. There were still a relatively large number of hand-looms and antiquated Crompton's mules in operation, and higher quality yarns were largely imported. Catalan manufacturers went a long way towards correcting these defects in what remained of the century. However, on the spinning side of the industry the major technological advance of this period was represented by the a spinning machine known as the ring-frame.

In Catalonia the division of labour which operated in the spinning mills was the same as in England. Women and children were employed in most of the preparatory processes, but men worked in the cardrooms and on the self-acting mules, the operation of which was regarded as too physically strenuous for women. As in England the spinner worked alongside a couple of young lads known as piecers. It was his job to supervise the work done by the piecers, and they were paid out of his wages. Furthermore, there is evidence to show that a piecer could be sacked by his spinner if his work was not up to standard or he did not show due respect. Like their English counterparts, therefore, the Catalan self-acting mule spinners played a supervisory role on the shop floor, and by limiting the recruitment of labour they could ensure they were paid relatively high wages. It should be noted that this division of labour was not universal. In the USA, for example, spinners and piecers worked together under an overseer. It was probably adopted in Catalonia for the simple reason that almost all the region's textile machinery was bought in England, and industrialists made frequent trips there to see it in operation. They were after all likely to copy the working arrangements that they found in the "workshop of the world".

In Catalonia the ring-frame had been used as an alternative to the self-acting mule since the 1840s, but its expansion was handicapped by relatively low productivity. However, this situation was to change in the 1870s, when a string of bitter conflicts between self-acting mule spinners and their employers in the United States stimulated the search for ways to improve the ring-frame. The result was a number of technical advances which made the substitution of the mule by the ring frame an attractive proposition. The relative advantages of the new machine were outlined in the Barcelona employer federation's mouthpiece, El Trabajo Nacional, a number of years later, when it stated:

15. ETN, 1 May 1912, pp. 89-92.
The ring-frame has advantages over the self acting mule with respect to the simplicity of its mechanism and the economy of its use. Its relatively simple operation permits, with all the more reason than on the self-acting mules, the employment of women and girls. It is for this reason that the ring-frame has stood out to such an extent that it has almost done away with its rival. However, in some cases it has not been able totally to replace it, and the self-acting mule is still used for yarns of higher quality. (...)

Nevertheless, new technical innovations are beginning to make it possible for the ring frame to advance in this direction.

In other words the ring-frame was more productive, and made possible a redivision of the labour force by the substitution of males by cheaper female and child labour. The fact that Catalan industry tended to specialise in the spinning of low counts of thread made its use particularly attractive and it was, as the above quotation indicates, rapidly adopted. Thus, in 1907 60 per cent of the industry's spindles were ring-frame. This represented the highest percentage of ring-frames in any European country with the exception of Italy. The pace of technological innovation in Catalonia was, in general, slower than that of her main continental rivals, but in this case she was at the forefront of change. (see Table 1.3.)

Table 1.3. Number of Self-Acting Mule and Ring-Frame Spindles in Europe's Six Largest Cotton Textile Industries 1907.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Self-acting mule spindles</th>
<th>Ring-frame spindles</th>
<th>Percentage of ring-frame spindles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>36,667,332</td>
<td>6,487,393</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>5,469,785</td>
<td>3,722,155</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>4,122,128</td>
<td>2,486,977</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2,307,267</td>
<td>1,277,167</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1,015,198</td>
<td>1,852,364</td>
<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>740,000</td>
<td>1,315,567</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


On the weaving side of the industry there were no such spectacular technological developments, but the changes which did take place were no less significant. In particular, since the mid-nineteenth century men had steadily been substituted by women on the power- looms. Thus in 1856 the Barcelona cotton textile industry had been 60 per cent male, and probably about 50 per cent of these were adults. By 1906, according to a census prepared by the Barcelona local government, men made up only 18.6 per cent of the industry in the city. Other sources, however, suggest that the proportion of adult men was considerably lower. The social-catholic publicist, Miguel Sastre i Sama, who carried out an exhaustive study of strikes in Barcelona between 1903 and 1914, maintained that adult males made up only 3.3 per cent of the of the workforce. He was
backed up by trade union sources, and evidence from other industrial towns in which weaving predominated also suggests that men formed well under 20 per cent of the labour force.16

The substitution of male for female workers seems to have speeded up in the 1880s. Weavers were also adamant that from this period there was a constant pressure on wage-rates, and that power-loom weavers' wages had fallen to under 20 pesetas a week since 1880.17 At the end of the century, moreover, employer attempts to cut piece rates through lengthening the pieces woven, and to raise productivity by increasing the number of power-loom each weaver had to mind were a source of constant tension in the industry. The moves designed to cut wages and reorganise work structures continued through to 1914. Thus the conservative daily, La Vanguardia, stated in 1901:18

The improvement of the jacquard looms in weaving and the substitution of the self-acting mules by ring-frames, requires organisation to be very different than at present. It's necessary to save wages, eliminate the men and increase production, without there being a growth in general expenditure, which is already higher in our country than abroad as a result of the administrative chaos and the disorganised tax system

The industrialists' second response to the mid 1880s economic crisis was to press for higher tariff duties on cotton textile manufactures. Their calls were given extra urgency by the fact that in the early 1880s the government had signed two important commercial treaties with France and Britain. These were aimed primarily at expanding foreign markets for Spanish wine. In return for concessions facilitating the entry of Spanish wine into France and Britain's home markets the government had agreed to reduce import duties on their competitors' industrial exports.

This decision demonstrated the primacy of agrarian over industrial interests in the Spanish state. The Catalan manufacturers' chances of success were, however, enhanced by the fact that their demands coincided with the landowners' call for measures to be taken to stop the import of cheap foreign grains. None the less, the higher tariffs on manufactures were only to become a reality after 1890 as a result of the decision taken by France not to renew the commercial treaty it had signed in 1882. Industrial tariffs were increased sharply in 1891, with duties on imported iron, steel and textiles set at a particularly high level. Both Spanish industry and agriculture were

16. Miguel Izard, Industrialización, pp.69-74; "Censo Obrero de 1905", in Anuario Estadístico de la Ciudad de Barcelona, Ano IV, 1905 (Barcelona, 1907), p. 599; Miguel Sastre y Sama, Las Huelgas en Barcelona y sus Resultados durante el Año 1905 (Barcelona, 1907), pp. 12-13; La Jornada... 1913, p. 43. 53-54. 453-459.
17. El Socialista (ES), 27 January, 3 February 1899; La Jornada... 1913, p. 59. According to the labour journal Revista Social in Barcelona in 1873 power-loom weavers earned an average of 3.5 pesetas a day. In 1905 the average power-loom weaver's wage was 3.16 pesetas a day. See, Miguel Izard, "Entre la Impotencia y la Esperanza. La Unión Manufacturera (7-V-1872 - 4-VIII-1873)", Estudios de Historia Social no.4 (1978), p. 31. "Censo Obrero 1905", p. 618
now heavily protected. Moreover, the general European climate of nationalist ambition and inter-imperialist rivalry, coupled with the weakness of the Spanish economy, stimulated successive governments to go further. As a result, by 1906 Spain had the highest tariff barriers in Europe.19

This was not the only concession to manufacturing interests. In 1882 some compensation for the trade agreements had already been given to the Catalan cotton textile industrialists in the shape of progressively reduced duties on their exports to the remaining colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines). The position of the Catalans was made even more favourable in 1891 when the higher tariffs on manufactured imports were also applied to the colonies.

These measures helped the cotton industry weather the economic storm. Thus, during the 1890s the Catalan industrialists, further aided by a fall in the value of the peseta, were able to substitute part of the higher quality fabrics still imported. In addition, the colonies provided a ready market for the industry's surplus production. Cotton textile exports to the colonies increased sixteenfold between 1876-1880 and 1891-1895, and by 1897 total exports made up over 17 per cent of production. Yet, the growth in exports was to prove a very short term solution to the problems which faced the industry. Indeed, by encouraging an expansion in productive capacity this growth only served to deepen the over-production crisis which was to hit cotton textiles at the turn of the century.

After a brief and disastrous war with the United States Spain lost her last colonies in 1898. The cotton textile industry was, quite naturally, seriously affected. It could not now compete with the United States in the Antilles and, in consequence, by 1902 exports had fallen to only 5.5 per cent of total production.20 The industry was, nevertheless, able to fend off total disaster. During the first decade of the twentieth century there were, as has been seen, productivity gains in some sectors of Spanish agriculture, and sales of cotton garments did increase as a result. Moreover, desperate efforts were made to find alternative foreign markets. Some success was achieved in South America, and by 1913 exports were up to 8.5 per cent of total production. This did not, however, suffice to lift the cloud of gloom which hung over the industry. Throughout the period 1900-14 it suffered from chronic over-production, which fierce competition between manufacturers only served to exacerbate. Particularly hard hit by the need to cut production were the Alta Muntanya industrialists who used hydraulic power, for they usually rented the water at a fixed price. The more they used, therefore, the cheaper it became. It was already the case that they


20. ETN, 16 September 1907, p. 454; Eusebio Bertrand i Serra, "Un Estudio sobre la Industria Algodonera", *Boletin del Comité Regulador de la Comisión Textil Algodonera* (March, 1931).
had to limit output part of the year due to lack of water. Between 1900 and 1914, however, they found that often they could not work at full production even when water was abundant.  

The major difficulty faced by the industry was that despite technological renewal, in international terms it remained uncompetitive. Quite apart from high energy costs, its plants remained smaller than those of its international competitors, and the limitations of the internal market made product specialisation difficult. Thus in 1884 the Catalan economist, Andrés de Sard, pointed out that the average English spinning factory had between 40-50,000 spindles, while the average Catalan factory had under 10,000.  

Little had changed by the turn of the century. Thus, in 1901, in what seems the most reliable guide, La Vanguardia calculated that there were 1,325 weaving and spinning establishments in Catalonia. Given that there were at this time, excluding the textile finishing trades, about 80,000 cotton textile workers, the factory-worker ratio in the industry was roughly 1:60. Spinning factories were, however, larger than their counterparts in weaving, and the 312 such establishments in the region had an average of about 121 workers. With respect to spindles, the average per factory was still well under 10,000, at about 5,700, while the number of power looms per factory averaged 52. These figures probably underestimated the number of small weaving workshops that continued to operate throughout Catalonia. What they do indicate, however, is that although a true factory based industry had grown up, factory size still by no means matched that of the British, German and French enterprises. The drawbacks of this situation were summed up by a commission of leading cotton textile manufacturers, who stated in 1906: “A greater industrial concentration is necessary. Small factories are expensive and uneconomic because they have to distribute general costs over a smaller production, and because of the greater cost of machinery.”

21. ETN, 1 July 1904, p. 257; 16 July 1909, p. 237; La Jornada...1913, pp. 49-50. This also explains why night work was so common in areas in which hydraulic power was used.

22. Andrés de Sard, Comparación entre el Actual Estado de Desarrollo de La Industria Algodonera en Inglaterra y el de La Propia Industria en España (Barcelona, 1884), note. 1. p. 16.

23. ETN, 30 December 1901, pp. 195-196; 16 May 1911, pp. 239-240; Boletín de la Cámara de Industria y Comercio de Sabadell, January 1913; Federación Internacional de Industrias Algodoneras, Memoria del Congreso Celebrado en Bremen los Días 25 al 29 de Junio de 1906 (Barcelona, 1907); Many conflicting statistics were quoted in these years. The most accurate figures for the number of power-looms and spindles in Catalonia appear to be 55,982 and 1,800,000 respectively. The figure of 80,000 cotton textile workers was quoted by a number of sources. It is also backed up by other evidence. In 1908 the cotton textile employers Mutua de Fabricantes stated that there were 21 workers per 1000 spindles, 65 workers per 100 power-looms, 140 “ancillary service” workers per 1000 power-looms and 40,000 spindles; and 1 transport or warehouse employee per 1000 power-looms and 40,000 spindles. ETN, 1 August 1908, pp.289-290. In Catalonia this would leave us with 37,800 workers in spinning, 36,388 workers in weaving, 6,800 ancillary workers, and 49 warehousemen. A total of 81,037.

The structure of the cotton textile industry did not, however, simply consist of a series of small enterprises ruthlessly competing against each other. In Barcelona by the mid-nineteenth century a number of relatively large concerns operated a variation of the putting out system. Thus they stimulated the creation of small, subordinate, workshops, sold them the raw materials and commercialised the final product. In this way the large concerns were protected against the vagaries of Spain's internal market, with its frequent agricultural crises and consequent contractions in demand. The large firms were as a result able to limit large capital outlays on equipment which would not always be in use, and respond to the crises by cancelling orders from the subordinate workshops.25

It was this industrial structure that explains why there existed in Barcelona a number of what were, in Catalan terms, very large integrated spinning and weaving factories, the best known of which were La España Industrial and Batlló in Sants, and Sert Hermanos, Fabra y Coats and La Fabril Algodonera in Sant Martí and Sant Andreu de Palomar. Furthermore, when the spinning factories began to move to the river valleys, many kept their headquarters and warehouses in Barcelona, and, it appears, continued to farm out yarn to be woven by dependent enterprises. This practice was noted by the Socialist commentator J.J. Morato, who stated during the 1913 strike in the industry that, “the conflict must be resolved principally in Barcelona, not only because the excellent Catalan organisations are to be found in Barcelona, but also because many weaving establishments, despite all their independence and personality, are only branches of the formidable spinning factories, whose headquarters are to be found in Barcelona, (…)”.26

It was for this reason that one could talk of a haute bourgeoisie in cotton textiles, in which such family names as Muntades, Güell, Ferrer Vidal, and Rusiñol stand out. By no means all, but an important part of their wealth came from cotton textiles, and they were a leading force in the so-called Grupo Catalán, a powerful pressure group of Catalan industrial, financial and agrarian interests in the Spanish capital. Yet, it was also because of this industrial structure that a sixth of the industry's looms were still hand powered in 1907, and that there continued to exist a large number of small-scale employers scattered throughout the countryside near urban centres.27

It may be that the industrial structure of cotton textile manufacturing was well suited to the conditions of the Spanish market. Nevertheless, the objective handicaps faced by the industry meant that throughout the nineteenth century its growth rate was slower than that of its major


26. La Publicidad, 1 August 1913.

European competitors. Moreover, the situation worsened in the years which followed the mid-1880s agrarian crisis. Thus, while imports of raw cotton into Catalonia increased at a rate of 5.54 per cent a year between 1834-80, the growth rate was only 2.28 per cent between 1880 and 1913.  

Yet although by international standards the cotton textile industry grew at a slow pace, no other branch of the Catalan textile industries could match it. The woollen textile industry came closest, and it did so by following in the cotton industry's steps and mechanising production. In so doing the woollen textile industrialists were able to form a modern industry which at the beginning of the century was about 10 per cent the size of cotton. The relatively high price of woollen fabrics ensured that employers could more easily afford steam power, and thus there was no temptation to move to the river banks of northern Catalonia. Instead, to take advantage of external economies the industry became concentrated around Barcelona, and in particular in the historic woollen centres of Sabadell and Terrassa. These two important industrial towns were situated in the Vallés comarca. The largest was Sabadell, a town which with 28,125 inhabitants in 1913 was second in size only to Barcelona. Sabadell had an eminently industrial population. Thus, in 1914 there were over 11,000 workers in the town. About 5,500 of these workers were employed in woollen textiles, and they were responsible for about 40 per cent of the region's total production.  

The problems faced by the woollen industry were in many ways similar to those in cotton textiles. Most obviously, they both confronted the limitations imposed by the nature of the Spanish market. However, woollen textiles also had additional difficulties to overcome. Sabadell and Terrassa specialised in higher quality woollen fabrics, and consequently a high percentage of their wool requirements were for special classes which could not be obtained on the home market. They were, therefore, forced to import about 50 per cent of their wool, but because of the strength of the Castilian wool interests these imports carried a heavy duty. Moreover, the woollen textile industrialists had had even less success in opening up export markets than their colleagues in cotton. This was possibly a reflection of the fact that the climate in those areas in which exports were a possibility - South America and the remaining colonies - was not really suited to woollen fabrics. Consequently, at their high point in the 1890s exports to the colonies represented no more than 10 per cent of total production, and by 1907 this figure had fallen to 3 per cent. As in cotton textiles, therefore, the atmosphere during the years 1899-1909 was, in general, one of gloom and...

29. F. Rahola y Tremols, op cit, p. 397; Jordi Nadal, "La Formació", pp. 78-84.
despondency. The mood only lightened between 1910 and 1914, when there was a significant increase in internal demand for textile garments.\(^{30}\)

Just as in the cotton textile industry, the woollen textile industrialists also had to adapt to the nature of the Spanish market. The use of steam power required important capital outlays, and a number of steam powered factories (vapors) were built in Sabadell during the nineteenth century. However, after they had been built, more than one industrialist often shared the same premises. Moreover, especially at times of peak demand, it was common for the industrialists to rent out unused rooms (cuadras) to independent weavers known as drepaires. These drepaires were ex-workers who had managed to buy a power-loom or two, and they worked alone or with an assistant. They bought the yarn off the industrialist and sold him the final product.

The idea behind this arrangement on the part of the industrialists was as in the case of cotton textiles – to be able to meet peak demand, but not have to make large investments on equipment which would lie idle most of the time. The result was that establishments were generally small. Thus in 1914, even though the number of drepaires had declined drastically from their peak in the late nineteenth century, the average number of power-looms per employer was only 13.76, and there were just two employers with over 50 power-looms. This average was considerably lower than in cotton textiles, and a similar situation was to be found on the spinning side of the industry, where the average number of spindles per industrialist was 1,332.\(^{31}\) These figures can in one respect be misleading. On the weaving side of the industry at least, workers often worked in the same factory but under more than one employer. Yet they do show that the woollen textile industrialists were even less able to take advantage of economies of scale than their cotton textile counterparts. It was for this reason that Alba Rosell, an anarchist trade union organiser and educationalist born in Sabadell, could state that at this time there were very few really rich industrialists in the town, and that most continually feared a bankruptcy “which would return them to the class from which, in general, they had come”.\(^{32}\)

The geographical location of the textile industries was, as the above sections indicate, very varied. Some factories were to be found in large towns and cities. Others on river banks, near small villages, or even in totally rural settings. The nature of the workforce employed was, in consequence, also very different. Furthermore, in cotton textiles, while weaving predominated in


\(^{31}\) Esteve Deu, op cit, pp. 3.17-3.106.

lowland areas, spinning prevailed along the Ter and Freser river banks. The skills required and the division of labour in these two branches of the industry also varied greatly. Finally, as has been noted, the structure of the woollen textile industry was in some respects unlike cotton, and this also had an important impact on the respective labour forces.

In cotton textiles, many industrialists who moved rural areas were able to employ peasants from the surrounding countryside. Many of these workers were women. Already in the eighteenth century female members of peasant households often combined agricultural work with domestic manufacture of textiles. This system came under increasing pressure when factory produced fabrics began to flood the market in the early nineteenth century, but the spread of cotton textile factories in rural areas provided an alternative source of income. Women, therefore, often exchanged home manufacture for factory work. The employment of "mixed" peasant and industrial workers in weaving continued throughout the period under study. Thus the social-catholic publicist, José Elías de Molins, noted in 1913:

In the countryside, the status of the woman is sometimes purely rural, and she only takes part in the duties of the home or the tasks of the peasant household. At other times it is mixed, and along with work on the land the female peasant is also involved in home industry, such as the manufacture of lace, rope sandals and the like. The rural woman is also often seen to go into the factories, but without leaving her home, and this occurs in numerous factories spread throughout the provinces of Barcelona, Girona and Tarragona.

A similar observation was made in the same year by one of Catalonia’s regional factory inspectors, who stated:

Men and women are employed on the looms without distinction, although in rural populations there are a greater number of women employed, for the men are engaged in agricultural work.

The wealth of the montaña is base on the fact that the men work on the land and the women in the factories.

The employment of mixed workers made it possible to pay lower wages than in Barcelona and the surrounding towns. Workers in rural areas had little or no experience of trade union organisation. Furthermore, they often had to travel several miles to work each day, and lived in isolated farmhouses. In such circumstances it would be almost impossible to build up the on and off the job solidarity necessary for collective action to be taken. However, at the same time,


34. José Elías de Molins, La Mujer Obrera en Cataluña en las Ciudades y en el Campo (Barcelona, 1913), pp. 74-75.

35. La Jornada...1913, p. 449.
The mixed workers were still very much attached to the rural peasant economy. They were consequently difficult to train as industrial proletarians, and often abandoned their factories when needed on the land. There were a large number of complaints in this respect from the industrialists of the Manresa area. Manresa was perhaps the foremost Catalan weaving centre after Barcelona. In 1913 the Manresa Official Chamber of Industry and Commerce stated that at certain times of the year it was difficult to find enough workers, and lamented that: 36

In the llano and on the outskirts of large towns (...) the workers abound, are of fixed employment, and are more capable than in the mountainous villages, where the poor classes usually combine work in the fields and in the factory, and in not a few places in the Alta Montanya employers are forced to have their looms idle for a quarter of the year, because during the harvest, and even when certain crops are sown, the workers do not go into the factories.

In a similar vein, the representative of the Alta Muntanya manufacturers stated that labour productivity was lower than in Barcelona, and that: 37

This is a result of the difference in their capability, of the scarcity of workers (in the Alta Muntanya), and of their instability. To which should be added the natural attraction of the Capital, which exercises a great pulling power on the small centres of production, in which it can be said their exists a kind of apprenticeship for workers who will after work in the big centres. In these the atmosphere is also more professional and industrial than in the small villages, where the employees may be called mixed in that on occasions a large part of them are occupied in the fields.

These difficulties were no doubt deliberately exaggerated. The industrialists quoted were speaking against a government Royal Decree which limited working hours in textiles to 60 per week. However, they serve to warn us against assuming, as historians often have, that when industrialists moved into rural areas they found a ready, cheap and “docile” labour force waiting for them.

Small-scale industrialists, who specialised in weaving and often worked for the larger Barcelona based concerns, had no choice but to use the mixed workers. The industrialists who built the relatively large spinning and integrated spinning and weaving mills on the Catalan river banks needed to find an alternative. They aimed to form a relatively stable labour force over which they could impose social control, and many were able to do this by building company towns (colònies industrials).

The larger company towns, most of which were to be found in the *Alt Llobregat*, consisted not only of the factory premises, but also had housing for the workers, shops, provided after hours entertainments, and they often had a school and a church. The workers every need was, therefore, cared for. This was in fact necessary because some of these establishments were as much as 10 kilometres from the nearest town. Social control was maintained through a mixture of employer paternalism and strict labour discipline. The workers were typically very isolated from the outside world. There were controls on the kind of press they could read. The left-wing press was usually totally prohibited, and trade unions were banned.

Indeed, opposition to trade unionism was often a significant factor in the formation or strengthening of the company towns. Such was the case of the Ametlla company town near Puig Reig on the *Alt Llobregat*. Here the management response to a strike which spread from Manresa in 1890 was to reorganise. Several families were sacked, the internal structure of the town became more authoritarian, and great importance was attached to catholic propaganda. Similarly, in 1900, during an intense period of social conflict on the Ter, the Rusífol company town near Manlleu opened a school on its premises, which it put in the hands of the clergy. These towns were, in fact, steeped in conservative catholicism, with priests and nuns employed both for compulsory religious services and to educate the workers' children.

The largest of the company towns in the *Alt Llobregat* were very successful. The workforce, which was almost totally of rural extraction, lacked any tradition of collective action. Moreover, in the countryside and in many small towns the powerful industrialists and their representatives were easily able to impose their will on the local authorities. As a result they could put pressure on workers to vote for candidates of their choice at election time, and were backed up by the courts and police in cases of industrial unrest. In this way, there grew up the figure of the industrial cacique alongside the traditional agrarian cacique, of such importance in nineteenth century Spanish history. The power of the industrialist over his captive labour force also meant that labour costs could be cut to a minimum. Indeed, up to the mid-1890s at least, many *Alt Llobregat* company towns did not pay wages at all, but gave their workers vouchers which had to be exchanged for goods sold within the town itself. Finally, these company towns were notorious for their long working hours and low rates of pay.

The other main areas of the *Alta Muntanya* in which hydraulic power was extensively used were the Ter and Freser valleys. In these areas, however, the company towns were not as

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numerous. Nor were they as all-inclusive as in the Alt Llobregat. This difference was made clear by the leading Catalan Socialist, Josep Comaposada. He had visited the Alt Llobregat in 1913 and gave a harrowing account of working conditions in the company towns. Yet, after a similar tour around the Ter and Freser in 1916 he stated:40

For the sake of the truth (...), we must note that the company towns to which we have referred (in the Ter and Freser) are a long way from being the same as those which operate in the Alto Llobregat.

While in the latter a despicable dictatorial regime has been established, the simple thought of which infuriates the spirit, for it converts the workers into slaves in the true sense of the word, the company towns along the Ter and Freser are no more than factories set up outside the towns. They exploit the workers as do all enterprises of this type, but without the attack on human dignity reaching the incredible extremes it does in the Alto Llobregat.

The reason for this difference in the size and number of company towns in the two areas was in part technical. The Alt Llobregat specialised in the production of low quality standardised textile fabrics. For industrialists in this area it was cheaper to spin and weave the product in the same establishment. However, on the Ter, yarn was produced for somewhat higher quality garments which were more subject to variations in taste and hence to fluctuations in demand. In this branch of the industry it was more economical for a factory which specialised in weaving to purchase the yarn it needed at any given moment rather that spin a large and changeable variety of yarns. The Ter Valley factories, therefore, tended to specialise in spinning alone.41

One consequence of this was that the vertically integrated plants of the Alt Llobregat were considerably larger than most of those on the Ter. Thus, on the Alt Llobregat in 1898 there were 35 factories. Of the 14 on which we have information 11 both spun and wove, and they had an average of 7,477 spindles and 209 power looms per factory. In the principal Ter Valley towns the situation was clearly very different (see Fig 1.2.). In Torelló in 1904 there were no weaving factories of any note and the 7 spinning factories had an average of 3,811 spindles. In Manlleu at the turn of the century the 10 large-scale factories were nearer the Llobregat average, with a mean of 6,820 spindles. However, only one of these factories also engaged in weaving. Manlleu was one of the towns on the Ter in which weaving was most in evidence, but the 10 small-scale employers who wove had only an average of 36.4 looms each.42

40. José Comaposada, "La Vida en La Comarca del Ter I", LJS, 4 November 1916.
42. ETN, 17 July 1897, p. 35; AMT, Matrícula Industrial; Ajuntament Municipal de Manlleu (AMM), S. 149. 395-396.
The cost of building a company town, which included housing for the whole workforce, was very high, and it was only the larger establishments that could afford such outlays. It was no doubt for this reason that in 1916, out of 76 factories to be found on the banks of the Ter and Freser, no more than 17 were in company towns. Furthermore, as Josep Comaposada noted, they were not at all similar to those on the Llobregat. The most all-inclusive was probably Fabra i Coats' spinning factory, Noves Hilatures del Ter, which was built near Torelló in the 1890s. It was formed with English and Catalan capital, and out of a total workforce which at its high point was 500 strong, it provided housing for about 300. The town also had a church and two schools. The paternalist relation between the employer and his men was cemented though a pension fund, free medical treatment and a consumer co-operative. In fact the regime in this company town, as in the two other factories owned by Fabra i Coats on the Barcelona Pla, was highly benevolent, and the working week was shorter than in the nearby factories. This ensured that Fabra i Coats probably had the best industrial relations record of any factory in the areas under study.

However, few of the Ter Valley company towns were involved in the lives of their workforce to such a degree as Fabra i Coats. One of the basic dissimilarities between the Llobregat and Ter company towns was that only a relatively small proportion of the workers actually lived and slept in the latter. La Mambla near the town of Orós was one of the largest on the Ter. In 1914-15 it employed 225 workers, and there was housing for 102. However, the Vilaseca company town near Torelló employed 450 workers at the same date, but housed only 62, and the Corominas company town, also built near Torelló, had 234 workers on its payroll in 1911, but provided housing for just 70.

The fact that many manufacturers did not set up company towns, and that those that functioned only provided housing for part of the workforce, does not, however, mean that they drew large amounts of mixed workers from the surrounding countryside. There were already in the mid-nineteenth century a number of significant urban centres on the Ter, and they grew rapidly as the area industrialised. Growth was most rapid in Manlleu and Roda. Thus, while Manlleu had 1,991 inhabitants in 1842, by 1852 the number had risen to 3,300, to reach 5,823 by 1900. At the same time Roda increased its population from only 593 in 1843, to 1,913 in 1857 and 2,287 in

43. José Comaposada, "La Vida I".
44. ETN, 17 July 1898, p. 35. Memoria sobre Las Obras Sociales a Favor de Los Trabajadores en La Compañía Anónima de Fabra i Coats de Barcelona (Barcelona, 1916).
1900. By 1887 22,862 people lived in urban areas on the Vic Plain. This represented about half the area's total population.46

Table 1.4. Numbers of workers in the Ter Valley 1850-1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1892</th>
<th>1914</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manlleu</td>
<td>1,116</td>
<td>2,620*</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torelló</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>1,029</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sant Vicenç de Torelló</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>610</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vilaseca company town</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabra ã Coats company town</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oris</td>
<td></td>
<td>610</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinyoles d'Oris</td>
<td></td>
<td>198</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Mambla d'Oris company town</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roda</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sant Hipòlit</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1,080</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sant Quirze</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1823</td>
<td>7428</td>
<td>6925</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This figure may be an overestimation. In 1891 the La Publicidad estimated there were between 1,600-1,800 workers in Manlleu. Sources. Guillermo Graell, Historia del Fomento del Trabajo Nacional (Barcelona 1908), pp. 442-492.; Juan Saltarés y Pla, El Trabajo de las Mujeres y Niños. Estudio sobre las condiciones actuales (Sabadell, 1892), p.130; Leopoldo Negre, "Encuesta sobre les condiciones economic socials a les conques del Ter i Fresser", Anuari d'Estadistica Social de Catalunya 1915 (Barcelona 1917); LP, 14 October 1891, p.2.

A large part this increase can be put down to the immigration of peasants from the surrounding countryside in search of employment. As Table 1.4. demonstrates, there was a 307 per cent increase in the size of the Ter Valley working class between 1850-1892, with the greater part of this increase concentrated in the main urban centres. Most this growth took place in the period 1850-1885. Thereafter, as a result of the growing difficulties facing the cotton textile industry, there was a stabilisation of numbers. Indeed, in Manlleu, where costs were higher than in the surrounding region, there may even have been a slight fall in the number of workers between 1892-1914. Nevertheless, there were about 7,000 workers in the principal Ter Valley towns in 1914. At the same time the working class population around Ripoll and in urban centres on the Freser and so-called Alt Ter numbered another 6,100 workers, with perhaps another 3,000 employed on the Ter around Girona.

The development of these important urban centres was to be of great importance for the subsequent history of the Ter Valley labour movement. The workers did not totally break their bonds with the land. As late as 1928 the Catalan geographer, Gonçal de Reparaz, could state:

There is a very close relationship between industry and agriculture on the plain. In well organised company towns, like Fabra y Coats near Torelló, each worker has his own small house and a piece of land behind it to cultivate. But there are some workers whose links with the land are closer. They are a type of farmer who, in addition to working in the factories as spinners, weavers etc., often cultivate one or two tracts of land they have rented on the outskirts of the town or company town. If the factory work goes well they have a labourer cultivate the land, and help during their hours off. But if there is a strike or a layoff, they cultivate the land themselves, and in this way they do not have to fall into debt and can resist crises far better than workers in the cities.

Produce from these allotments was certainly a useful supplement to the workers industrial wage, and the possibility of turning to agricultural work also helps to explain, as shall be seen, their ability to resist prolonged strikes and lock-outs. Yet this should not obscure the fact that by the late nineteenth century in the Ter Valley towns the workers were primarily industrial. Their main source of income was wage labour, and most lived in an urban, industrial setting. Manlleu was the clearest example of this transformation, having “an essentially industrial appearance, like Sabadell, Terrassa, Mataró, and other towns of the same type”. 48

The importance of this point for our study is that in an urban setting workers were in a far stronger position to set up trade unions and other associations to defend their interests. Furthermore, because in the Ter and Freser part of the company town workforce also lived in urban areas, and therefore mixed with the other workers in their free time, the associations the town workers created found support throughout the region. This fact was noted at the time. Thus, according to one commentator, on the Ter: “In the small industrial towns the caps (gorras) of the workers mix with the Catalan caps (barretines) of the peasants; the landscape is more appealing and life somewhat freer than in the company towns.” This could most clearly be seen in the largest of these towns, such as Manlleu and Roda. Along the Freser, Alt Ter and around Girona, on the other hand, the task of forming stable union or political bodies was far more difficult, for in Josep Comaposada’s words:

In spite of their best efforts it is impossible for the workers of the outlying districts to defeat the bourgeoisie single-handed. The bourgeoisie has all the power which money, the church, the civil guard and local authorities can bestow, and all the resources of state power.

47. Gonçal de Reparaz (lll), La Plana de Vic (Barcelona, 1928), p. 110.
49. José Comaposada, “La Vida...Ill. Camprodon”, LJS, 18 November 1916.
The collective strength of workers in the Ter Valley can be appreciated if wages and working hours in the area are compared to those in the rest of the Alt Muntanya. From the late nineteenth century through to 1914 working hours in Barcelona cotton textiles were 64 per week. In the Ter Valley they were officially 66 for day and 48 for night work, though they were in reality somewhat longer as workers were expected to take turns and mind each others machines during lunch and dinner breaks. This working week was most strictly enforced in the principal Ter Valley towns. Longer hours were more common in outlying areas. In the principal cotton towns around Barcelona and along the Baix Llobregat up to Manresa a 66 hour working week was also in force. It was, however, in the Alt Llobregat that working hours were longest. Here a 70 hour week was the minimum and a working day of up to 16 hours was not uncommon. Wage levels told a similar story. Wages on the Ter were appreciably higher than in other areas in which hydraulic power was used. Data for the Ter and Alt Llobregat in the early 1890s indicate that on the Ter wages were about 20 per cent greater in the processes prior to spinning, and about 30 per cent greater in spinning itself. Indeed, consequent upon the decline in wages in Barcelona from the 1880s, associated with the substitution of male for female power-loom weavers, the difference between average wage rates in the Ter and the Catalan capital became increasingly narrow. This is made plain by Table 1.5., which compares wages in the two areas between 1913 and 1915.

Wages in Barcelona and the Ter were almost identical on the weaving side of the industry. The Ter Valley, however, specialised in spinning. On this side of the industry, female workers in general earned slightly less than their Barcelona counterparts. Male fullers, carders and mule spinners earned between about 70 and 80 per cent of the equivalent Barcelona workers wage. Nonetheless, two further factors inclined the balance in favour of the Ter Valley workforce. First, the price of basic foodstuffs appears to have been on average a little lower on the Ter, and rents were without a doubt considerably cheaper. Moreover, as we have seen, many Ter Valley workers still cultivated their own patch of land. Second, the relatively high paid male spinners formed a far higher proportion of the cotton textile labour force on the Ter than in Barcelona. In the Catalan capital, it has been suggested, men may have made up no more than 3 per cent of the labour force. The mule spinners earned the princely wage of between 30-45 pesetas a week, and yet, according to Miguel Sastre i Sama, in 1905 there were only 100 mule spinners in the whole of the city. Male adults, on the other hand, represented about 23 per cent of the industry's

50. Miguel Renté, op cit, pp. 22-23.


workforce along the Ter and Freser, but in the larger Ter Valley towns this proportion was usually higher. In Manlleu, indeed, a majority of the workers appear to have been men.53

Table 1.5. Average weekly wages in the Ter Valley and Barcelona cotton textile industry 1913-15 (pesetas).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Worker</th>
<th>A The Ter</th>
<th>B Barcelona</th>
<th>A as a Percentage of B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spinning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fullers</td>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>20-22</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carders</td>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>24-25</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuales</td>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>92.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechares</td>
<td>13-16</td>
<td>12-18</td>
<td>93.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ring frames (men)</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>15-25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ring frames (women)</td>
<td>15-16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-acting mules</td>
<td>24-28</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodeteres</td>
<td>12-16</td>
<td>12-16</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dobladores</td>
<td>14-21</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdidores</td>
<td>20-28</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>106.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weavers</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>97.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources. Instituto de Reformas Sociales, La Jornada de Trabajo en la Industria Textil (Madrid, 1914), pp.417-418, 440-443: Leopoldo Negre, "Encuesta sobre les condiciones económicas sociales en les conques del Ter y Freser". José Comaposada, "La vida del obrero en la comarca del Ter. X Manlleu".

The fact that there were a relatively high percentage of male workers is of key importance for our understanding of labour protest on the Ter, for it was the men who were behind trade union organisation, and it was their interests that the unions were formed to defend. The workers of the Ter had only in the past generation been drawn from the surrounding peasantry, and they were still strongly influenced by the values of the peasant family economy. Throughout Europe these values were very similar. They did not oppose female labour, but stressed that it was supplementary to that of the male head of the household.54 It was this notion of women's work as a supplement which allowed employers to pay women so much less than men. For this reason on the Ter male heads of household had been given higher paid work as spinners while women were employed in the low paid preparatory processes. It was a sexual division of labour of which, all evidence suggests, the men approved. Thus, the cotton textile industrialists were right in stating in 1911 that: "The men have never worked on the manuales, mechares, or aspes, either by day or by night.

53. José Comaposada, "La Vida...I".; Leopoldo Negre, op cit.

for they regard it as improper of the male sex.”\textsuperscript{55} It was also for this reason that male workers would often complain at the employers attempts to pay them a “woman's wage”.

Within the peasant family economy daughters were expected to work full time. However, once a woman was married her primary role was seen as in the domestic sphere. These values were also passed on to the first generations of Catalan proletarians. The result was that most female workers tended to be young and unmarried. This could be seen in the case of the Torelló cotton textile industry, where in 1909 in the factory of Castell, Callís and Verdaguer, 66 per cent of the men over the age of 16 were married, but only 10.1 per cent of the women. Data giving the age of workers in Torelló's cotton factories two years later shows why this was so. The average age of men over 16 was 36. The average age of women was 25, and there were also a large number of girls of between 14 and 16.\textsuperscript{56}

It was for these reasons that the cotton textile spinners were so outraged by the industrialists' attempts to replace them by women on the ring-frames. Their attitude could clearly be seen in 1911 when the Ter Valley unions launched a campaign in support of a government bill to abolish female night work. This the unions claimed was necessary “given the debility of the female sex”, and they made no secret of the hope that:\textsuperscript{57}

With the introduction of the said law hundreds of unemployed men will find work and they will, therefore, cease to be half women (hombres mujeres) dedicated to domestic chores, which are a woman's preserve. With this work they will be the family's bread winners, while their women will be able to stay at home and really carry out the sacred duties of a mother and wife. This does not happen at present due to the distribution of work in the factories.

Indeed, the radical nature of this critique of female factory work suggests that the male workers had at least partly accepted the liberal view that there should be a total separation between work and the domestic sphere. In the cotton textile industry conflict over wages and working hours were common. Nevertheless, on the Ter the most bitter fought industrial disputes were to revolve around the employers' efforts to replace male by female workers.

It may be thought that the labour process in woollen textiles would resemble that of the cotton textile industry. In fact there were substantial disimilarities. In the first place, the sexual division of labour was quite different. Thus in Sabadell in 1914, of the industry's 5,441 workers, 56. AMT. T. Trabajos Varios. The situation was similar in Barcelona. Thus, the Anuario Estadístico de la Ciudad de Barcelona stated in 1902 that, “women are occupied in many professions only when they are single,” and “the work is not constant and only lasts for brief periods. In Barcelona the immense majority of single women and widows have a job which does not pay enough for their sustenance, but helps to pay the family's bills”. AECB 1902 (Barcelona, 1904 ), p. 152.

57. AMT. (A), C. Asociaciones s - de 1910 a.
38 per cent were adult males.\textsuperscript{58} This percentage was considerably higher than in most of the cotton textile industry. The principal reason was that in the woollen textile industry only men were employed as spinners and power-loom weavers. Moreover, the well paid spinners were hardly threatened by the introduction of female labour. The power-loom workers were not so well paid. None the less, their average wage of 28 pesetas a week was equivalent to that of a skilled artisan, and far higher than the 18 to 21 pesetas a week earned by the female power-loom weavers in Barcelona.\textsuperscript{59} This was not the only advantage enjoyed by the woollen textile workers. From the late nineteenth century many Catalan unions had waged a constant struggle against the use of piece rates. They maintained that such a payments system set the workers against each other, and that in the long run they were forced to work harder without earning higher wages. In cotton textiles the workers had been forced to accept piece rates. Yet in woollen textiles during the first decade of the century most workers still enjoyed fixed wages. In addition the working week was slightly shorter in the woollen textile industry: 65 hours a week between 1899 and 1911, and 62 hours a week between 1911 and 1913.

There were perhaps two main reasons why the Sabadell industrialists had made no concerted effort to restructure the labour process in their favour. First, the high value of woollen textiles probably made it possible for them to bear higher wage costs than their counterparts in cotton textiles. Secondly, most of them ran very small scale operations, and so had neither the capital resources nor the will to modernise their industries. Instead they seem to have largely been satisfied to run inefficient plants behind high tariff walls.

Yet this does not mean that the woollen textile workers faced no dangers. The 1891 tariff greatly increased the cost of woollen textile fabrics imported into Spain. In order to get around this difficulty Europe's largest importer, the Paris based Seydoux y Compania, set up a factory in Sabadell in 1895.\textsuperscript{60} The factory was run on very different lines from its Spanish rivals. It was a large-scale integrated spinning and weaving concern. Its workers were non-unionised, paid piece-rates, and earned lower wages than those in the rest of the industry. Sabadell's other industrialists had little sympathy for the Seydoux plant. Yet they had to compete with it and some of the larger ones - the "big fish" in the workers own words - were suspected of wishing to imitate it. Sabadell's woollen workers, with the power-loom weavers at the forefront, were determined that this should not be the case. Thus the two greatest strikes in Sabadell during the period under study would be the result of attempts made by the unions to force Seydoux to conform to the work practices of Sabadell's other factories.

\textsuperscript{58} Boletín de...Sabadell, August 1915, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{59} Esteve Deu, op cit, p.4.4. At the same time the spinners earned between 30 and 32 pesetas a week.
\textsuperscript{60} ETN, 30 May 1895.
In conclusion, then, by the first decade of the twentieth century the Catalan textile industries lived in the shadow of recession. The cotton textile industry had tried to renew plant and machinery, but by international standards it remained uncompetitive. Employers in woollen textiles, on the other hand, had seemingly been unable even to attempt to meet the challenge. In cotton textiles it was the workers who bore the brunt of the pressure to modernise. Yet, one of points this chapter has brought to the fore is the great variety in the terrain on which the industry operated. There were several large-scale enterprises, and a large number of weaving factories in Barcelona and its surrounds; small-scale weaving workshops were scattered throughout the countryside; integrated spinning and weaving plants operated in the Alt Llobregat, and specialised spinning factories on the Ter. The type of worker employed by the manufacturers also varied enormously. In rural areas many “mixed workers” found employment. In the Alt Llobregat company towns large numbers of workers (also of rural extraction) formed a captive labour force. On the Ter, on the other hand, male spinners and their assistants often lived in urban areas and travelled to work each day. In Barcelona there were large numbers of female power-loom weavers, but in the Sabadell woollen textile industry men still operated the looms. The capacity of these various categories of worker to respond to developments in the industry and defend their interests varied enormously. In those areas in which it was possible to form trades unions, so did the typology of conflict with their employers. Thus, in the Ter Valley the male spinners became involved in a life or death struggle over the employment of women on the ring frames. In woollen textiles, however, through replacement by female labour was feared it had not yet become a reality. In Barcelona, finally, the female power-loom weaving labour force had come into being as a result of the almost total substitution of male labour. These are questions to which we shall return in Chapter Three.
Cotton and to a lesser extent woollen textiles were, then, at the forefront of Catalonia's industrial revolution. This was reflected in the make up of the region's workforce. During the first decade of the twentieth century there were about 80,000 cotton textile workers in Catalonia, and there were at least another 20,000 in other branches of the textile industries. This represented roughly a third of the Catalan working class. By international standards this was very high. Thus in England, France and the United States the percentage of textile workers in the total workforce was 12, 13 and 6 respectively. Furthermore, these figures do not take into account workers involved in the textile finishing trades.

Yet, it was not only the cotton textile industry whose structure was profoundly altered by the industrial revolution. In the European core states industrialisation was also accompanied by a rapid growth and technological transformation of the iron industry. In the Spanish Basque country an important iron and steel industry also grew up in the late nineteenth century. In Catalonia, however, the lack of coal and iron ore resources made such a transformation impossible. It would have appeared more feasible for a solid metal working industry to have grown up, in order to serve the needs of the new industrial economy. Yet, during the nineteenth century the size of Catalonia's metallurgical sector remained small. The principal cause of this state of affairs is to be found in government policy, which adversely affected the prospects of the metallurgical industry in two respects. First, Spain's railway network was largely built by foreign interests, and with the object of hastening the network's completion Spanish governments permitted foreign firms to import rails and rolling stock with minimal customs duties. The Spanish metallurgical sector, as a result, hardly benefited. Second, while tariffs placed on unelaborated or semi-elaborated iron and steel imports were high, those on machinery imports remained low. Home based companies, therefore, found it extremely difficult to compete with foreign suppliers.

In the second half of the nineteenth century a number of relatively large companies were founded in Barcelona, the most famous of which was the *Maquinista Terrestre i Marítima*. They did not, however, meet with any great success, for unable to compete with most machinery imports they tended to specialise in less profitable areas such as the construction of bridges and

markets. Nevertheless, with the take-off of the Basque iron and steel industry in the 1880s the situation improved, for Catalan metallurgy's dependence on foreign suppliers was thereby removed.

The weight of metallurgy within Catalonia's industrial sector did, indeed, grow in the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus, while metallurgical industrialists paid only 2.66 per cent of the taxes levied on industrial establishments in Catalonia in 1856 they paid 7.05 per cent of these taxes in 1900. However, it was only from the turn of the century that the industry experienced quite rapid expansion. Important in this respect was the growing muscle of metallurgical interests as a pressure group with influence in government circles. This became clear in 1906 when a new tariff put greater restrictions on the import of machinery and railway stock. Furthermore, more capital to invest in industry had become available from 1899. The loss of the colonies had represented a severe setback for much of Catalan industry. Yet it had also resulted in a large influx of capital from Spain's ex-colonial possessions. Investment tended to flow into new areas of economic activity. Consequently, although textiles remained dominant a certain diversification of economic activity could be observed, especially during the economically buoyant years of 1910-14. Already in 1906 the French economist Eduard Escarra could state that the various branches of the metallurgical industry "are very characteristic of Catalonia, and some have grown to an extent which could not normally be expected given the size of its population". Yet despite this expansion most machinery was still imported. Thus, to meet Spain's industrial needs imports of machinery, electrical equipment, instruments, vehicles and ships increased by 142 per cent between 1906 and 1913, and at this latter date their value was thirty times greater than that of exports. During this whole period Catalan industry continued to face fierce foreign competition, a fact which, as shall be seen, greatly influenced the shape of industrial relations in the industry.2

Yet excessive concentration on those industries which underwent a radical transformation during the nineteenth century tends to obscure other aspects of Catalonia's industrial structure. In particular, as recent research has shown, the industrial development of Europe did not lead to a rapid demise of the artisanal trades. The advance of mechanisation was uneven and many artisanal occupations were only slowly transformed before 1914. Indeed, the growth in demand associated with population increase, urbanisation, and greater wealth, initially led to an expansion in the number of artisanal workers. The case of Barcelona makes this clear. If those districts which were aggregated to the Barcelona in 1897 are included then the city's population rose from

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244,401 inhabitants in 1860 to 505,790 in 1897. Urbanisation stimulated a rapid expansion of the construction, woodworking and furniture industries. The growth in population was also accompanied by an expansion of clothing and shoemaking. A modern printing industry also grew up as a consequence of the formation of a literate middle class public. These, with the partial exception of clothing, were all areas in which artisanal workers tended to predominate during the first decade of the twentieth century.

The continued importance of artisanal work structures was, in fact, particularly pronounced as a result of the region's relatively slow, faltering, economic development. Most of Catalan industry remained, by international standards, very small-scale. The standard economic unit was the family firm, not the joint stock company. Capital was raised through the formation of sleeping partnerships, and growth secured via the reinvestment of profits. What was true for textiles was true for the rest of Catalan industry. The smallness of the internal market encouraged product diversification and made it difficult to take advantage of economies of scale and adopt production line techniques. As Eduard Escarra observed:

Given the absence of large-scale industry the progress of mechanisation has logically not been so spectacular in Catalonia as in other countries. Hand power (...) has not been replaced in all those sectors in which it could have been substituted. Without mentioning small-scale industry, in many important industries, in particular in the preparatory and finishing processes, machines are used almost everywhere, but in Catalonia these processes are still carried out by hand. To this should be added the fact that when machines are used they are not usually the latest model, and there are even industrialists who buy second hand machine tools from foreign firms when these are renewing their equipment. Nevertheless, although it is insufficient, the machinery in Catalan factories is important and is being modernised.

Indeed, metallurgy itself was a good example of this situation. Not only was average plant size in the industry very small, but many metalworkers remained highly skilled and retained an apprenticeship system. They could, therefore, be better classified as artisans than as industrial workers.

This tendency towards small-scale production was, finally, also mirrored in commerce and retailing. In Britain and France larger departmental stores had made their appearance, but in Catalonia they were scarcely visible. In Barcelona there were two or three large stores, and several important wine, alcohol and flour merchants. Yet they were exceptions to the rule, and were surrounded by a sea of diminutive concerns.

3. Anuario Estadistico de la Ciudad de Barcelona (AECB), 1911 (Barcelona, 1912), p. 74.

4. Eduard Escarra, op cit, p. 68. These comments appear as particularly significant if it is remembered that Eduard Escarra was French, and that the French economy also contained a large artisanal sector.

5. Ibid, pp. 44-47.
Table 2.1. Number of Workers in Barcelona's Principal Industries in 1905

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage Of Total Workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cotton textiles</td>
<td>18,251</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other textiles</td>
<td>8,478</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>textile finishing trades</td>
<td>7,678</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>20,479</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>land transport</td>
<td>17,890</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>construction</td>
<td>15,277</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metallurgy</td>
<td>8,943</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food industry</td>
<td>8,129</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>printing</td>
<td>7,495</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paper and chemicals</td>
<td>6,183</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marine transport</td>
<td>4,437</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woodworking trades</td>
<td>3,858</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glass and ceramics</td>
<td>3,069</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>furniture trades</td>
<td>2,686</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gas and electricity</td>
<td>2,224</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coach, cart and boat makers</td>
<td>2,206</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leather trades</td>
<td>1,628</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>138,911</td>
<td>95.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source. "Censo Obrero de 1905", in AECB 1905 (Barcelona, 1907).

At the turn of the century, therefore, the textile industries still maintained a leading position within the secondary sector of the Catalan economy. Yet Catalan industry remained diverse. In small towns outside Barcelona a worker not employed in textiles was usually an artisan. As Table 2.1. indicates the picture in Barcelona was somewhat more complex. There were a total of 144,788 workers in the city in 1905. The percentage of textile workers in the Barcelona working class was lower than in most of urban Catalonia - a reflection of the importance of cotton textiles in the Alta Muntanya. As befits a port there were also a relatively large number of sailors and dockers, included under the heading marine transport. Any large city in an age in which the motor car was only making its first tentative appearance also employed large numbers of workers to transport goods and men by horse. The greatest number of workers in this category were the carters, of which there were over 5,000 at this time.

There were 88,210 adult male workers in Barcelona in 1905. Artisanal workers probably made up nearly 50 per cent of the adult male working class. Along with those industries already mentioned, artisans were to be found in glass, ceramics, coach making and the luxury trades. Unlike textiles proper the textile finishing trades were also dominated by male adult skilled workers. In the food industry Barcelona's 3,000 bakers, though badly paid and forced to work extremely long hours, also maintained the semblance of an apprenticeship system. However, all these branches of industry had their share of unskilled labourers. These workers were often newly arrived immigrants, who once in the city milled around the docks, railway stations and
construction sites in search of work. Moreover, 34,333 Barcelona workers, or 23.7 per cent of the Barcelona working class, were female. Many, as has been seen, worked in textiles, but an increasing number - over 10,000 in 1905 - worked at home as seamstresses, dressmakers, ironers and the like in the rapidly expanding outworking branch of the clothing industries. This left, finally, a total of 22,245 children employed in Barcelona. Most of the girls worked in textiles or helped their mothers and elder sisters with homework. The majority of boys, at least theoretically, undertook some kind of apprenticeship.

Table 2.2. Social Structure of Barcelona 1900 (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Workers</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Workers</td>
<td>61.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Service</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Professions</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Categories</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source. Anuario Estadístico de la Ciudad de Barcelona 1902 (Barcelona, 1904), pp. 160-161.

The pattern of the city's economic development was also reflected in its social structure. Table 2.2. outlines the main social categories into which Barcelona was divided in 1900. The figures are by no means wholly reliable. They are based on a questionnaire sent out by local government officials, and the returns were incomplete. This is demonstrated by the fact that, according to the census, the city's active population represented only 28.8 per cent of total population. None the less, in the absence of any alternative the census does at least provide us with an approximation.

The census confirms the large percentage of the city's active population dedicated to working class professions. However, this percentage was, as might be expected, not as great as in the most industrialised parts of Europe. In the iron, steel and coal mining town of Bochum at the heart of the German Ruhr, for example, by 1907 almost 79 per cent of the active population was working class.6 As a result of the region's relatively slow industrialisation drive, and of the small-scale of its industry and commerce, most urban areas in Catalonia also had a large petty bourgeois and lower middle class population. This could be seen in Barcelona where the majority of those classified in the "General Categories" were small-scale employers.7 Together with those engaged in commerce they made up 23.4 per cent of the active population.


7. The compilers of the census stated: "In this section are to be found those whose return did not state a specific profession such as industrialists, manufacturers etc." p. 154.
Table 2.3. The Social Structure of Barcelona by Districts 1900 (percent).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Workers</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Workers</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Service</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Professions</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Categories</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>100.5</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source. Anuario Estadístico de la Ciudad de Barcelona 1902, pp. 160-161

From 1897 Barcelona was divided into ten districts (see fig. 2.1.). Table 2.3. outlines the class structure of these districts. The first thing that becomes apparent from this table is that Barcelona was not a city geographically divided by cast iron class barriers. Many small-scale employers, it seems, lived in the same districts as their workers, and even the more prosperous parts of town had an important working class population.

Nevertheless, the third, forth and fifth districts stand out as the most bourgeois. The third, along with the more popular second district, was at the centre of Barcelona's Old Quarter. It was here that the Barcelona nobility had in the past built its palaces, and where the new class of bourgeois professionals had come to live during the nineteenth century. The area was crossed by a number of main commercial arteries, behind which were to be found a maize of dark, narrow, streets. On the more prosperous avenues bourgeois, merchants and master artisans often lived in the same building, the more wealthy patrons below and their more modest inhabitants above. It was also in these districts that one could still speak of a highly skilled, independent, artisanate of: 8

Ancient professions in old workshops, which resist the vulgar regime of capitalist exploitation and machinery. Reputable workshops which had filled with work the laborious Portal Nou, and other streets which still conserve something of their proud historic and artistic past. Preserved in the forged steel and cut stone, the elements which gave respect and gravity to the beautiful buildings around the Cathedral, La Plaça del Rei, Santa Maria del Mar, and the interesting Moncada street.


Across the Ramblas - the main artery which ran through the old city of Barcelona - was to be found the fifth district. The fifth district was well known for it bawdy Avenida del Paralelo, where small-scale employers, artisans and industrial workers rubbed shoulders at the weekend.\textsuperscript{10} The district was also home to a subproletarian criminal underworld, and to a large community of prostitutes. In 1912 there were, in fact, about 12,000 prostitutes in Barcelona, and 75 per cent of them were under age. Many of these prostitutes came from rural areas. Domestic servants were invariable young girls from peasant families who came to Barcelona alone. Their

original aim was usually to save enough to return home and marry. Most, nevertheless, ended up staying in Barcelona, and they were it seems particularly vulnerable.11

Yet the fifth district was at the same time far more proletarianised that either the second or third. Emili Salut, a friend of the great syndicalist trade union leader Salvador Seguí, was brought up in the fifth district, and paints a vivid picture of working class life at the turn of the century. He point out that the district was teaming with small workshops. These included small textile factories, sweat shops such as those which employed women in the manufacture of cardboard boxes and paper cones, but also a large number of shops in which adult male skilled workers predominated. However, they could not be compared to the artisans of Barcelona's Old Quarter. In the barrack like constructions of the fifth district capitalist relations of production had made their appearance, and the journeymen's position was under threat. Salut gives as an example the Vilella carpentry of which he states:12

The workers of that long disappeared factory justifiably referred to it as the “slaughter house”, because every week they had to lament an accident involving the labourers or apprentices, and that at a time when there was no accident insurance. The excessive repetition of these accidents was the result of the desire to substitute journeymen for low paid labourers, at the same time as the labourers were substituted for apprentices. These workers had to work under a management which showed a total technical incompetence in the installation and operation of the machinery.

In fact, the district's industry was in decadence. Employers had begun to move to the cheaper and more spacious areas outside the old city of Barcelona, and over the next thirty years, either by design or by accident, most of the factories in the fifth district were burnt to the ground.

The bourgeoisie also slowly moved out of the old city. After its walls had been knocked down in the mid-nineteenth century work began on the so-called Eixample, which to a large extent coincided with the fourth and sixth districts. There was no industry in the Eixample, and its sunny streets and spacious buildings provided a welcome change from the overcrowding of the Old Quarter. With the construction of the Eixample geographical class boundaries became somewhat more marked. This is partly obscured in Table 2.3 because a part of the socially diverse sixth district formed an extension of the fifth district rather than part of the Eixample proper.13

The second half of the nineteenth century also saw a new band of largely proletarian dwellings grow up around the city. These new working class districts had as their origin a number of towns which until 1897 had maintained a separate existence. Not all of the towns incorporated into the city of Barcelona in 1897 were clearly working class. Gràcia, most of which belonged to the eighth district, had a thriving petty bourgeois community and a long tradition of high quality artisanal manufacture. Hostafrancs and Sants to the east and Sant Martí de Provençals to the west, however, had by far the largest concentrations of textile factories on the Barcelona Pla. This has led some historians to claim that a division could be seen between skilled workers who lived and worked in the old city and Gràcia, and the factory workers of Sants and Sant Martí. Table 2.4. examines the extent to which such claims can be upheld.

The table does show that textile workers were somewhat more likely to live in the proletarian districts outside the old city. Thus 38.8 per cent of textile workers lived in the seventh, ninth and tenth districts as against 33 per cent of all workers. Nevertheless the correlation was not very strong. The picture is perhaps to a certain extent obscured by the very poor census returns from Sant Martí. Contemporaries were unanimous in stating that it was the most industrialised part of the city, and it was often referred to as the “Catalan Manchester”. The percentage of workers living in the area is therefore greatly underestimated by the census. There is, however, no reason to suppose that it was only textile workers who did not fill in their forms.

Of the other groups of workers included in the table the most surprising residential pattern is at first sight that of the clothing workers. As can be seen, they were strongly represented in the more prosperous districts. This apparent paradox is explained by the fact that many of them were female homeworkers. Although not admitted in polite society many female members of lower middle class and middle class families were employed by merchant capitalists as seamstresses or dressmakers: the extra income allowing the family to keep up appearances.

Amongst workers from the skilled artisanal trades definite residential patterns were also often visible. Printers and workers involved in the furniture trades were overrepresented in the fifth and sixth districts and Gràcia (54.7 per cent of furniture trade workers and 53.4 per cent of printers as against 34.5 per cent of all workers). Yet many journeymen did not reside in the old city. For example, 34.4 per cent of Barcelona's tanners and furriers lived in Sant Andreu and Sant Martí. Even greater was the concentration of woodworkers - principally sawyers, wood turners and coopers - ceramics and glassworkers in these areas. Thus, 41.4 per cent of woodworkers resided in Sant Martí, while 47.5 per cent of all glass and ceramics workers lived on the other side of town in Sants and Hostafrancs, and 34.8 per cent in Sant Martí.

The proletarian circle which surrounded much of Barcelona was closed by the Barceloneta. It had originally been a village of fishermen, and was still distinguished as a centre of sailors taverns and dwellings. Thus it was that 80 per cent of all sailors and dockers lived in the First
District. It was also in the Barceloneta that many of Barcelona's larger metallurgical establishments were located. It was, therefore, this mixture of seamen and metalworkers, who formed over 50 per cent of the district's working class population, that gave the Barceloneta its distinctive flavour.

Table 2.4. Residential Patterns of Barcelona workers 1900 (percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Workers</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Trades</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
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<td>12.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing Industry</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal-Workers</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Industry</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>100.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Transport</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing Land</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport Furniture Trades</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanners and Furriers</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood-Workers Ceramics and Glass</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>99.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2.4., therefore, points to important variations in workers patterns of residence. In particular it highlights the tendency of workers within a number of skilled artisanal trades to live in close proximity to their fellows. This fact tends to confirm research findings on skilled workers in other parts of Europe. On the job solidarity was often confirmed and reinforced by close contact within the neighbourhood. This is a question to which greater attention will be given later in the chapter. The data does not, however, bare out the idea that there was any clear division between skilled and factory workers. Suggestions that Sant Martí and El Clot formed ghettos of non-Catalan speaking immigrants who had recently arrived in Barcelona are very wide of the mark, and indeed misunderstand the nature of the Barcelona working class's family economy.14 As in the Alta Muntanya, in Barcelona young unmarried girls went out to work in order to supplement

14. This is the interpretation put forward by Joan Conelly Ullman, La Semana Trágica. Estudio sobre las Causas Socioeconómicas del Anticleficalismo en España 1898-1912 (Barcelona 1972), pp. 115-116.
family income. When they were married it was hoped they would be able to give up their work. Given the high cost of living, however, this could prove impossible. Female cotton textile workers, therefore, often formed part of the same family as skilled workers. Syndicalist trade union leaders, who made great efforts to convince male trade unionists to play an active role in the unionisation of female textile workers, noted this fact on numerous occasions. Thus, for example "Syndicalist Weaver" argued in 1911: "In this task (the unionisation of the weavers), workers from other trades - printers, metalworkers, painters, blacksmiths, etc. - can be of great assistance, because thousands of these workers have wives and daughters whom they could persuade to join the union if they showed a little interest and made the effort." This fact was, as shall be seen, of great importance for our understanding of the Barcelona labour movement.

Barcelona was not only one of the most expensive cities in Europe, it was also one of the most insalubrious. In the old city of Barcelona workers lived in damp, overcrowded, houses four or five stories high, in narrow, dark and smelly backstreets. In the populations of the Pla there was more space, and housing was generally better. Yet in these areas the lack of drainage systems also proved a serious health hazard. Epidemics of typhus, smallpox, and cholera were, consequently, very common.

The high resultant mortality rate meant that the city was only able to expand through immigration. In the aftermath of the 1880s agrarian crisis there was no shortage of peasant immigrants. Thus the Barcelona Pla grew by almost 54 per cent between 1877 and 1900. On the Pla during these years death rates were generally higher than birth rates. As a result this growth was more than covered by immigration: 196,487 people came to live in the Pla during these years, and an average of 7,000 people a year arrived in Barcelona during the first decade of the century. In fact by international standards the level of immigration was not particularly high. Furthermore, it was to be dwarfed by the great wave of immigration which swept the Catalan capital between 1916-19, and during the 1920s. Nevertheless, it was too much to be absorbed by the sluggish Catalan economy, particularly in times of depression. In Barcelona, therefore, there was usually a "reserve army of labour" which served to keep down wage levels and increase the workers sense of uncertainty. Unemployed workers had to turn to begging and swelled the ranks of the so-called trinxaires, who wandered the streets of Barcelona.

Immigration during this period did not, however, as has sometimes been asserted lead to the formation of a non-Catalan speaking working class community. Much of the immigration was

15. SO, 23 June 1911.
16. Pere Casals, op cit, La Nació, 2 October 1915; José Elías de Molins, op cit, pp. 32-33, 42.; AECB, 1905 (Barcelona 1906), pp. 171-178.
from rural areas in Catalonia itself. Thus in 1900 78.7 per cent of the inhabitants of Barcelona were born in Catalonia, and even in working class areas 74.6 per cent of the residents were Catalan. Moreover most non-Catalan immigrants were from Valencia (40 per cent), Aragon (25 per cent), and the Balearic islands (5 per cent). With the exception of part of Aragon these were Catalan speaking areas.18

Catalan workers, in fact, found themselves in a somewhat paranoic situation. Central government imposed Castilian in all its schools. The impact of this measure was limited. State schooling was highly inadequate, and illiteracy rates remained high. However, those workers who learnt the basis skills of reading and writing learnt them in Castilian. This in part explains why almost all the Catalan working class press was written in Castilian. Yet very few workers could speak the language. Several examples may serve to illustrate this point. Emili Salut recalls the great difficulty working class children faced in the fifth district at the turn of the century because schooling was not conducted in their maternal language.19 Several years later a government delegate suspended a meeting of the Barcelona bakers union because the speakers would not talk in Castilian. The Socialist weekly La Internacional commented: "This had never happened in Barcelona. Especially not in a working class meeting where, thanks to the paternal care of the bourgeois state, there are always a large number of people who know no language except Catalan."20 Finally, in 1914 a number of representatives of Catalan textile unions were sent to Madrid to give evidence at an enquiry on working hours in textiles. Several of these representatives lamented during their intervention that they could not express themselves adequately in Castilian.21 Indeed, in Barcelona the only area in which a clearly non-Catalan culture milieu had developed was in a part of the fifth district which was later to be known as China town. Its inhabitants were closer to the underworld of petty crime and prostitution than to that of the proletariat.22 Working class culture during this period, therefore, remained Catalan. As was noted in the introduction some interpretations of the roots of Catalan anarchism have tried to link the phenomenon with a high level of immigration from Andalusia. The evidence of immigration patterns before 1914 would, however, seem to discount any such correlation.

In 1905 the average daily wage of Barcelona's adult male workers was about 3.9 pesetas a day. However, as Table 2.5 demonstrates, the level of wages varied considerably between trades.

18. AECB 1902, p. 132.
20. La Internacional, 4 December 1908.
21. La Jornada...1913, pp. 43, 53, 71, 96.
22. Emili Salut, op cit, pp. 75-76.
Skilled journeymen could expect to earn between 4 and 4.5 pesetas a day. Workers such as cabinetmakers, coopers, compositors and brickmakers, who were paid about 4.5 pesetas, earned by the standards of the time a good wage. It was only workers in a few highly skilled professions and self acting mule spinners who could expect to earn more. Unskilled labourers, on the other hand, averaged only about 3 pesetas a day, and most textile workers did little better. Moreover, workers were not paid on Sunday and many faced seasonal unemployment. Female workers earned considerably less than their male counterparts, and there daily wage averaged at most between 2 and 2.5 pesetas. Children, as was to be expected, did even worse, and brought in about 1.25 pesetas.

Table 2.5. Adult Male Wages in Barcelona Industry 1905 (pesetas a day).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Wage</th>
<th>Number of Workers</th>
<th>Industries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.6-4.7</td>
<td>1,903</td>
<td>Makers of Musical Instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Luxury Trades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4-4.5</td>
<td>6,075</td>
<td>Printers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Furniture Trades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2-4.3</td>
<td>2,028</td>
<td>Car and Coach Makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-4.1</td>
<td>16,192</td>
<td>Textile Finishing Trades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Woodworkers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Metalworkers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8-3.9</td>
<td>40,926</td>
<td>Land Transport Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Food Industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leather Trades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ceramics and Glassmakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Building Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6-3.7</td>
<td>12,267</td>
<td>Paper and Chemicals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other Textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4-3.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2-3.3</td>
<td>3,402</td>
<td>Cotton Textile Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3.1</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>Makers of Bone Objects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source. Censo Obrero de 1905; Miguel Sastre i Sama, Las Huelgas en Barcelona y sus Resultados durante los Años 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907.

23. The dockers were casual workers and, therefore, particularly severely affected by unemployment. Thus they earned about 7 pesetas a day but could often only find work two days a week. Another group of workers whose level of wages is difficult to classify are the sailors. The earned 75 pesetas a month but this included board and lodging. For this reason Barcelona's 4,377 marine transport workers and dockers have not been included in the table 2.5.
However, it was the overall low level of wages in Barcelona that was most commented on by contemporaries, particularly as there was a tendency for real wages to decline between the mid-1890s and 1914. This was primarily due to inflation. The cost of foodstuffs made up about 75 per cent of a working class family’s total budget at that time. In Barcelona their price began to increase from about 1895. Between this date and 1900 their cost rose by about 10 per cent, and between 1900 and 1914 by another 15 per cent. Rented accommodation took up another 10 per cent of the working class budget, and rents also rose considerably during these years - by as much as 60 per cent in the Old Quarter of the city between 1895 and 1915.24

In 1917 Manuel Escudé, a member of the Barcelona local government’s technical staff, calculated that in 1914 the cost of living of a working class family with two children had been 5.75 pesetas a day.25 Yet wages were little higher than they had been in 1905. Other sources reached a similar conclusion. In the same year the report at the Metalworker Federation’s conference stated that the minimum expenditure of a working class family with a similar number of children was 5.4 pesetas a day. It pointed out that a metalworker’s average pay was 4 pesetas a day, and that if Sundays and holidays were taken into account it was only 3.4 pesetas. If his wife worked, the report stated, she could earn 10 pesetas a week, but this still left a substantial deficit.26 Many working class families probably managed on less. However, by 1914 it was becoming increasingly difficult for even a well paid journeyman to support his family without the wife and children going out to work.

Low wages were not, however, the only problem facing the Catalan working class. Despite the technological backwardness of much of Catalan industry, it was not only the cotton textile workers who were seriously affected by employer attempts to maximise profits. Technical change and the replacement of male by female labour threatened workers in a number of branches of industry. An example of the first type of challenge is provided by the port of Barcelona. During the first decade of the century the port underwent a comprehensive modernisation programme. One of the main results was the greater use of steam powered loading and unloading equipment, and the construction of new wharfs which allowed ships to dock sideways and thereby


did away with the need for lighter boats. The result was a great reduction in the demand for coal unloaders, a fact which was to lead to considerable industrial unrest.\textsuperscript{27}

There were employer attempts to replace male by female workers in a number of industries. In commerce for example there were claims amongst the shop assistants that owners were employing increasing numbers of women. Bookbinders also attempted to resist the use of women as folders and cutters. The Barcelona waiters' unions also stated that new cafes were opening staffed by waitresses, and they even added a moral note to their protests arguing:\textsuperscript{28}

The cafes in the centre of Barcelona, those which serve mocha cafe, high class liqueurs and excellent pastry, are shutting down through lack of clientele. The city has moved to the Paralelo and its surrounds, where as a result of the crowds each day new \textit{cultural centres} open served by \textit{thirty five beautiful waitresses}

However, outside of textiles it was the artisanal trades that were most affected by the development of capitalism. Given the importance of this process for our understanding of the city's labour movement it is worth considering in some detail. The continuing importance of artisanal work structures in Catalan industry meant that the imposition of industrial discipline was a long and difficult task. Thus bourgeois sympathisers could still lament in 1910 “that not in France, nor Germany nor Belgium is the liberty that the workers of Catalonia enjoy in their workshops, particularly in all branches of Barcelona industry, at all common”. And claim that: “A German worker, even when on day rates, is about 30 per cent more productive than a Spanish worker. This is a result of the rigorous discipline (...) which does not allow smoking, singing, and other abuses so common in our workshops.”\textsuperscript{29}

These comments should not perhaps be taken at face value. They were made during a strike of Barcelona metalworkers in 1910, and their object was to swing public opinion behind the employers. Nevertheless, it does seem clear that the Catalan journeymen had been able to preserve a large degree of autonomy on the shop floor. In the late nineteenth century in many respects these artisanal workers still moved in the same mental universe as their predecessors, who had been formed within the guilds. They considered themselves as craftsmen, and showed great pride in their work. Artisanal workers, their spokesmen maintained, should be well educated and have a solid grounding in all aspects of their trade.\textsuperscript{30}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} ETN, 30 March 1903; \textit{La Ilustración Obrera}, 27 August 1904; \textit{AECB} 1907 (Barcelona, 1908), pp. 541-551.
\item \textsuperscript{28} LP, 21 April 1912.
\item \textsuperscript{29} ED, 20 September 1912, ME; Miguel Sastre, \textit{Las Huelgas en Barcelona y sus Resultados durante los Años 1910 al 1914 ambos inclusive} (Barcelona, 1915), p. 36.
\item \textsuperscript{30} See, for example, the comments by a representative of the Barcelona compositors union in \textit{Boletín de la Sociedad del Arte de Imprimir} (Boletín), May 1905.
\end{itemize}
In the second half of the century, however, their position within the labour process was threatened by a series of developments. Some artisanal workers were affected by the introduction of new machinery and the employment of female labour. They had, in addition, to face the growing use of piece rates and the degradation of the apprenticeship system. Piece rates were anathema to the journeyman because they led to a speed up of work and put the emphasis on quantity rather than quality. Apprenticeship, as was noted in Chapter One, was of key importance to skilled workers because it allowed them to limit access to the trade. Moreover, through the apprentice system it was the the journeyman rather the employer who trained the new workers. However, as the division of labour became more sophisticated in some trades the level of skill required of any particular worker fell. The length of apprenticeship training was in consequence reduced leading to a rise in the number of journeymen. Moreover, employers often tried to wrest the employment and sometimes even the training of apprentices out of the journeymen's hands.

By the beginning of the century there was, therefore, a tendency for employers not to accept the ratio of apprentices to journeymen which their workers had set, and in some cases, to use apprentices simply as a source of cheap labour. These changes were by no means limited to the carpentry workshop in the fifth district described by Emili Salut. Thus the Revista del Ateneo Obrero de Barcelona noted in 1897:

31

For thirty years the fatal consequences of the present industrial regime have been felt. The division of labour, on the one hand, which transforms the worker into a simple machine destined to do only part of the work of his trade, and the excessive number of apprentices on the other, are a real danger for the future of our industry.

When a master pays an apprentice he thinks that he has the right to employ him on all sorts of tasks, and makes little effort to teach him the trade. The result is that the majority of apprentices will inevitably add to the number of vagrants or have to apply for jobs which do not require any particular skill, like those of sweepers, porters, carriers, etc.

Not all trades were, however, affected in the same way. There were a number of highly skilled well paid artisanal trades hardly touched by the onset of capitalist relations of production. This, for example was the case of the hatters, glove makers, gold and silver smiths, all of which maintained tight entry restrictions, and earned at least 5 pesetas a day.

Other groups of workers did not maintain such a privileged position, but nevertheless faced no concerted attempt by employers to redivide the labour process in their favour. This was, for example, the case of the glassworkers. In fact, the average glassworks was considerably larger than that of most workshops. Thus there were in 1907 two large bottlemaking plants in Badalona and Poble Nou which employed about 700 workers between them. By this time the larger factories had installed Siemens furnaces, which produced a continuous supply of molten glass. As

can be seen in table 2.5. wages in glassworking were overall not very high. This was a reflection of the large number of unskilled labourers employed. It was also, according to the factory inspectors, the industry which most regularly flouted the laws relating to the use of female and child labour. At the heart of these capitalist enterprises, however, was to be found an artisanal work team or *placa*. The strength of this team on the shop floor rested on the inability of the employers to mechanise production. Thus a report noted in 1916 that in the glassmaking factory of Joan Giral Laporte in Cornellà, “from the fusion of the igneous mass (...) through to the packaging a long and complicated series of processes are carried out in which the hand of the worker is of primary importance. This is unlike most industries, in which the machine is the principal factor.”

At the centre of bottlemaking team was the glassblower who had to combine great skill with physical stamina. Thus according to *El Trabajo Nacional*, blowing the glass “requires a special skill and certain operations can only be learnt by youngsters of 14 to 16 years of age after 8 to 10 years of practice”. Glassblowers were thereby in a strong position drastically to limit entry into the trade, and this they did by “not teaching nor tolerating that anyone outside their own family should be taught the profession”. The glassworkers, therefore, retained a strong sense of their own professional identity, reinforced as has been seen by the close geographical proximity in which they lived. Glassworkers clearly formed a closely knit team on the job and also met regularly in the local taverns and neighbourhood after work.

However, the isolation in which the skilled glassworkers lived also led them to look upon other groups of workers with a certain disdain. The reasons for this attitude were explained by the glassworkers’ trade union leader Joan Peiró in 1916. He maintained that the glassworkers did not consider themselves real workers “but as artists, as labour aristocrats”. Moreover, he observed that:

(...) there exists a certain pride, arising from the historic “grandeur” of our trade, which leads them to think of themselves as superior to other groups of workers, the consequence of which is the absence of our collective personality, of our personality as a highly exploited class, from the annals of the working class’s struggles for its dignity (...) The immediate consequence of that vane pride is a state of accentuated corporativism and its result: an ignorance of our most elemental duties as part of that great family affected by the regime of exploitation of man by man, and the lack of a spirit of worker solidarity (...).


33. ETN, 30 May 1895.


35. *El Vidrio*, 1 August 1916.
This situation was only to change during the first world war when the glassblowers position was rapidly undermined by new machinery which used compressed air to blow out the bottles.\footnote{The use of glassblowing machinery was first reported in 1904. See, ETN, 1 May 1904. Its use did not, however, become generalised until after 1914. Thus Manuel María Balaguer an economist closely linked to the employers noted in 1923 that during the war years: “Not only did the rise in the price of raw materials used in the manufacture of these products lead to an increase in their sale price, but also to continuous strikes and wage rises. These were very important factors, for although they have affected all industries with more or less intensity in this one the problem has been particularly arduous as a result of the skills and physical strength needed by the workers in general and the glassblowers in particular. The decision taken recently to install glassblowing machines which use compressed air was therefore a good one. They are easy to operate and, above all, hygienic.” Manuel María Balaguer, “La Industria Oul”Mica”, in Reseña Ilustrada de la Industria y Comercio de Cataluña 192, p. 115. In her study of the Ressegüier bottlemaking factory in Carmaux Joan Scott states that the position of the skilled glassblowers was under pressure from the 1880s. The installation of Siemens furnaces led to a growth in unemployment as marginal factories were forced to close down, and the introduction of closed moulds to blow the bottles reduced the skill content of the trade. In the Ressegüier factory the coup de grace was provided by the introduction of glassblowing machinery in 1902. By this time, she maintains, “glassblowing was no longer an exclusive craft (…). In fact, there was little to distinguish it from many other semiskilled trades”. Joan W. Scott, The Glassworkers of Carmaux. French Craftsmen and Political Action in a Nineteenth Century City (Massachussets, 1974), pp. 73-77, 170-175. The Catalan glassblowers, all evidence suggests, retained their artisanal status far longer. This was the result, at least in part, of the technological time lag which affected much of Catalan industry.}

Another group of workers which could to a certain extent be considered in a similar situation were Barcelona’s 400 coopers. Within Catalonia important nuclei of coopers were to be found in Sant Martí and in the towns around Reus, Tarragona, and Vilafranca del Penedés. From the 1880s they had, in fact, encountered considerable difficulties. They faced two basic problems. The first derived from the import of second hand casks through the port of Tarragona, which led to considerable unemployment in the region. The second was a result of the severe competition coopers faced from a large number of tiny workshops which had opened in rural areas around the town of Vilafranca. Employers in these workshops could not afford to keep journeymen on all year round, and those they did employ were paid very low rates. They survived the rest of the year through self exploitation. Merchant capitalists who bought the final product nevertheless encouraged them to remain in production.\footnote{El Eco de los Toneleros, 30 October 1887.; Federación de Oficiales Toneleros de la Región Española, Actas del 15 Congreso Celebrado en Sans los dias 9 al 18 de Mayo de 1887 (Barcelona, 1887), p. 111.}

The Sant Martí coopers put pressure on the Barcelona merchants not to buy these cheap casks. In this they appear to have had considerable success. Working conditions in Sant Martí were the best in Spain. At between 4 and 5 pesetas a day wages were not very high, but the coopers kept a firm grip on the training of apprentices, and thereby ensured that the ratio of
apprentices to journeymen remained low. For this reason, as in the case of the bottlemakers, they kept somewhat aloof from the rest of the working class. Thus the syndicalist activist, Alfredo Bueso, noted that when he was a young lad at the beginning of the century the coopers were isolated from the other woodworking trades. The coopers, he maintained, were a "group apart" who "passed on the trade from father to son and only slowly admitted new faces into their union". Their position certainly appeared more secure than that of other workers in the woodworking trades such as the power sawyers, cabinetmakers, and wood turners, who were conducting a vigorous campaign against the use of piece rates and to reduce the number of apprentices employed.

From the late nineteenth century the coopers were faced by another concern, when news came from abroad that machinery had been developed to assist in the construction of the casks. The Spanish coopers' federation stated that the introduction of any such machinery would be a "terrible blow to our trade" and should be resisted. Before 1914, however, the problem was never a serious one. Thus the syndicalist cooper, V Garcia, who had worked a number of years in France, noted that even in that country:

The number of machines that are at present in operation is not large because, (in coopering) as opposed to other trades, the machine cannot attain the same level of perfection as a man. Moreover, the machines lack men to operate them, because a good worker does not surrender himself to a machine which is assassinating his comrades.

The Catalan economist, Federico Rahola y Trémols, for his part, also stated about that time that the coopers "are well organised and up until now have managed to prevent machinery for making casks being introduced into Catalonia".

Both skilled glassworkers and coopers, then, were able to maintain a strong position within the labour process. Workers of other artisanal trades were, however, under more serious pressure. A case in point were the compositors. Printing was, as Table 2.5. indicates, relatively

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40. Thus in 1899 the Barcelona cabinetmakers' union regarded piece rates as "the fundamental cause of the exploitation faced by our trade". L.P, 19 December 1899, NE.
41. Federación de Oficiales Toneleros de la Región Española, *Actas de la Conferencia Verificada en San Martín de Provensals los Días 26, 27 y 28 de Enero y del Congreso XXII Celebrado en la Misma Localidad los Días 9 al 16 de Abril de 1894* (Barcelona, 1894), pp. 22-23.
42. SO, 9 May 1909.
43. Federico Rahola y Trémols, op cit, p. 436.
well paid. Lithographers and photoengravers earned 5 pesetas a day. Compositors could earn 4.5 pesetas a day, by the standards of the time a relatively good wage, though there were it appears many employers who paid below official rates. Nonetheless, the attempt to ensure all the city's shops paid the same wages was not the only fight the compositors faced.

The compositors, like workers in many other trades, had to tackle the problem of the employment of a growing number of apprentices paid by the piece. The compositors opposed their use for two reasons. First because they undertook tasks which had previously been reserved for the journeyman. Second, because they were given work which did not contribute to their training, and should therefore, the artisans maintained, be reserved for labourers. The overall result of the employers actions, it was felt, was to reduce the skill content of their work. Shoddy workmanship they claimed was being encouraged to the detriment of excellence. This was something, it has been emphasised, that skilled workers could not bear. 44

Already by the early 1890s Miguel Rente, a leading figure in the Catalan co-operative movement, could claim that: “There are so many apprentices that the journeymen cannot find work.” Several years later in 1906 the compositors trade newspaper, El Boletín de la Sociedad del Arte de Imprimir, stated that in newspaper offices there was a tendency for apprentices to replace the men on simpler tasks after only a year or two's training. In 1908 it talked of an “avalanche” of apprentices into the trade, which according to one compositor “will end up - if it has not done so already - by making the situation in our sad trade unsustainable”. One of the results of the use of apprentices by employers to do all manner of work was the rise of the so-called “half journeyman” (medio oficial); workers who had not been properly trained and who “work for years and years without being considered as journeymen or receiving the wage which as such corresponds to them”. 45

Yet serious as this challenge was it was not the only one which faced the compositors. Hand compositry was a highly skilled job which required years of training. However, in Europe during the 1890s a technological revolution hit the industry. In the previous decade a new machine, the linotype, had been developed in the United States. It was introduced into Britain in 1889. The linotype could set type far more quickly than could the hand compositors and, moreover, its operator only needed a short period of training. It was particularly suitable for newspaper publishing where speed was essential, while it was also the newspaper agencies that could afford the heavy capital outlays its instalment entailed. Furthermore, a few years later another American machine, the monotype, came onto the market. Production costs of the

44. Boletín, May 1901; June 1901.

45. Miguel Rente, op cit, p. 25.; Boletín, October 1906; May 1908; Boletín de la Unión Obrera del Arte de Imprimir, 30 June - 30 September 1913.
monotype were higher than those of the linotype, but it was well adapted for book printing. The change-over to the new technology was extremely rapid in Britain and the USA. In Britain by 1914 almost all news offices had installed linotypes, and all the main book houses were using monotypes.46

In Barcelona the new machinery was introduced more slowly. As the discussion of the first half of this chapter would lead us to suspect, this was primarily the result of the small-scale of much of the industry. There were over 300 printing houses in Barcelona in 1913. Between journeymen and apprentices there were at the same time about 2000 compositors, but they worked alongside the industry's 5,500 other workers. The factory-worker ratio was, therefore, at most 1:25, and it was probably considerably less. There were a number of large news offices and several important book houses. Yet at the same time there were large numbers of job houses which only employed 5 or 6 workers and, of course, could not afford significant capital outlays. This was a mixed blessing for the compositors. Conditions were often worst in these small, marginal, houses known as "coal yards."47 However the news offices and a couple of the larger book houses began to introduce the linotype and monotype between 1900 and 1910. The resultant increase in production led to growing unemployment amongst the compositors. Thus their trade newspaper commented in 1910:48

We feel that to talk here about what has happened since the introduction of the printing machinery in unnecessary. For, as you all know, in La Vanguardia, La Publicidad, El Noticiero, El Poble, La Tribuna, El Intransigente, La Prensa, and in the publishing houses in which it has been installed, personnel was shed as a result of over-production.

In addition, as the new machines were relatively easy to operate, there was a temptation on the part of some employers not to train skilled compositors to operate them, but to use cheap female labour instead. As shall be seen, the male workers were to fight tooth and nail against any such attempt.

Many skilled building workers had to contend with a quite similar set of problems. Within the construction industry there were, of course, a large number of trades. Wallpaperers and plasterers were the aristocrats of the industry, and could earn over 5 pesetas a day. Another well paid group of workers connected to the building industry were the stonemasons who cut stone from the mountain of Montjuïc. The statutes of their union drawn up in 1895 stressed the need to maintain harmonious relations with their employers. Yet even in the case of these workers there was conflict over the use of piece rates.49


47. SO, 28 October 1910; 17 February 1911.


Two other trades whose workers were employed in workshops away from the construction sites were the marblers and brickmakers. With an average wage of 4.5 pesetas they were, as in the case of the compositors, relatively well paid. The marblers, however, were on particularly good terms with their employers and maintained a tightly controlled apprenticeship system. Nevertheless, from 1911 there was an undercurrent of anxiety amongst the workers, caused by the decision of a factory in Cornella to introduce stone cutting machinery and raise working hours from the customary eight to nine and a half. Brickmakers also maintained strict entry restrictions, but there was a higher level of industrial conflictivity, as a result, as was so often the case, of the employers use of piece rates.

Workers in these trades, however, formed only a small minority of those employed within the construction industry. The great majority of workers were bricklayers and their labourers, painters, and carpenters. These workers laboured in small groups on building sites under the supervision of contractors. The contractors were usually ex-workers, a fact which does not seem to have improved labour relations in the industry. Wages in these trades were lower than in those already analysed, and varied between 3.75 and 4.5 pesetas a day in 1905. In fact there real wages were considerably less than this daily wage. Like almost all workers they were not paid on Sundays. Furthermore, construction was very much a seasonal occupation and in the winter there was usually heavy unemployment. In the case of the bricklayers this was made even worse by the fact that they worked in the open and were not paid on rainy days. The result, a number of sources confirm, was that the bricklayers real wage was more like 2.5 pesetas a day. Finally construction was also a industry prone to particularly violent cyclical swings. This could be seen in the depression years of 1904-1907. In Barcelona between 1900 and 1906, according to Miguel Sastre, the number of bricklayers and their labourers employed in Barcelona fell from 15,000 to 3,500. Moreover, in 1905 out of Barcelona's 3,500 carpenters, 2000 were unemployed.

The carpenters were the only group of workers in the building trades who faced a serious threat from mechanisation. Power saws were used by a large number of employers, and the carpenters claimed that they were the cause of rising unemployment within the trade. Thus in 1903 when the carpenters struck for a reduction of working hours they: "Based their attitude on the fact

50. Miguel Sastre, Las Huelgas...1906, pp. 39-50.; LP, 5 August 1911, ME.; Miguel Sastre, Las Huelgas...1903, pp. 23-25.
51. LP, 23 September 1901, NE; El Trabajo, 4 January 1902; Miguel Sastre, La Huelgas...1906, p. 33.
52. Miguel Sastre, Las Huelgas...1905, p. 22; 1906, pp. 30-34.
that with modern machinery in less time more work could be done, and by reducing the length of the working day the 400 workers in the trade who are at present unemployed would find work.  

The workers of the three trades, nevertheless, were all confronted by the contractor’s employment of an increasing number of apprentices. Contractors also made a concerted effort to speed up the pace of work. In carpentry and painting piece rates were their favoured tool. In bricklaying they tried to increase the speed of work through closer supervision. The bricklayers, like other artisanal workers, showed great pride in their work. The restriction of their job autonomy and the attempt, as they saw it, to sacrifice the quality of their work for quantity was, therefore, greatly resented. Thus, for example, a leader of the Barcelona bricklayers’ union showed his indignation at the methods employed by the contractors when he stated in 1901:  

Here we have gone though the shame of an employer, devoid of any sense of humanity, going so far as to dictate to a journeyman the way in which he should take hold of his trowel, bend down and pick up the mortar, because he considered the way the journeyman was doing it not fast enough, and he wished to save a few seconds for his own benefit.  

The anger and anguish caused by the development of capitalism and employer attempts to undermine these workers artisanal status is, however, perhaps best summed up by a resolution put forward by the Igualada and Sants bricklayers’ unions at the first congress of the Regional Confederation of Bricklayers and Bricklayers Labourers held in 1914. It stated that to work in an “honourable” profession was the dream of any child. Unfortunately that of the bricklayer was “rapidly degenerating” as a result of the actions of their employers, who moved by “sheer material selfishness” had converted the trade into a “den of iniquity”. This was, the resolution maintained, “intolerable behaviour in a trade like the art of bricklaying, whose reputation was since the remotest times well established, and which was at the head of all the trades in the construction industry.” In particular the report complained that the employers did not respect apprenticeship regulations. Thus they “avoid making any kind of commitment when employing an apprentice on one of their jobs, and in this way the situation had been reached whereby three quarters of the workers employed on a construction site are classified as and paid like apprentices”. Moreover:  

In some localities, especially in the big cities where exploitation by the bourgeoisie is at its height, apprentices are only used to put up the building site. When this is finished the employer is careful to discharge them or move them on to another site.  

53. Miguel Sastre, Las Huelgas... 1903, p. 42.  
54. LP, 7 October 1901, ME.  
55. Confederaci6n Regional de Oficiales y Peones de Albañil de Cataluña: Memoria y Actas del Primer Congreso Celebrado en Vilanueva y Geltrú en el Local del Ateneo Vilanovés los Días 28 y 29 de Julio de 1914 (Barcelona, 1914), pp. 15-16.
When the apprentice regards himself as an adult and is ashamed to ask for work as an apprentice, his self respect is wounded and he decides, without consulting with anybody, to go up in rank and become a journeyman.

Metalworkers would at first sight be thought to be a very different category of worker from those considered above. On the European continent by the first decade of the twentieth century this was to a large extent the case. The nineteenth century had seen a total transformation of work structures in the iron and steel industry, and in metalworking and machine building. At mid-century most metalworkers had been artisans. Even though many factories were by that time fairly large the workers continued to behave as if they were employed in small workshops: they controlled the pace of work, moved about the factory freely, and took breaks whenever they felt it necessary. However, the growth in factory size combined with the development of new technology gave employers the opportunity to break the hold the artisans had over the industry. The results could be seen in 1914, by which time most of the industry’s workers were semiskilled, and required only a short period of training.

This transformation took place throughout the metallurgical sector of the economy. The first process carried out in the industry was the smelting of coke and iron ore in a blast furnace to produce pig iron. The pig iron was then resmelting in a reverberatory furnace in order to produce cast iron. Cast iron was then used in the foundry. The key worker in a mid-nineteenth century foundry was the highly skilled moulder. However, from the 1860s the moulder was faced with a number of threats to his position. First, the invention of machine moulding. Second, the growth of mass production methods which allowed a standardised product to be cast by men with relatively little training. The result could be seen in England, where by the first decade of the twentieth century the craft based iron moulders formed only a small part of a labour force dominated by semiskilled moulders.56

Cast iron was, however, too brittle to be employed in the manufacture of a large number of products. For products such as rails, tools and guns, wrought iron had to be used. In order to convert cast to wrought iron it needed to be rolled and puddled. Great strength and stamina were required of the workers involved in this process. Like the mule spinners, therefore, they became another group of industrial workers who could command a high price for their labour. However, from the 1870s wrought iron was rapidly replaced by cheap steel. The most successful steel producing processes, the Bessemer converter and Siemens Martin open hearth furnace, again required only a semiskilled or unskilled labour force, which moreover could be closely supervised.

Another group of workers with a strong position within the labour process were thereby eliminated.57

Once produced the wrought iron or steel was forged. This process was originally carried out by a skilled forger. Yet as the size of the plates and beams which had to be forged increased it became clear that an alternative had to be found. This alternative was provided by the steam hammer, which was increasingly employed on the continent from the 1860s. The steam hammers were not difficult to operate. The result was again, therefore, to replace a group of skilled workers by another which was at most semiskilled.58

Iron and steel were, of course, the main inputs of machine construction. In the 1850s engineers were craft workers. Machine tools were very crude and the experience and eye of the engineer were, therefore, of the utmost importance. Production was not yet standardised and it was the job of the engineer to construct the entire machine. This situation was to change in the second half of the nineteenth century with the introduction of mass production methods. As a result far greater use was made of standardised, interchangeable, parts. Furthermore, new semi-automatic machine tools came onto the market. Here again, therefore, the content of the engineers work became de-skilled and it became technically feasible to employ semiskilled workers.59

As a consequence of Catalonia's lack of coal and iron ore resources no blast furnaces were to be found in the region. Cast and wrought iron was imported first from Britain and later from the Basque country and Asturias. The only factory that transformed cast to wrought iron on any scale was Fomento de Obras y Construcciones. In 1908 it finally opened a Siemens Martin open hearth furnace. Few factories, however, followed the same path. Foundry work was far more common. By the turn of the century a large number of foundries, some of which were very small, were to be found scattered throughout the region.60 In Barcelona, moreover, most of the larger factories also had their own foundry. Nevertheless, almost half the city's metalworkers were employed by firms involved in machine construction.

As in the case of most Catalan industry the Barcelona metallurgical industry was set apart from that of its continental counterparts by the small size of its plants. In 1910 there were about 350 metallurgical establishments in Barcelona, which employed some 11,600 workers. The

58. Ibid, pp. 113-120.
60. Federico Rahola y Trémols, op cit, pp. 420-421.
factory-worker ratio was, therefore, only about 1:33. Indeed, looked at by international standards even Barcelona’s largest two factories, La Maquinista Terrestre i Marítima and Fomento de Obras y Construcciones, which employed 700 and 750 workers respectively, were relatively small. About 136 of the city’s establishments, consisted of tiny workshops “in which the owner himself works with several apprentices”. Many of them were to be found in the Old Quarter and they were dedicated almost exclusively to repair work. Given that most machinery was imported repair work was, nevertheless, an important part of the work of most factories. The larger factories, as has been noted, tended to be located in the Barceloneta. This was where La Maquinista along with the important factories known as El Vulcán and Alexander Hernanz were to be found. Fomento de Obras y Construcciones, on the other hand, was situated between Sant Martí and Poble Nou.61

Eduard Escarrià stressed the link between the small scale of Catalan industry and the lack of a large consumer market. In the case of machine construction this was particularly clear. Unlike their German and British neighbours Catalan firms found it impossible to mass produce machinery, and thus could to a far lesser degree use specialised machine tools which would allow them to subdivide the work in their factories. As José Playá, a commentator who had close contacts with the Catalan industrialists, stated:62

Here the machine construction firms can rarely specialise due to the lack of a market. That is to say they cannot fight with their foreign competitors in export markets, and in these circumstances they cannot take advantage of the the great benefits of serial production.

What our industrialists do in general goes unnoticed, but is quite extraordinary and proves that the industry lies on firm foundations. Not being able to specialise, for a construction firm to survive it is absolutely necessary that it undertakes a wide variety of tasks, producing in each case only a limited number of copies, (...).

The need to produce a wide variety of products was felt by even the largest Barcelona firms, and was not restricted to machine construction. La Maquinista, for example, received such a varied demand for cast iron goods that for each order it had to make a new mould. However, this was not the only factor that militated against the use of the latest production methods. The fact that labour costs were relatively low made employers reluctant to replace men by machines. Thus as A Escribano has pointed out Catalan industrialists were better able to compete with foreign suppliers in the production of machines like steam and hydraulic engines in which labour costs formed a large part of total costs. Finally technical modernisation was also slowed down by the absence of qualified technicians in the smaller workshops.63

61. LP, 14 September 1910, ME; El Diluvio (ED), 15 September, ME, 2 November, ME, 1910.
63. A. Escribano, “La Maquinista Terrestre i Marítima”, Recerques, no. 18 (1986), pp. 160-165.; José Playá, op cit, pp. 32-33.; Spain’s metallurgical industrialists stated in 1913: “In The United States, England, Belgium and Germany in general, and in some parts of France and Italy, wages are higher than in
As Eduard Escarra had noted, therefore, the machinery employed in the Catalan metallurgical industry tended to be out of date. This was even the case in *La Maquinista* where in 1910 the management decided that its machine tools had become obsolescent and would have to be replaced. The renovation of the factory's machinery did not, however, take place until the years 1917-23.64

The result was that in Barcelona at the dawn of the new century the replacement of artisanal by semiskilled workers had only very partially been carried through. Of course by no means all metalworkers were skilled. The larger Barcelona plants used steam hammers. As noted, fierce competition from foreign firms also forced firms like *La Maquinista* into the fields such as bridge construction. The assemblers and riveters employed on these tasks were not highly skilled. Finally, some smaller workshops specialised in such fields as the making of wire netting, galvanised buckets, nails and screws, which needed few skilled workers.

However, in many branches of the industry the employers inability to mass produce favoured the preservation of artisanal work structures. This was particularly so because so much of the work carried out by the metallurgical workshops involved repairs. Skilled workers were needed for such work. This was reflected in the survival of apprenticeship, and despite employer complaints that it did not produce a technically competent workforce nothing was done to find an alternative.65 The difference between the nature of production in Catalonia and on the Continent was, indeed, favourably commented on by the Barcelona metalworkers' union, which hit the nail on the head when it stated:66

The majority of our employers only do repair work, and this shows us that Spanish metalworkers are not inferior to the rest. Foreign metalworkers, who are employed in large workshops, become specialists in one type of work and have no knowledge the rest. We, on the contrary, do all classes of work, and are therefore trained to be genuine workers, capable of all classes of construction and repair work.

These workers were not, however, well paid. The average 4 peseta wage was, as table 2.5. indicates, well down the league table of wages in the city. A skilled forger was the best paid workers in the industry, and in 1905 he could earn over 5 pesetas a day. In machine construction

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Spain. But the perfection with which the work is done and the favourable environment gives them an advantage over us. "Primer Congreso de Industrias Metalúrgicas. Exposición del Cuestionario (Barcelona 1913), p. 31.

64. Alberto del Castillo, op cit, pp. 355-356.
65. José Barret, "Raquitismo Metalúrgico Nacional. Sus Causas y Consecuencias", in Primer Congreso Nacional de Industrias Metalúrgicas Celebrado en Barcelona el 13 de Abril de 1913 (Barcelona 1913), pp. 145-147.
66. ED, 18 September 1910, ME.
the best paid worker was the turner or lathe operator who only earned 4.5 pesetas a day. An adjuster, on the other hand, could only manage 4 pesetas. In foundry work the only worker to earn over 4 pesetas a day was, as might be expected, the skilled moulder, whose average wage was 4.25 pesetas. Moreover, it appears that as in the case of some cotton textile workers, metalworkers wages had actually declined since the mid-1880s.67

This was not the only grievance felt by the metalworkers. In Barcelona industry working hours were longest in the cotton textile industry where, as was seen in Chapter One, 11 hours per day was the norm. Most artisanal workers worked an 8 or 9 hour day. Since the 1870s, however, the working day in metalworking had been 10 hours. Any demand for a reduction in working hours or rise in wages on the part of the workers was, however, fiercely resisted by the industrialists, who maintained that only by keeping down labour costs could they compete with foreign imports.

Furthermore, although metalworkers did not face a technological revolution in the first decade of the twentieth century, they were confronted by the same difficulty which so many artisanal trades had to cope with: the use of “an excessive” number of apprentices by employers who had wrested their employment and deployment from the metalworkers’ hands. The background to a conflict involving the Sabadell engineering workers in 1899 serves to illustrate this point. Sabadell was the largest metalworking centre outside Barcelona. At the beginning of the year the engineers complained at the number of apprentices employed. Many of these so-called apprentices were brought in from rural areas outside Sabadell and lived with their employer. In order to obtain the maximum benefit from the apprentices’ low wages the employers often stretched an apprenticeship out from three to three and a half or even four years. The apprentices were made to work over twelve hours a day and given work which the journeymen felt was their preserve. At the same time the engineers rejected the use of anyals. These were workers who were employed on a trial basis on low wages for one year after having completed their apprenticeship.68

Yet, it was in the clothing industry that the situation of male skilled workers was most desperate. The major contributing factor to the tailors’ plight was the development of the sewing machine, which allowed employers to put out work to low paid female homeworkers who produced cheap, standardised, garments.69 Shoemakers were faced by a similar set of problems. In Barcelona skilled male shoemakers were employed as cutters and fitters. However, women

68. AMS, Conflictes Laborals 1899, Huelga de Cerrajeros y Trabajadores de la Fàbrica Harmel Hermanos.
were employed either at home or in the workshop to sew on the soles and polish the shoes. Moreover, work was also put out to large numbers of male shoemakers. They were particularly badly paid on average earning no more than 3 pesetas a day. For this reason they worked very long hours and, therefore, proved a serious competitive threat to the factory based workers. The position of these workers was further undermined by the loss of the last colonies which had absorbed a large part of Spain's production. As a result unemployment in the industry was particularly severe. A number of large factories closed at the turn of the century, and in Barcelona the number of shoemakers fell from from about 11,000 in 1903 to 6,000 in 1906, and half of these were unemployed. These factors help to explain why, in 1905, skilled shoemakers earned between 3.58 and 3.75 pesetas a day, little more than the average labourers wage. But this does not end the catalogue of problems they faced. During the first decade of the century larger factories began to introduce machinery which was to make the skills of the fitter redundant. Thus by 1914 the Barcelona shoemakers union reached the sombre conclusion that:

At the present time a slow transformation is taking place within the industry which escapes the eyes of the observer.

In Barcelona there are already five or six factories which make shoes with the new machinery, and its results are so prodigious that before long the other industrialists, not being able to compete with the new form of production, will be obliged to imitate them or else be defeated

As a result of the small-scale of Catalan industry and the sluggish growth of the Catalan economy, then, artisanal work structures continued to predominate in many branches of Catalan industry at least until 1914. However, few artisans in Catalonia seem ever to have had the privileged status in society which had been accorded to the British "labour aristocrats" in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In Britain, it has been argued, these aristocrats formed a higher stratum within the working class. They were separated from the "labouring poor" by the higher wages they enjoyed. Moreover, this division was cemented because the labour aristocrats adopted their own peculiar lifestyle and culture. They aspired to "respectability", the main characteristics of which served to differentiate them from the majority of workers. Thus, for example, in the late nineteenth century even when unemployed the London bricklayers would not allow their wives to go out to work, and to be known to have visited a pawnshop was a great stigma. This was made possible not only by the higher wages the labour aristocrats earned, but also because they were cocooned from the effects of sickness and unemployment by union benefits.

70. ETN, 30 May 1895; ED, 16 June 1903, EE; Miguel Sastre, las Huelgas... 1903, pp. 25-26.; Emili Salut, op cit, pp. 85-86.; LP, 26 October 1900, ME; "Censo Obrero", 1905.

71. SO, 5 June 1914.
The aristocrats were able to carve out their privileged position through entry restrictions into the trade. Most like the compositors and workers in the building trades were craft workers as yet little affected by new divisions of labour. Some industrial workers like the self-acting mule spinners were, however, also able to enjoy the same status. It was as a result of the great mid-nineteenth century boom, when Britain became the "workshop of the world", that employers were able to grant these workers pay increases without eating into profits. From the 1870s competition from the continent and the United States became more severe, but British exporters still had the alternative of moving into safe empire markets. The importance of the labour aristocrats lay in the fact that it was largely only they who were unionised and politically active, and given their privileged status in the working class they shunned any form of political radicalism.72

In Catalonia, however, the febre d'or ended in 1885, and from this date the Catalan economy faced a continuous crisis. Catalan industrialists were, therefore, unlikely to grant concessions similar to those of their British counterparts. Moreover high food prices made it difficult for workers to afford anything but basic necessities, and the situation was to deteriorate as a result of the inflationary pressure of the years 1895-1914. One of the results of this situation was that although the distance between a journeyman and his master was often not as great as in Britain wage differentials within the working class were also less marked. Thus, in Barcelona the average labourers' wage was about 77 per cent that of the average artisan.

Few workers, therefore, were able to afford the trappings of respectability. This could be seen in the fact that 1914 the wife of many a skilled worker had to go out to work to supplement the family income. Moreover, virtually all working class families were forced to visit the pawnshop in times of difficulty. The inadequacy of unemployment, accident and sickness benefits also meant that if the male breadwinner were affected by a long term injury his family soon lived in abject poverty, and workers seriously injured were forced to beg in the streets.73 By the late nineteenth century, moreover, craft controls in many branches artisanal industry were being undermined, seriously threatening the status of skilled workers. These difficulties, it will be argued, formed the basis for much of the labour agitation of the period under study.

However, there were also political factors behind the differences in the position of labour in British and Catalan society. In 1875 unions in Britain were legally recognised, thereby allowing employers and union officials to develop collective bargaining procedures. In Spain the class


73. AECB 1903, p. 522.; La Nació, 2 October 1915; SO, 10 March 1911. A quite similar set of contrast between Britain and France were outlined by B.H. Moss, op cit, p. 15. The similarities between much of the French and Catalan labour movements will be remarked upon several times during the course of the thesis.
nature of the state was more blatant, and unions found it far more difficult to operate. In addition
even when unions were formed employers often refused to deal with them. It is with role of the
state, employer attitudes towards organised labour and trade union organisation that the next two
chapters will deal.
CHAPTER THREE

THE STATE, TRADE UNION ORGANISATION AND STRIKES, 1899-1914.
PART I: THE TEXTILE INDUSTRIES

The nature and actions of the state naturally played a key role in shaping the political conscience of ordinary workers. During the turbulent years of 1868 to 1873 the working class and petty bourgeoisie had for the first time forced themselves onto the stage of national politics. This period in Spain's history was finally brought to a close by the Canovist Restoration of 1875. The Restoration was set up as a result of a conservative reaction against the threat to the interests of Spain's dominant classes represented by the reforming First Republic of 1873. The principal aim of its creator, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, was to lay the foundations of a stable political system which would effectively marginalise Spain's lower classes from political life. To do this he had to put a stop to the internecine struggles between the various political groupings of the ruling classes. As a consequence of these struggles the military coup had become the normal means of replacing one regime with another, and this had finally put in jeopardy the dominant position of the large-scale land owners and financiers within the Spanish state.

Cánovas set about this task by engineering the organisation of two new political parties - the Conservatives and Liberals - which represented the whole spectrum of ruling class opinion. These parties, it was Cánovas's wish, would in the future regularly replace each other in power not by coups but through the so-called peaceful change-over (turno pacífico). These change-overs were, however, by no means the result of democratic elections. The régime adopted a liberal-democratic facade. The Liberals in particular were cast as the party of reform, and during their period in office during the 1880s they passed laws regulating the freedom of the press in 1883, legalising private associations in 1887, and restoring universal manhood suffrage (abolished by Cánovas in 1876) in 1890. Yet the reality behind this democratic veneer was a very different one. The essence of the turno was that the parliamentary majorities necessary to govern were not won in the heated battle of elections but manufactured in the Ministry of the Interior, and this continued to be the case even after universal male suffrage had been reintroduced.¹

At a local level it was the task of the political bosses or caciques to get official candidates elected. The power of the caciques was based on their economic standing within the local

¹ The consolidation of the Restoration in Catalonia is discussed by Borja de Riquer in, "Burgesos, Politics i Cacics a la Catalunya de la Restauració", L'Avenç, no.85 (September 1985). For an overview of electoral manipulation see in particular, José Varela Ortega, Los Amigos Políticos. Partidos, Elecciones y Caciquismo en La Restauración, 1875-1900 (Madrid, 1977).
community. In rural Spain they were typically large-scale landowners or their representatives. Once the security forces had again been placed at their disposal after 1873 they re-established a very large degree of control over the local workforce and at election time, either through force or as a result of traditions of deference, they could ensure that workers voted for the candidates of their choice.

In urban Catalonia, however, other fractions of the bourgeoisie could to some extent take the place of the landowning cacique. As comments made in Chapter One would lead one to suspect it was in the isolated company towns that the figure of the cotton textile baron most resembled that of the rural cacique, and there are numerous examples of industrialists in these areas forcing workers into voting for their candidates. In urban areas it was more difficult to exercise such blatant pressure. Nevertheless, in the larger industrial towns, and even in Barcelona up to the turn of the century, through their control of the levers of local government power and patronage, local élites were able to ensure that candidates they favoured were elected. 2

The first instinct of the Restoration state was, as might be expected, to deal with the challenge of organised labour through repression. After the fall of the First Republic most unions were effectively repressed, and left wing organisations had to lead a clandestine existence. After the Liberals came to power in 1881 the situation improved greatly, and unions were able to operate freely. However, government repression again intensified after 1883. In Barcelona it reached its climax between 1893 and 1897. During these years martial law was in operation most of the time, unions were closed down, and a large number of labour leaders and even left wing bourgeois sympathisers were arrested.

Through to the end of the nineteenth century, then, the two official political parties, and especially the Conservatives, dealt harshly with the trade unions. It was only in the 1890s that Cánovas del Castillo began seriously to consider the need to put industrial relations on a more stable footing. In part this was a reaction to a strike wave which swept the country between 1890 and 1892. In addition, the growth in social legislation on continental Europe pointed the way to the kind of measures which could be taken by the state. The Conservatives, therefore, began to advocate greater state intervention to deal with the "working class threat". The result of this reappraisal could be seen in 1901 when the Conservative Government founded the Instituto de Reformas Sociales. This body was charged with the task of investigating social conditions in Spain and of preparing legislation. At the same time, the Spanish parliament or Cortes approved

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2. An analysis of industrial caciquismo in Sabadell set in a very different conceptual framework to the present work is to be found in Gabriele Ranzato, *La Aventura de una Ciudad Industrial. Sabadell entre el Antiguo Régimen y la Modernidad* (Barcelona, 1986) pp. 17-58.
Spain's first social laws. The most significant piece of legislation was probably the act limiting female working hours to 11 a day and putting restrictions on the employment of children. Furthermore, laws were passed restricting Sunday trading, setting minimum standards of hygiene at work, and providing machinery for compensation in case of industrial accidents. Later in the decade the Conservatives also passed an - admittedly restrictive - law legalising strikes, and supported a scheme by which industrial tribunals could be set up to resolve disputes over pay and working conditions.

In each locality so-called juntas locales de reformas sociales were meant to be set up to ensure the legislation was respected. These juntas were to be presided over by the Mayor, and included worker and employer representatives. Nevertheless, the reforming drive of the Spanish state was very weak. As shall be seen, government officials did little to ensure legislation was complied with, so it was only where trade unions were relatively strong that there was any chance of the reforms being implemented. Moreover, in Catalonia union officials continued to be subject to harassment. After the turn of the century martial law was declared at frequent intervals, and on each occasion the result was a total clampdown on union activities.

The hostility of the state was naturally a serious obstacle in the path of trade union growth. The attitude of the employers was often a further impediment. On the European continent industrialists by no means naturally accepted the proposition that industrial peace could best be guaranteed by entering into negotiations with independent unions. On the contrary, it appears that only when workers showed sufficient strength to overcome employer opposition to union organisation could collective bargaining take place. Trade union organisation was, therefore, largely an outgrowth of power on the shop floor. Consequently, it was often artisanal workers who formed the strongest unions. This was in part because they were usually difficult to replace. Moreover, they were not in general subject to close managerial supervision, and therefore had the time and opportunity to plan industrial action. Industrial workers, on the other hand, were usually in a weaker position vis à vis their employers, and owners of industrial enterprises could take advantage of this fact to reject trade unionism and institute their own forms of social control. This was particularly the case in large-scale heavy industry, where industrialists could more easily co-ordinate their actions, and where they had the necessary resources to develop an anti-union strategy effectively. The best known example of this strategy is provided by the iron and steel industry on

3. With the exception of legislation passed in 1873 regulating the use of female and child labour, but which was never enforced.


5. See the comments in M.A. Hanagan, op cit, p. 155.
the German Ruhr. On the Ruhr, industrialists combined strict labour discipline with employer paternalism. They used all means at their disposal to root out union organisers. At the same time, they rejected state intervention, and instead developed their own housing, insurance and benefit programmes.6 This method of maintaining social control was, however, by no means limited to the German Ruhr. Indeed there are clear parallels with the paternalist régime adopted by the basque iron and steel industrialists, which ensured that trade unionism made little progress in Baracaldo and Sestao before 1916.7

In textiles the situation was more confused. Cotton textiles was the pioneering industry of the new industrial age, and yet in many parts of Europe the spinners had been able to imitate the apprenticeship restrictions instituted by the skilled journeymen. Power-loom weavers operated no such apprenticeship system. Nevertheless, they were able to draw on the traditions of trade unionism developed by the hand-loom weavers during the first half of the nineteenth century.8 Moreover, in textiles the typical unit of production was smaller than in heavy industry and competition between individual employers was often fierce. As a result, it was often difficult to co-ordinate action against trade unions, and the capital outlays that could be employed in welfare schemes were limited. Within textiles, therefore, union organisation was typically stronger than in heavy industry. None the less, the situation varied greatly from country to country.

In the Catalan cotton textile industry, the Alt Llobregat company towns were in the strongest position to adopt a paternalist régime. In urban areas, however, such a strategy was more difficult to pursue. Thus, despite determined employer resistance, there was a rapid growth of trade unionism during the "democratic six years" of 1868 to 1873. Consequently, some industrialists came to accept the need to negotiate with trade unions. This attitude was favoured by the rapid expansion of the industry between 1869 and 1883. During this time profit levels in the larger establishments were high, and there was thus an incentive not to provoke costly strikes.

In 1868 a Catalan wide cotton textile labour federation was founded. This federation was called the Three Steam Sections or Tres Classes de Vapor (TCV) because it aimed to organise workers in the preparatory, spinning and power-loom weaving branches of the industry. From the outset it was centralised in Barcelona and developed rather a bureaucratic structure based on paid officials. It also adopted a very moderate trade union practice. Its main aim was to bring wage rates outside Barcelona up to level of those in the Catalan capital. This policy was cautiously pursued. All efforts were made to reach a negotiated settlement to disputes, and strikes were only

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7. Juan Pablo Fusi, op cit, pp. 76-78.
declared in the last resort. The TCV was forced underground after the fall of the First Republic. However, it was again to flourish in the more open atmosphere of the years 1881-1883. In this latter year it had about 20,000 members, over a quarter of the region’s cotton textile labour force. 9

As a result of the TCV’s success then, there grew up a body of officials who by the early 1880s consciously modelled their policy on that of the reformist leaders of the English New Model Unions. Some employer representatives supported the TCV official’s goal of peaceful collective bargaining within the framework of capitalism. From 1889 most cotton textile industrialists formed part of an employer organisation called the *Foment del Treball Nacional* (FTN). The *Foment*, as it came to be known, was by the end of the nineteenth century the most important employer organisation in the country, and its prestigious monthly publication, *El Trabajo Nacional*, had a very wide circulation. *El Trabajo Nacional* was first published in 1895 and from the start the contributors showed themselves to be in favour of union organisation. They argued that by accepting the right of unions to exist and giving them legal guarantees they would be taken out of the hands of extremists. And that once responsible leaders were elected it would be easier for employers to solve disputes than if they had to deal with a non unionised amorphous working class mass. 10

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, this was by no means the dominant view amongst the cotton textile industrialists. The principal reason behind their increasingly anti-union stance appears to have been economic. As was seen in Chapter One, from the mid-1880s the economic climate in Catalonia became markedly more adverse. Cotton textile industrialists responded by cutting wages and by restructuring the labour process in their favour. In rural areas, where the company towns operated, this was a relatively easy task. The workers were able to offer little resistance to the omnipotent industrial caciques. In the towns, on the other hand, workers put up a stauncher fight, and for this reason industrialists had to break the back trade unionism in the industry in order to impose the new working conditions.

The employer offensive began in Ripoll and Campdevanol on the Freser river, where in 1889 local industrialists were able to destroy trade union organisation and impose harsher working conditions. 11 The offensive continued in Manresa in the following year. In the Manresa area, unlike the Ter and Freser, power-loom weaving predominated, and the labour force was by this

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10. See, for example, ETN, September 1909.

11. ES, 8 November, 6 December 1889.
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time to a large extent female. The industrialists main aim was, therefore, to cut costs at the expense of the female weavers and preparatory workers. Hostilities began in the Dolors power-loom weaving factory in March. The workers wages had seriously been eroded in the past few years and they took advantage of a temporary upturn in trade to demand that the old wage rates be established. No agreement was reached and, in consequence, the workers came out on strike. The employers' reaction was to lock-out the entire Manresa cotton textile labour force. There followed solidarity strikes in Barcelona and the surrounding towns, which according to some estimates affected up to 50,000 workers.

In Manresa the workers achieved a temporary victory when the civil governor forced the town's industrialists to end their lock out and enter into negotiations with the workers. The victory was, however, to be short-lived. In July 1891 the Conservatives came to power. The party of Cánovas had forged close links with the Catalan industrial bourgeoisie. The Manresa and Alt Llobregat industrialists, therefore, took advantage of the new political conjuncture to close their factories throughout the region and sack large numbers of workers. In Manresa the TCV declared a general strike in response to the sacking of its factory delegates. Several days later it was pressured into declaring a solidarity strike in Barcelona. Its actions were, however, all to no avail. In Manresa and industrial towns throughout the Alt Llobregat the workers were defeated and their trade unions outlawed. 12

The workers of the Ter Valley were to face the employer onslaught in 1891. The employer drive to cut costs on the Ter was to lead to bitter and protracted industrial conflict, for within the cotton textile industry it was the workers of the larger industrial towns on the Ter that were best able to defend their interests. There were two main reasons why this was so. First, as was noted in Chapter One, in the Ter Valley there were few large scale, isolated, company towns. In addition, workers in the Ter Valley towns were urban industrial and not mixed workers. In such a setting a sense of community could be built up, and trade unions could be established far more easily. 13

In the second place, spinners formed the backbone of the trade unions on the Ter. It has already been stressed that in cotton textiles it was the spinners who were in the strongest position to form trade unions. In areas where by the 1880s female weavers were increasingly predominant, it was relatively easy for the employers to victimise militant workers because they were unskilled and could, therefore, be replaced with relative ease. This was especially the case in Barcelona, which had a large floating population. In the Ter, on the other hand, the male spinners commanded a position of respect in the factory. They were regarded as skilled workers. This

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12. On these strikes see, Miquel Izard, Industrialización, pp. 167-172.; Joaquim Ferrer, El Primer "1er de Maig" a Catalunya (Barcelona, 1972), pp. 61-68.
perception may have been false to the extent that it took only a few weeks to train a worker to operate a spinning machine. However, whilst the spinners were able to limit recruitment of piecers onto these machines they maintained great power on the shop floor. In the 1880s for the first time industrialists moved to replace them with female workers on the ring-frames. However, the spinners were able to respond by mobilising the whole of the cotton textile labour force behind their demands.

As in the rest of the cotton textile industry, in the Ter Valley towns class conflict had become increasingly marked from the mid-1880s. In Manlleu 1885 saw the first important strike in the industry since 1872. It was also around this time that a yellow union “set up under the auspices of priests and the bourgeoisie” began to function in the town. In most areas, industrialists who introduced the ring-frame immediately tried to replace the male spinners by female workers on these machines. In Manlleu and other large Ter Valley towns, however, the strength of organised labour initially led the mill owners to adopt a more cautious approach. Thus according to “R.S” the correspondent of the republican daily La Publicidad in Manlleu: “When the first machines known as ring-frames were introduced a gentleman's agreement was reached to the effect that they would be worked by men, and that of the profits that resulted from the new machinery two-thirds would be for the industrialist and the rest for the worker.” However, as the economic crisis deepened the Manlleu employers became increasingly dissatisfied with this accord.

The first serious attempt to replace men by women on the ring-frames was made in 1891. The first step taken by the employers was to found the Foment Moral i Material, which was to act as a co-ordinating body of all the town's industrialists. The employers' strategy was then to provoke a conflict, destroy trade union organisation in the industry, and finally impose the new work practices. Their action began in October when five female frame tenters were sacked from the factory of Rifa i Co. for no apparent reason. In response, the rest of the town's workforce came out on strike in solidarity. The reaction of the Manlleu employers could not have been more drastic. They locked-out the town's entire workforce and stated that work would not resume work until Rifa i Co. had restarted production without the five women. The real motives behind the lock out were pin pointed by the correspondent of La Publicidad, who stated: “It seems that some intransigents, spurred on by the results of the conflicts in Ripoll, Manresa and the Llobregat, want to make a last ditch stand and subject their workers to the same conditions as in the factories in these towns. That is to say to break their old customs.” These were, he added, the agreements that

14. ES, 23 October 1891.

15. LP, 14 October 1891. He continued: "This to my mind is the only way to resolve these social questions, and is very different from the stance generally taken (by the employers) in Catalonia, which leaves the men without a job."
men should work the ring-frames and that no worker could be sacked without a justifiable reason.\textsuperscript{16}

As a result, not surprisingly, the workers adopted an increasingly radical stance. In October 1891 the Manlleu textile unions were described as “always moderate and without utopian demands.”\textsuperscript{17} Yet, in a leaflet published on 19 November the Manlleu Workers’ Commission explained:\textsuperscript{18}

The war between the exploiters and exploited has begun. The bourgeoisie has united to combat us. The most ridiculous demand is for them a rallying cry provided that it can be used to annihilate us and undermine the improvements in our working conditions. They have in common everything that signifies opposition to our plans. And so the position that every worker should adopt in this class struggle is well defined: given that all the industrialists have united against us it is our duty to unite against them without indulgence or pity, whosoever falls and whatever happens

On this occasion the cotton textile industrialists were not to be successful. The workers had public opinion on their side and collected large amounts of money. They were, therefore, able to resist the lock out relatively well. Consequently, on the 12-13 of December the industrialists agreed to a compromise solution which in no way fundamentally affected the the position of the spinners within the labour process. The end of the Manlleu lock-out was an important victory in the context of the string of defeats which had recently been inflicted on the cotton textile workers. Yet the victory of the male spinners had only been partial. They had maintained their position in Manlleu and to a certain extent in the nearby towns of Roda and Sant Hipòlit. This fact confirmed that these were the strongest points of working class resistance in the area. It did not, however, prevent the employers from replacing men by women in the other Ter and Freser towns, not to mention the Alt Llobregat.\textsuperscript{19}

Furthermore, the Manlleu victory was insufficient to halt the general collapse of trade unionism in the cotton textile industry. In the repressive climate of the 1890s this pattern would be very difficult to reverse. The TCV was almost totally destroyed in the employer offensive of the years 1889-1891, and over the next eight years trade union organisation in the industry remained very weak. Industrialists were, therefore, able to advantage of this conjuncture further to cut wages, lengthen working hours, and replace male by female labour. In particular the years 1896-1898, in which the industry was faced with a severe economic crisis, saw a significant deterioration of the cotton textile workers standard of living.

\textsuperscript{16} LP, 1 November 1891.
\textsuperscript{17} LP, 14 October 1891.
\textsuperscript{18} ES, 23 November 1891.
\textsuperscript{19} LP, November-December 1891; Josep Comaposada, “La Vida...X”. 83
In 1899, on the other hand, there was a short lived economic boom in the industry. At the same time government repression of labour in Catalonia eased significantly. It was the combination of these two factors which made possible the rebirth of trade union organisation in the industry. It was Manlleu and the principal Ter Valley towns that were at the forefront of this recovery. In Manlleu the 1891 pact not to use female labour on the ring-frames had only begrudgingly been accepted by the employers, and was, therefore, a source of constant tension. During 1897-98 the employers called the pact increasingly into question, and in line with industrialists in the rest of Catalonia they continuously chipped away at established work practices. Since 1894 only a small power-loom weavers union had functioned in Manlleu. During 1898, however, a process of trade union reorganisation began. A new industry wide union was formed, which was to grow rapidly in the following year. As a result the workers were able to launch a counteroffensive against the mill-owners in 1899.

In February of that year the attempt was made by a number of employers to force their night shift to work through to 12 o'clock on Saturday nights. The new union responded by supporting a general strike in defence of the 1891 pact. This action forced the employers on the defensive, and after a few days they agreed to accept the workers' demands. This victory gave a great boost to trade union organisation throughout the Ter. At the beginning of March general strikes were declared in Torelló and Vic, with solidarity strikes by the workers of two factories in Roda. La Publicidad commented on these strikes:

The workers say that having come to an end the war which led, as a result of the unfavourable economic conjuncture, to a 10 per cent reduction in wages, they want a re-establishment of their old rates. Furthermore, the fact that in Manlleu the rates, which are more favourable than in the rest of the comarca, have remained unaltered, besides being unjust favours some industrialists at the expense of others.

After a long and arduous struggle the strikes finally ended in success, and wage increases were accepted in all of the factories. Just as important, it was also agreed that when spinning machines became vacant or new machines were installed they would in the future be operated by male workers.


21. LP, ME, 5 May 1899.

22. Juan de Catalunya, "Los Obreros de la Industria Textil IV. Continua el Relato", La Justicia, 26 February 1930. That the workers intended the agreement to be honoured was shown later in the year in Torelló, where a strike was called in the Colomer factory after a women had been employed on a ring-frame. ES, 29 September 1899.
The events of these months confirmed the collective strength of labour in the larger Ter Valley towns. The towns' textile labour force almost unanimously seconded the disputes. This included workers from the areas larger company towns. Female workers also came out in support. This is an important point to note, for although the strikes often involved claims for pay increases, the main underlying cause of tension was the employers' wish to replace male by female workers. Male and female textile workers, it should be remembered, formed part of the same families. Women textile workers, therefore, seem to have accepted the view that the male head of the household should be the main breadwinner, and that female labour was only supplementary. This vision was no doubt reinforced by the more prosaic consideration that if the male spinners' were made redundant the income of the whole family would decline.

The support received by the strikers was not, however, limited to the working class. In these towns it embraced virtually the whole community. Particularly important in this respect was the attitude of the towns' petty traders, who proved willing to sell the workers food on credit. These tradesmen were almost totally dependent on the workers for business. They could therefore readily sympathise with the strikers' opposition to cuts in their standard of living. These ties were strengthened by the fact that most of the larger-scale industrialists in the area lived in Barcelona, and left the running of their factories in the hands of managers. Consequently, the majority did not build up personal contacts with the townsfolk, and could be seen as outsiders who damaged the local community's prosperity through their actions. Finally, during 1900 the strikes were also aided by the benevolent stance adopted by the province's civil governor. His attitude was probably not unrelated to the fact that after the loss of the last colonies many cotton textile industrialists began to distance themselves from the Restoration state's official parties. Through its actions it seems that the Government wished to frighten them back to the fold.

After their victories the Ter Valley trade union leadership began to look further afield, and planned a recruitment drive through Girona and the Alt Llobregat. In order to co-ordinate their efforts the unions formed a district federation known as the Commission for the Fourth District and appointed a full time official to run day to day business. The first fruit of this drive was the extension of union organisation to the more outlying areas of the Ter and into the Freser Valley.

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23. Thus workers from the Rusifol company town participated in the February 1899 strike in Manlleu. In the March-June conflict in Torelló workers from Filatures del Ter and La Mambla d'Oris struck.

24. On this point see, Juan de Catalunya, “Los Obreros...IV”.

25. Particularly important in this respect was the case of Ripoll which had a large working class population. A new union was formed in the town in August 1899, and the employers were almost immediately presented with a demand for improved wages and working conditions. The strike which followed met with success, and an accord was signed which stipulated not only an increase in wages, but also that, “the means by which the personnel on the ring-frames might be changed, occupying them with men, will be subject to study.” ES, 29 September 1899.

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The Ter and Freser Valleys were not, however, the only points in Catalonia in which there was a resurgence of trade unionism. In Manresa, where all organisation in the industry had been destroyed in 1890, there was also a parallel growth. A new union was formed in the town in 1898. In the following year it was involved in a number of strikes, in which the demand for all wage rates to be restored figured prominently. They were, in general, successful. In consequence the union grew quickly and extended its influence to the workers of nearby towns. By February 1899 it had about 4000 members.

This union revival crystallised in the Autumn of 1899 when the Ter Valley unions were able to organise a new cotton textile labour federation. The founding congress was held in Barcelona between the 8 and 10 of September 1899. At the congress it was agreed that the federation should be called the Federación de la Industria Textil Española (FIFE), that its central committee should reside in Manlleu, and that it should have its own publication entitled Revista Fabril. The decision to set up the central committee of the FTE in Manlleu represented an important break with past practice, for the Catalan wide TCV had been centred on Barcelona. This break was a reflection of the fact that since the mid 1880s it was the Ter Valley unions that had most successfully been able to defend their workers' interests. In Barcelona, on the other hand, from the 1870s many spinning factories moved to the Alta Muntanya river banks. Moreover, those mill owners who stayed in Barcelona had been able to replace the male by female power-loom weavers with relatively little difficulty. It was these male spinners and power-loom weavers who had been in charge of the TCV. With their departure, therefore, an increasingly large percentage of the cotton textile labour force was female, and these female workers found it very difficult to unionise.

This basic shift in the geography of Catalan textile trade unionism became clear in the following year. At the time of its foundation the federation had about 7,000 affiliates, so its first priority was to extend its membership. In order to carry out this objective recruitment drives were made throughout the region in the following months. The result of this activity could be seen at the FTE's second congress held in Manresa between 29 June and 1 July 1900. There were 84 delegates from 34 localities present. It was claimed that they represented the no doubt exaggerated figure of between 50,000 and 70,000 affiliates. Whatever the true number, however, it was clearly above the peak of 21,000 affiliates which the TCV had reached in 1891. Trade union organisation was still centred on the larger Ter Valley towns and the Llobregat around Manresa. Nevertheless, it had also made significant headway in the Alt Llobregat and on the Ter around Girona. In the Ter Valley towns themselves union organisation was now very strong. In Manlleu, for example, it was impossible to find work without being unionised. Barcelona, however,

26. ES, 10 February, 10 March 1899.
27. LP, 11 September 1899, ME.
remained a black spot. Despite the growth of union organisation in much of the industry the female power-loom weavers had found it impossible to follow suit. Thus the TCV rump had only 250 members and other textile unions in the city were equally weak. 28

From the start the FTE adopted a more combative stance than the old TCV, which during the 1880s had become increasingly class collaborationist. At the same time, however, it structured itself along lines similar to those of the TCV. Thus, its General Secretary and President were paid officials. The Federation was divided into eight different districts each covering a part of Catalonia, and full time officials were also appointed in each of these areas. The FTE pursued two basic aims. The first was to reverse the trend in the industry towards the substitution of male by female labour. 29 Its second aim was to improve wages and working conditions. Like the TCV it aimed to secure wages and working hours in the area in which working conditions were best and then try and bring conditions in other areas up to the same level. By 1900, however, it was in Manlleu that unionised workers were paid the best rates.

This strategy was, however, soon to run into difficulties. Workers had not been able to express their discontent for a number of years and so there was a great feeling of pent up anger and frustration. There was, therefore, a tendency for many workers to go on strike immediately they had begun to organise. At the same time, in the textile towns, industrialists who had grown accustomed to dominating the affairs of the locality were loath to accept a weakening of their grip. The result was a rapid escalation of industrial conflictivity. Thus, for example, between October and December 1899 there were at least twenty strikes or lock-outs in the industry. In these circumstances the FTE central committee began to fear that the whole organisation might collapse. It therefore counselled prudence in the declaration of strikes, and formed a commission to try and reach a negotiated settlement to those disputes in progress. 30

Despite these problems, while the economic conjuncture remained favourable the FTE could continue to expand. The conjuncture, however, was dramatically to change in the Summer of 1900 when another severe economic recession hit the industry. As a result, unemployment grew rapidly. By September 1,500 textile workers were unemployed in Barcelona and the Pla, 6,500 in the province as a whole. Particularly hard hit was the Ter Valley where labour costs were

28. LP, 11 September, ME, 18 October, ME 1899, 5 July, ME, 1900; Revista Fabril (RF), 7 June, 5 July 1900; La Plana de Vich (LPV), 1 August 1900.

29. This became official policy at the federation's second congress, at which a delegate from Vic presented a motion which asked: "Is it advisable that as the spinning machines and power-looms became vacant they be occupied by men over fourteen years of age?" He stated that in his town this policy had been implemented and was a great success. The motion was then put to the vote and approved unanimously. RF, 5 July 1900.

30. RF, 7, 28 June, 1900.
higher than in the rest of the Alta Muntanya. In October in Manlleu alone there 1,163 unemployed, a figure which represented over 50 per cent of the town's labour force.31

As the economic recession deepened so industrialists throughout Catalonia prepared to strike back against the FIT. In the Ter their first reaction to the challenge of labour had been to build up their own organisations. The Manlleu employers had already associated in the late 1890s. The mill owners of Vic and Roda followed suit in the Summer of 1900, and, according to La Plana de Vich, by the Autumn of that year: "Fifty nine of the sixty three Ter industrialists have associated and in the future they will not allow delegate inspectors from the Workers' Association into their factories."32

The first sign of an impending employer onslaught came at the beginning of 1900, when after unsuccessful negotiations over new wage rates a lock-out was declared throughout the length of the Freser river. In all about 5,000 workers were left on the streets. Although the dispute was primarily over wages, conflict over attempt made by the FIT to reverse the substitution of male by female spinners on the ring-frames was never far below the surface.33 The lock-out was to last for four months with work not resuming until the 15 May. Nevertheless, the trade unions remained solid, and work did not finally resume until the mill owners had agreed to re-employ all sacked workers.

The lock-out, therefore, highlighted the determination of the Ter and Freser workers to resist their employers' demands. Nevertheless, as the economic crisis deepened so tension continued to mount. This is illustrated by the fact that employers began to use increasingly anti-union rhetoric. For example, the president of the Alt Ter i Freser employers association, though recognising the economic factors behind the recession, maintained that wage costs were higher in Catalonia than in any other part of the world. He also accused the workers of ignorance because they had opposed the introduction of new machinery, and claimed that this attitude was the root cause of the technological backwardness of Catalan industry. Finally, he accused the Government of exacerbating industrial conflict by favouring the workers' demands.34 Clearly this represented a call on the Government to support the employers forthcoming attack on the unions. Josep Ma Prat

31. LP, 2 September, ME, 6 October, ME, 1900.
32. LPV, 8 August 1900. By this time there were four employer associations in the Ter and Freser: Manlleu and District, Vic-Roda, Alt Ter and Freser, and Torelló and Sant Quirze.
33. Thus "A Worker" declared in La Publicidad on the real motives behind the employers' actions: "As the Textile Federation tends to regulate these machines (i.e., the ring-frames) it is not surprising that the industrialists try by all means at their disposal to destroy the workers' organisation". LP, 6 January 1900, ME.
34. LP, 18 October, ME, 1900.
i Vilaró, president of the Manlleu i Comarca employers' association, however, went further. He maintained that had it not been for the large number of strikes in the industry the loss of the colonies would have had absolutely no impact, and his reply to the question of how "class harmony" could be restored in the industry was a battle cry to the region's mill owners. Thus he stated:

> It could be achieved by making the principle of authority respected. Today the workers use brute force. They have become emboldened.

Workers representatives, on the other hand, claimed that the industrialists' greed was at least partially responsible for the crisis. Josep Genollà, president of the FTE from August 1900, argued that the solution to the recession lay in the reduction of working hours and a rise in the price of textile fabrics to offset the increasing cost of raw material imports. He also stated that to maintain the workers' purchasing power an increase in wages would also be necessary. At grass roots level it seems the view that the mill owners had provoked the economic recession was widespread. Although Genollà refused to comment, therefore, the belief was growing amongst the workers that if nothing were done to alleviate the crisis strike action would be necessary.

The conflict was precipitated in November. In Manresa the mill owners provoked 3000 textile workers into taking strike action by sacking their trade union leadership. They followed this measure up with the introduction of good conduct certificates. In the future no worker was to be taken on unless he was recommended by his previous employer. At the same time there were widespread sackings in Ripoll and on the Ter around Girona. In Manlleu the union presented a new wage list and, after it had been rejected, went on strike on 19 November. This decision proved to be a serious tactical blunder. The mill owners were confident of their strength and so reacted by sacking the entire Manlleu workforce. Accordingly, by the end of the month much of the FTE's membership was either on strike or locked-out. The workers position was, in addition, made more difficult by the fact that the Conservative Government changed its previous stance, and decided fully to support the employer offensive. Thus, it reacted to the disturbances by sending large numbers of troops and civil guards into the textile towns. Furthermore, large numbers of workers were imprisoned - including the central committee of the FTE -, union headquarters were closed down, and the working class press found it difficult to publish. Revista Fabril, for example, was forced to suspend publication never to reappear.

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35. LP, 19 October, ME, 1900.
36. LP, 9, 22 October, ME, 1900.
37. On the repression see, ET, 14 December 1900; ES, 23 November 1900.
In response the FTE attempted to organise a solidarity strike of the entire Catalan working class. The strike appears to have been followed in the textile towns along much of the Ter, Llobregat and Cardoner. In Barcelona, however, it had no impact. Even the female weavers, who were still almost totally non-unionised, were in no position to second the action. Consequently, the general strike was a failure, and the back of the FTE was broken. The employer onslaught, nevertheless, continued unabated. In a meeting of cotton textile factory owners at the Barcelona headquarters of the FTN it was agreed not to employ those workers most identified with the unions. This decision became known as the "hunger pact". As a result about 800 workers were sacked and in order to find work in a Catalan cotton textile factory had to hide their real identities.38

This attack on the unions was combined with moves to intensify production and restructure the labour process. In Manresa no men were readmitted into the factories. Along the Llobregat efforts were made to increase the number of ring-frames each female spinner minded.39 These moves were largely successful. In the Ter Valley, however, the workers put up a stiffer resistance. Between 1899 and 1900 the male spinners had succeeded in halting and even reversing the employer drive to replace them with female workers. The employers now looked to press ahead with their plans to employ women on the ring-frames. Conflict over this question flared up in 1901 in Roda when three factory owners tried to replace three male spinners, whom they had previously sacked, with women. The women's refusal to operate these machines led to a further lock-out in the town in March. Moreover, the Ter and Freser valley employer associations again threatened to extend the lock-out to all their factories if the Roda mill-owners' demands were not met.

The workers of Roda refused to climb down and the new lock-out, therefore, began on 11 March. As the Junta of the Manlleu textile union, the Art Fabril i Anexos, stated several years later it had been called: "Because it was planned to substitute the men who worked and still work on the ring-frames by women."40 Yet, as the quotation suggests, things did not go according to plan for the industrialists, for it was as a result of the March lock-out that the pent up anger and frustration felt by the workers burst into violence. In Torelló, on the same day as the factories were closed, a group of workers set fire to the house of the ex-Mayor and factory owner, Antonio Mercadell. In a subsequent clash with the mossos d'escuadra several workers were injured. In Ripoll a demonstration of cotton textile workers ended in clashes with the Civil Guard. On this occasion the crowd was fired upon with the result that one worker was killed and two critically injured. The

38. Josep Comaposada, "La Vida del Obrero...X".
40. El Progreso, 10 July 1909.
most dramatic events, however, took place in Manlleu. Here the workers organised an attack on the local employers casino, and injured three of those inside. The crowd then attacked the houses of the Mayor and two more industrialists, setting them all on fire. The size of the crowd made it impossible for the Civil Guard to control. Luckily its commander adopted a conciliatory stance and avoided bloodshed. Order was, nevertheless, only restored when the local authorities promised to do everything in their power to find a solution to the conflict and obtain the reinstatement of the workers subject to the “hunger pact”.41

With these events class hatred had reached a point difficult to surpass. The situation in the Ter Valley was now extremely explosive and another outbreak of violence was feared. Tempers were, nevertheless, cooled by the replacement of the Conservative civil governor in the run up to the Liberal victory in the elections held on 19 March 1901. The new civil governor adopted a far more even handed approach. Thus he chaired discussions between employers and workers in which he put pressure on the industrialists to reopen their factories. A compromise solution was then reached. On the one hand the employers agreed to end their lock-out and revoke the hunger pact. On the other hand, their right to employ women on the ring-frames was recognised.42

The factories finally reopened on 18 March. Amongst the workforce there was considerable discontent at the compromise reached, as it was felt that employers would now have a free hand to employ female labour. The feeling of betrayal became more intense when it emerged that few of the workers subject to the “hunger pact” would actually be reemployed. The workers fears were, however, in some respects exaggerated. It is true that as a result of the employer onslaught, and with no end to the recession in sight, trade union organisation was greatly weakened throughout the Alta Muntanya. In Manresa and its surrounds, along the Freser and upper Ter, and even in Torelló, the unions were completely destroyed. This left Manlleu, Roda and Sant Hipòlit as the only towns on the Ter in which unions continued to function. In these towns the ferocity of labour's reaction to the March lock-out had, nonetheless, made the industrialists draw back from their decision to employ women on the ring-frames. They, therefore, became the only areas in the Alta Muntanya which continued to employ large numbers of male spinners.43

41. LPV, 14 March 1901. The various reports of these events stressed the role played by working class women. Thus according to one correspondent: “Amongst the rioters who committed those outrages a multitude of women were to be seen, especially in Manlleu. No doubt they threw themselves onto the public footpath on seeing that they had nothing to give their children, and that the strike imposed by their bosses had shut out any hope.” LPV, 21 March 1901.

42. LPV, 28 March 1901.

43. La Guerra Social, 18 July 1903.
In the largest of these towns, Manlleu, the workers' opposition also made the mill owners reconsider their industrial relations strategy. As has become abundantly clear, by this time few cotton textile industrialists subscribed to the view, held by the leadership of the FTN, that stable industrial relations could only be attained by bargaining with the unions. On the contrary by 1900 most industrialists felt they could impose social control by destroying the FTE. Yet, in Manlleu, labour's violent response to the mill owners attack on trade unionism had convinced the mill owners that they would have to find a means to lessen social tension, and tie the workers to their employers more effectively.

Albert Rusiñol, the owner of Manlleu's largest factory, provided a possible answer to this dilemma. Rusiñol was, in fact, in a strong position to reduce industrial conflictivity in the industry. Conditions in his company town were amongst the best on the Ter. Moreover, he seems genuinely to have been respected by many of his workers. In 1905, indeed, he stood as a parliamentary candidate for the district of Vic (which included the Ter Valley) and received considerable worker support. He seems, therefore, in many respects to represent what remained of the reformist tradition in the Ter labour movement, which stretched back to the heyday of the TCV.

Albert Rusiñol's proposals were first outlined in 1900. In this year the Barcelona Provincial Council called on all those institutions interested to present studies on possible ways to solve the crisis in the cotton textile industry. The FTN's study was elaborated by Rusiñol, who was at that time the association's president. This study called for the setting up of mixed commissions of workers and employers representatives to settle their differences. The republican daily, La Publicidad, hailed the document as a serious attempt to end the bitter class conflict which had racked the industry over the past year. It then praised Rusiñol as a "prudent and far sighted spirit", and lamented that "he is not understood and followed by those of his colleagues who only believe in the efficacy of terror and its corollary, the politics of the big stick".

Leading figures in the FTE showed themselves to be interested in a possible negotiation. The following months, however, saw social tension intensify, a process which was to culminate in the lock-outs of December 1900 and March 1901. In this month La Publicidad announced that the FTN's project for the formation of mixed commissions had been put off after a number of industrialists representing the leading cotton textile employer associations had been incorporated into its leadership. These industrialists had apparently opposed the plan, "thinking that the social environment needed to make the institution work effectively does not exist."

44. Gazeta Vigatana, 24 May 1905; La Justicia Social, (LJS) 6 November 1909.
45. LP, 12 December, ME, 1900.
46. LP, 12 March, ME, 1900.
The idea was, nevertheless, once again canvassed by the Ter and Freser employers' associations in 1902, and this despite the fact that they had chosen the path of confrontation rather than conciliation with the FTE. At first sight this gives the impression that these industrialists wished to reach an accommodation with their workers. Careful attention needs, however, to be paid to the exact contents of their proposals.

The view of the Ter and Freser employer associations was made public in a book published in 1902. The main concern of the associations was to bring an end to strikes in Spanish industry. They were at pains to stress their opposition to state intervention in industry. They had already campaigned against the new law regulating female and child labour, and in general felt that social legislation should be kept to a minimum. They were even more vigorous in their condemnation of state sponsored industrial tribunals. These, the Ter and Freser mill-owners maintained, would inevitably fail as no employer could possibly accept that outsiders should have the right to tamper with wages and working conditions in his factory. Any concessions he made in this respect, they argued, would inevitably foster indiscipline on the shop-floor and eventually lead to his firm's bankruptcy. The industrialists, therefore, seemed to argue that the individual factory owner should have complete freedom to order his factory as he wished. At the same time, however, they stated that they favoured the setting up of industrial tribunals or mixed commissions of workers and employers representatives through "private initiative" (i.e., by the industrialists themselves). Yet given the mill owners concept of the the employer's rights within the factory it is difficult to see what these tribunals would discuss. Even more contradictorily they gave the collective bargaining machinery developed in England as a shining example to be followed. In that country, they stated, the "conservative" unions, which only went on strike in extreme cases, "supplied a powerful element in favour of industrial pacification". It was argued that the formation of such unions in Spain had proved impossible because of differences in "race", "temperament" and "industrial and general culture". However, no mention was made of the causes behind the demise of the TCV, an industrial federation which had as its ideal the establishment of industrial relations on the "English pattern".

Indeed, throughout the whole discussion, a contradiction could be seen between the idea that the mill owner had an absolute right to order his factory as he wished, and the acceptance that some kind of collective bargaining machinery might prove a necessity. This same contradiction was to be seen in the industrial tribunal and friendly society that was actually founded in Manlleu in 1902. The project had been worked out by Albert Rusiñol and was accepted by all the town's employers. Rusiñol had obtained the collaboration of leading figures within the FTN. Thus,

47. Asociaciones de Fabricantes del Ter y del Freser, Los Jurados Mixtos en España. Datos y Consideraciones Acerca de la Conciliación y el Arbitraje en los Conflictos entre Patronos y Obreros (Barcelona, 1902), pp. 8-22-25.
Federico Rahola was given the task of elaborating the friendly society's regulations, and Joaquin Aguilar wrote the introduction to a book which explained how the industrial tribunal and friendly society was to work.

Aguilar felt that the new institution represented, "the first step taken towards the solution of the industrial problem", and that it "could be copied in other comarcas, and thereby result in the disappearance of the anxieties felt by the people in these areas". These were, indeed, high hopes. The industrial tribunal was founded on the understanding that wages and working conditions would remain at their present level. These could only be altered by a special sitting of the tribunal. This tribunal was, in fact, to be composed of two bodies, one which dealt with conflicts between the individual worker and the factory owner, and the other which had the power to resolve more general conflicts over wage rates, hours of work, etc. The employers and workers had an equal number of representatives on both these bodies. The friendly society was funded by both the employers and the workers affiliated. It consisted of a sickness fund, and would eventually include provision for old age pensions. Joaquin Aguilar saw it as a key element in the whole set up, and hoped it would lead to the creation of a conservative strata of the working class, who would defend the friendly society because of the pensions they received from it.

Indeed, the whole scheme was based on the premise that workers represented on the industrial tribunal also had to form part of the friendly society. These workers could not, at the same time, form part of any other union. The new body was not, therefore, open to all the town's cotton textile workers, but only those who had agreed to separate from the old union which had formed part of the FTE. It was for this reason that, in the aftermath of the bitter social conflict of the years 1901-1901, many workers came to see the Patronat - as it was pejoratively called - as a mere tool in the hands of the employers. This, for example, was the view of the veteran anarchist militant, Francesc Abayà, who commented at the end of 1901: "Some of the nosiest workers do not now open their trap, and form part of the dirty mix of idlers and workers thinking they will land something worthwhile".

This comment illustrates the main problem which faced the Patronat. The mill owners had attempted to impose social control in the industry through a mixture of intransigent anti-unionism and paternalism. The paternalist element was provided by the new friendly society. At the end of the day, however, they had been forced to recognise that they could not impose their demands on

48. Alberto Rusihol, Bases para la Creación y el Funcionamiento de los Jurados Mixtos en Manlleu - Proyecto de Montepío reductado por D. Federico Rahola por Encargo de la Junta de Conciliación - con un Prólogo de D. Joaquin Aguilar (Barcelona, 1902), p. IX.

49. Ibid, p. XVII.

50. El Productor, 26 October 1901.
the textile workers with no regard for their opinion. It was for this reason that the *Patronat* included industrial conciliation machinery. Consequently, the *Patronat* was not, as some labour militants claimed, a simple creature of the employers. This is brought out by the fact that its statutes included the clause that wage rates could not be altered without a special session of the industrial tribunal. Accordingly, the workers who joined were offered some protection against further wage cuts. In addition, the workers affiliated were not wholly subservient to the demands of the industrialists. Certainly they had to abandon any social or political radicalisms. Yet, within Manlleu’s *junta local de reformas sociales* - which functioned throughout the first decade of the twentieth century- representatives of the *Patronat* defended the textile workers demands, in opposition to the industrialists, on a number of occasions. The first of these was in 1902, when they argued in favour of a reduction in working hours in Manlleu from 68 to 66 a week. Throughout the period they also supported the observance of social legislation, and in particular the limits placed on the use of child labour. Finally, in 1909 they were to reject an attempt made by Albert Rusiñol to reduce the wages of male spinners in his factory. 51

This did not, however, alter the fact that it was the town’s bourgeoisie who had set up the *Patronat* and who determined the shape it should take. It was for this reason that the dream of the leaders of the FTN - that the *Patronat* should form the basis of stable labour relations in the industry - was unreal. It had been founded after the destruction of the FTE. In this destruction the Manlleu employers had fully participated. Thus 47 workers in this town alone had been subject to the “hunger pact”. The majority of Manlleu’s workers, therefore, remained very suspicious of the *Patronat*. As a result the response to the mill owners call for their workers to join was disappointing. Between 1902 and 1909 the economic climate remained depressed and trade unions in the Ter Valley weak. Nevertheless, the *Patronat* only attracted between 150 and 200 workers, most it seems from the Rusiñol company town. 52 The Socialist weekly, *La Guerra Social*, maintained that those workers who joined knew that it was ineffective, and hence only did so to get the best jobs for them and their families. 53 This argument was no doubt one sided. As has been noted there does still seem to have existed a nucleus of workers identified with Albert Rusiñol. They were, however, in a minority. The *Patronat* was, consequently, very unstable. The power of the male spinners on the shop floor had not been broken, and they could still react violently against any move to cut their wages or endanger their position in the workplace. When the employers once again attacked working conditions in the industry in 1909, therefore, the spinners mobilised in opposition and the class collaborationist *Patronat* was swept away.

52. AMM, Ibid.
53. *La Guerra Social*, 4 July 1903.
Until the end of the decade, however, trade union organisation in cotton textiles - and, indeed in the rest of Catalan industry - remained very weak. It was not until 1908 that that the trade unions began to reorganise, and it was once again workers in the Ter Valley who led the way. In other parts of Catalonia the cotton textile workers found it more difficult to unionise. Nevertheless, the possibility of extending trade unionism was given a boost when in September 1908 a new regional labour federation, known as Solidaritat Obrera, decided to launch a recruitment drive in the industry. This drive finally began in April of the following year, after an assembly of textile workers had met in Barcelona and agreed to lay the foundations of a new Catalan textile federation. In the Alta Muntanya union organisers had little luck outside the Ter and Freser. However, unions began to spring up in a large number of urban centres around Barcelona.54

Since 1901 unemployment in the textile industries had been high. Not surprisingly, then, the April assembly decided that its first priority would be to reduce working hours in the industry. Any action the planned federation might take was, however, pre-empted by the employers. Once again, as during 1899 and 1900, the mill owners responded to the growth of trade union activities by opposing labour's demands, and in many cases the right of the workers even to form trade unions. Indeed, the industrialists resolve to oppose union organisation was strengthened by the fact that the economic recession faced by the industry actually deepened between 1908 and 1909. The result was another escalation of industrial conflictivity from late 1908. Once again, moreover, it was a dispute in the Ter Valley that was to have the most far reaching consequences.

On the Ter employers had, as in the 1890s, taken advantage of the weak state of the unions to cut wages. Spinners were, in particular, seriously affected. The male spinners of Manlleu, Roda and Sant Hipòlit nevertheless continued to earn far higher wages than female minders employed on ring-frames in the rest of the Alta Muntanya. Though the industrialists in these towns had been forced to abandon attempts to replace the male spinners, their relatively high wages were resented.55 Matters came to a head in 1908 when employers reacted to the worsening crisis in the industry by attempting further to cut costs, and sacked large numbers of workers. The most dramatic events were to take place in the Rusiñol company town just outside Manlleu.

Conditions in the Rusiñol company town were, it has been noted, amongst the best on the Ter. Profit margins in the factory had, therefore, no doubt been particularly badly squeezed. This explains why on 15 May 1909 Albert Rusiñol closed his factory and dismissed the 365 workers

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54. ET, 23 May 1908; SO, 4 December 1908; La Internacional, 5 February 1909. For the history of Solidaritat Obrera see, Chapter Seven, pp. 230-249.

55. The occasional attempt was still made to substitute men or women on the ring-frames. A case in point was the Baurier company town outside Roda. SO, 8 January 1909.
employed therein. Rusiñol made the excuse that he had closed the factory temporarily because it was changing hands. The new proprietor was, however, to be his brother, Josep Maria Rusiñol. The workers would, Rusiñol stated, have to reapply for admission, and accept a new wage list which had been drawn up. Not surprisingly wages were in the future to be considerably lower. In particular male spinners who worked on the ring-frames would have to accept a cut in wages of about 20 per cent.

The workforce replied that it would only accept wage cuts in those cases in which wages had actually been higher than in the other factories in the town. Rusiñol refused to compromise, so no solution to the dispute could be found. Thus, when the factory reopened on June 31 the only people to go in were the managers and foremen. Another long strike ensued. The strikers were strongly supported by the Ter's textile unions. Rusiñol tried to break the strike by sending agents out into the country to look for blacklegs, but he had little success: by November only 40 had been recruited. The result was deadlock, which was only broken in February 1910 when Rusiñol announced that he was to close the factory.

The conflict had important repercussions within the Manlleu labour movement. Many workers in the Rusiñol company town still maintained close, paternal, relations with the management. It was, for this reason that the employer inspired Patronat was strongest in Rusiñol's factory. However, the lock out produced a change of attitude amongst these workers. During 1909 feelings amongst the workforce were running very high against the "inhuman" and "tyrannical" Rusiñol. Consequently, the members of the Patronat entered into negotiations with the town's independent union, known as the Art Fabril. They then agreed to dissolve their own association and entered the Art Fabril en masse, "convinced at last of the wickedness of the employer class".56

The events of 1909 showed once again how difficult it was to find a compromise solution to industrial disputes in cotton textiles. In the context of a seemingly permanent crisis in the cotton textile industry the mill owners were prepared to go to great lengths to push through their cost cutting reforms. In the Alt Llobregat they had been able to impose social control, with the result that the workers in those areas were able to form no independent unions prior to World War One. On the Ter, however, their attempt to outlaw trade unions and cement a paternalist relation between masters and men had proved unsuccessful. Indeed, with the closure of the Rusiñol company town and the demise of the patronat any organised paternalist link the workers was broken.

56. SO, 4 June 1909; La Internacional, 28 May 1908; LP, 2 June, ME, 7 June NE, 12 June, NE, 1909; El Progreso, 3, 4, 5 July 1909; LJS, 6 November, 4 December 1909, 19 February, 17 September 1910; AMM, Gobernación, 149. 395.
A pall of mutual mistrust and suspicion hung over industrial relations on the Ter. Open class warfare was not, however, resumed until 1914. In July 1909 anticlerical riots spread throughout much of urban Catalonia. The subsequent government repression greatly weakened the labour movement, and put paid to the attempt to form a Catalan wide textile federation. In July 1913 cotton textile trade unions remained weak, with only about 10 per cent of the industry's workers organised. That year, nevertheless, was to see the beginnings of another revival in the fortunes of the textile unions. The revival was on this occasion led by a Barcelona union known as La Constància, which was made up largely of female cotton textile workers. La Constància was founded in 1912, and grew rapidly in the following year. By July 1913 it had about 8000 members, a figure which represented roughly 44 per cent of the Barcelona cotton textile labour force.57

The rapid growth of La Constància was facilitated by a boom in sales in the cotton textile industry during 1912.58 Nevertheless, it was still a great surprise to most contemporary observers. In Barcelona and the other textile towns, as has been noted, female weavers and preparatory workers had found it very difficult to unionise. Some employers had stepped in and developed a paternalist régime in their factories in order to increase the subservience of the labour force and head off possible conflict. The example of the two Fabra i Coat plants in the Barcelona Pla has already been mentioned. Another case in point was Catalonia's largest cotton textile factory, La España Industrial, which was situated in Sants. The factory owners provided loans for the workers when necessary, and continued to employ them on menial tasks in old age. The vision of the company director that was projected was that of a father who saw the workers as his own children. In this way it was hoped the workers would develop a sense of loyalty towards the company and gratitude to its director. In this the company certainly had some success. The sense of belonging was strengthened by the fact that generation after generation of the same family tended to work in La España Industrial. The rapport between master and men could be seen during the celebrations of the company's fiftieth anniversary in 1897. At these celebrations between 5 and 20 pesetas were given to each of the workers, and a raffle was held with sizeable cash prizes for the eldest employees. This prompted a commission of workers to present a message to the director of the factory, Matias Muntades, which read:59

When a worker finds in his employer, not the selfish boss who looks at him with disdain and treats him harshly, but an affectionate protector who starts, when he is an inexperienced youngster, by acting as his guide, and later provides him with the means to work honourably, perhaps even the means to achieve what he has achieved with the same or less elements; who helps him when he is ill, and in periods of dearth and crisis; who

57. ES, 18 April 1913.; LP, 4, 28 July 1913.
58. LP, 25 August 1912.
59. La España Industrial en su 82 Aniversario, 1847-1929 (Barcelona, 1929), p. 94. See also, ETN, 30 May 1897; Revista del Ateneo Obrero de Barcelona, June 1897.
does not abandon him in his old age nor in misfortune; and who perhaps even after his death continues generously to give a helping hand to his destitute child and poor widow, as has always occurred in *La España Industrial*. Then, he feels in his heart a great desire to demonstrate to he who behaves in this manner his gratitude, and heartfelt pleasure in so expressing it.

The extent to which the Barcelona cotton textile industrialists followed the lead of *La España Industrial* and instituted welfare programmes should not, however, be exaggerated. Thus, the reformist working class magazine, *Revista del Ateneo Obrero de Barcelona*, commented that if more factories in Barcelona functioned like *La España Industrial*, then class conflict would be greatly reduced. Moreover, Miguel Renté, one of the magazine's principal writers, lamented that friendly benefits had only been established in two factories from Sant Martí and one from Barcelona.60 The reason for the lack of effort in this direction was apparently twofold. First, many industrialists operated relatively small-scale plants, and lacked the capital outlays necessary. Second, by the beginning of the twentieth century most of the cotton textile workers were female. These female workers often only worked in the factories a few years before getting married, and in such circumstances it would have been difficult to operate welfare schemes effectively. In addition, the position of these workers on the shop floor was very weak. Indeed, reports suggest that at the turn of the century in the larger Barcelona concerns the female power-loom weavers were subject to close managerial supervision, and that talking was not permitted while work was in progress.61 As a result, most industrialists probably felt they could maintain social control effectively without the extra cost benefit schemes entailed.

The task of organising the female weavers was not, however, only obstructed by the fact that they were unskilled, and that many spent only a few years in the labour market. It was also impeded by the attitude of many male trade unionists towards women. It was true that married female workers had increasingly to turn to full time work to supplement the family income. Nevertheless, most men still considered female labour largely as something transitory, to be undertaken by young unmarried workers. Due to force of circumstance many had to accept the employment of their wives. Yet they continued to view the use of female labour, while male workers were unemployed, as an unacceptable imposition on the part of the industrialists. Accordingly, they found it difficult to accept female workers as an integral part of the labour movement. This explains why syndicalist labour leaders frequently complained that in spite of the fact that male skilled workers and female textile workers often formed part of the same family, the male trade unionists did little to try and unionise the women.62

60. *Revista del Ateneo Obrero de Barcelona*, June 1897: Miguel Renté, op cit, pp. 75-76.
62. SO, 23 July 1911. See also, *El Sindicalista*, 26 October 1912; LJS, 5 August 1911.
It was because of these difficulties that between 1891 and 1914 the Barcelona cotton textile workers were effectively able to organise only on two occasions. The first was at the end of 1901 and the second, as has been seen, in 1913. In part the workers were able to unionise as a result of the efforts of pioneering female trade unions, of which the most famous was the anarchist propagandist, Teresa Claramunt. However, on both occasions the Barcelona labour movement was buoyant, and male trade unionists overcame their indifference to play a key role in the organisation of the Barcelona weavers. Thus, in 1901 the all male bleachers and dyers unions played the leading role in a drive to unionise the female workers. In 1913, on the other hand, it was a syndicalist dominated labour federation, the Confederació Regional del Treball, which was behind the foundation of La Constància.

These male trade unionists tried to unionise the female weavers for two main reasons. First, the working conditions of many skilled workers were also under threat from their employers. These workers had formed unions to defend their interests. In order to bring the maximum pressure to bear, however, it was important that the Barcelona labour movement as a whole was as strong as possible. The Barcelona textile workers represented about 15 per cent of the city's working class, and their unionisation would therefore increase the influence of labour on the local political stage. This is a question which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

In the second place, there still persisted the hope amongst male trade unionists that if they were able to unionise the female weavers and bring their working conditions up to the same level as male workers, they would then be able to replace the female by male weavers. This idea was most clearly put in a communiqué which in 1907 the all male Barcelona union of textile finishing trades addressed to the female cotton textile workers. It began by arguing that in order to get rich the employers had replaced male by female workers, whom they paid less. Furthermore, technical advances had made it possible for employers to reduce absolutely the number of workers employed. There was, therefore, heavy unemployment in the industry, and a consequent downward pressure on wages. The solution proposed by the Barcelona finishing trades workers differed little from that put forward by the Ter Valley spinners:63

It is essential colleagues that you help us so that we can, for now, reduce your working hours, so that more hands can be employed, and you have more time to rest and look after your families. And so we can, in the future, emancipate you from the factory, so that you can be free women and live up to your grand mission to be wives and mothers, not slaves and instruments of exploitation.

The communiqué was a curious mixture of revolutionary rhetoric used to justify rather traditional demands. Yet, as in the Alta Muntanya these demands seem to have received

63. SO, 16 November 1907.
considerable support from the female workers concerned. This was revealed in an article written by Adela Camprubi, a female power-loom weaver who spoke at a number of rallies held to organise the cotton textile workers in 1901. Thus, she argued: "It is essential that union organisation spread from factory to factory, and loom to loom. That we should make a start, in order first to reduce working hours, and later to hand over our machines to the men, our beloved colleagues."64

The call for the reduction of working hours was, nevertheless, the Barcelona cotton textile workers foremost demand, for while they worked an average of 11 hours a day, most skilled men worked only 8 or 9 hours. Once unionised these female weavers adopted a very combative stance. They had had to suffer for years in silence and were, therefore, hungry for justice. This could be seen in November 1901 when a new union, known as the *Art Fabril de Sant Martí de Provençals*, was formed. A campaign was launched by syndicalist trade unionists to unionise the weavers towards the end of the year. On 18 November the first seven workers to have joined the new union in the Nadal cotton mill were sacked. However, to the owners' surprise a great solidarity movement followed. The whole of the labour force in the Nadal factory came out on strike, and a large number of meetings were held in support of the strikers. Rocked by these events the employers gave way and, moreover, made a compensation payment of 125 pesetas to the strike's organisers. Spurred on by this success the female weavers flocked to join the new union.

There was a great deal of enthusiasm, and an eagerness to enter into combat against the employers. Accordingly, in February 1902 the female weavers supported a general strike called by anarchist militants in support of the striking Barcelona metalworkers. The general strike, however, ended in failure, and as a result the mood of the workers changed completely. The great energy displayed in previous months was replaced by a feeling of disillusion and despondency. This sense of despair was accentuated by the relative ease with which industrialists were able to victimise union militants. Like their colleagues in the *Alta Muntanya* many Barcelona cotton textile mill-owners opposed independent trade unionism, and they were able to take advantage of the failure of the February 1902 strike totally to destroy the new union.65

A similar pattern emerged when the Barcelona cotton textile workers next organised in numbers during 1912-13. *La Constància*, whose central committee was totally male dominated, did try to strengthen cotton textile trade union organisation throughout the region. In the Spring of 1913 it established contact with the Sabadell and Terrassa woollen textile unions with the object of forming yet another Catalan textile federation. The efforts of these unions were soon to bear fruit. On 11 and 12 May delegates from a number of textile unions met in Barcelona and founded the so-

64. *El Productor*, 16 November 1901.

called Federació Regional Fabril de Catalunya. As in 1900 the formation of a new federation gave a great impetus to the spread of trade unionism amongst the textile workers. Little progress was made in the Alta Muntanya, but in the textile towns around Barcelona trade union organisation again grew apace.66

This organisational phase was, however, to be short lived. The female cotton textile workers were anxious that their working conditions be improved. As a result, La Constància quickly became involved in one of the greatest industrial conflicts in the whole period under study. In a meeting held on 8 June the Federació Regional outlined its main demands. These were: “A 40 per cent increase in piece rates and 25 per cent increase in fixed rates. A reduction in working hours from 11 to 9, with mid day closing on Saturdays. That is to say the English week of 40 hours. A reduction in the hours worked at night to 8, and recognition of the union”. Moreover, it was agreed to call a strike if these demands were not met.67

The FTN was presented with these demands on 16 June. In Barcelona it became clear that the most keenly felt of the demands was a 9 hour day. In the following days a large number of meetings were held at which there were frequent references to the need for strike action. However, a general strike was called in the industry before even the most militant union leaders had imagined. In the previous week the Government had become increasingly worried at the prospect of a general strike in Catalan textiles. It, therefore, proposed that the Instituto de Reformas Sociales intervene and prepare a law which would regulate working conditions in the industry. At the same time it also made an effort to ensure social legislation regulating child and female labour were complied with. It was this decision to try and implement existing legislation which was to precipitate the conflict. In 1911 a law had been passed which aimed, over a period of time, to reduce female night work to nine hours a day. Most Barcelona factory owners, nonetheless, still maintained an 11 hour night shift. When the civil governor insisted, for the first time, that the law be complied with, a number of factories in Sants responded by simply cutting the night shift. This decision produced great indignation amongst the textile workers, leading to widespread calls for strike action. It was in these circumstances that delegates from the Federació Regional met on 25 July. At this meeting it was agreed that La Constància elect the federation’s executive committee, and that this committee should call a strike when it saw fit. The committee’s room for manoeuvre was very limited. On 29 July the workers from other Sants factories began to come out in solidarity with the sacked women. The committee was then pushed along by rank and file militancy and, fearing that once initial enthusiasm had worn off it would be very difficult again to mobilise the female weavers, it decided to call a general strike that very night.68

66. SO, 1, 17 May 1913.
67. LP, 23 July 1913.
68. LP, 31 July, 18, 27 August 1913.
Once declared the strike spread quickly. Thus by 22 July almost all the city's cotton textile workers had come out. The only factories which could have stayed open with the workers consent were those run by Fabra i Coats. Yet even here pickets forced the suspension of production. The workers of La España Industrial struck with no hesitation. Outside Barcelona the strike was seconded by the Mataró hosiery workers, and the Sabadell and Terrassa woollen textile workers. In the cotton textile industry, workers from a number of textile towns around Barcelona also came out in support. In the Alta Muntanya, on the other hand, union organisation was too weak, and the strike call was not heeded. Nevertheless, by the end of the first week it was claimed that up to 50,000 textile workers were on strike.69

The Barcelona civil governor was quick to claim that the strike was seditious and revolutionary in nature. However, the Liberal Government in power was anxious to reach a settlement, especially as the Catalan railway workers had threatened to come out in support if the textile workers' demands were not met. The first problem the Government faced in this respect was that the textile industrialists had no regional federation. The civil governor, therefore, tried to work through the FTN. The FTN's president, Eduard Calvet, was asked to consult with the cotton textile industrialists to ascertain the maximum concession they were willing to make. After holding a meeting with about 40 textile industrialists on 1 August, he informed the civil governor that they would not reduce working hours below 60 per week. The civil governor then called the strike committee and informed them of a government plan to resolve the dispute. It consisted of the introduction of a bill in Parliament which would limit working hours in textiles to 10 a day. There would, at the same time, be a compensatory increase in piece rates to ensure that wages were not adversely affected.70

The Government's formula by no means met with unanimous approval. Nevertheless, on 10 August a meeting of Federació Regional delegates agreed to accept its offer. Especially favourable were the delegates from outside Barcelona, for whom a 60 hour week represented a significant reduction in working hours. The civil governor, thinking that the dispute was over, responded by asking the textile employers to open their factories the following day. However, the delegates resolution still had to be put to the Barcelona strikers in a meeting to be held that evening. The majority of the audience at this meeting was made up of women. When the president announced that the Government's formula had been accepted there was uproar. Most radical in their opposition were the female workers, with one speaker going as far as to a say, “that if the men are frightened they should retire, and let the women continue the strike”. Many of the female

69. LP, 28 July, 2 August 1913; LJS, 23 August; IRS, La Jornada...1913, pp. 599-603.

70. LP, 1, 4, 6, August 1913; IRS, La Jornada...1913, pp. 599-603.
workers were reluctant to abandon their demand for a nine hour day, and all were unwilling to accept the Government's word that it would introduce a bill reducing the length of the working week when they returned to work. This fact contradicted the claims which were sometimes made by male trade unionists that female workers were invariably more docile and easier to exploit than their male counterparts. The intransigent stance adopted by the female weavers again demonstrated the radicalism of this group of workers. They had been unable to voice their demands since 1901, and vented their pent up anger and frustration as soon as it was possible to organise.  

The Government's reaction to the vote against its proposal was to put a heavy guard on the factories, and hope that most of the strikers would return to work in the following week. Once this proved not to be the case it agreed immediately to publish a Royal Decree reducing working hours if the the workers called off their action. In a meeting on 16 August, after hearing the Government's new offer, the leadership of La Constància and representatives of the Federació Regional again agreed to accept. Once more, however, the female weavers would have none of it. The situation, therefore, appeared to be deadlocked. However, in the following week a number of factors worked against the strike's prolongation. First, the workers from textile towns outside Barcelona began to return to work, and the Federació Regional delegates publicly called on the Barcelona workers to follow suit. Second, the unity until then displayed by the female strikers showed signs of breaking up. A key factor behind their ability to resist so long had been the fact that in many households their wages supplemented those of the male members of the family. While the men continued to work, therefore, the household economy was not totally disrupted. Nonetheless, their will to resist was now being sapped, leading to a slow return to work. There were fears that in the following week this trickle would become a flood. For this reason in a meeting held on the Friday it was reluctantly agreed that work would begin on the following Monday.  

The final act of the great Catalan textile strike of 1913 was now to be enacted. It began with an employer revolt against the more reformist elements in their midst, and ended with the formation of a new Spanish textile federation, which adopted a significantly more radical stance  

71 IRS, La Jornada...1913, pp. 510-513. The link between the radicalism of the power-loom weavers, and the difficulties they faced when trying to unionise was noted by the more reformist sectors of the bourgeoisie. Thus, La Vanguardia stated in August: "It must be admitted that part of the blame for the slavery (of the textile workers) lies with the employers and the conservative classes who, with short sighted and selfish criteria have obstructed all serious organisation on the part of the workers. It is true that organised workers are a danger to many pockets and many insatiable strong boxes, but unorganised workers are an even greater danger to society. They are the raw material of all tumults, as soon as anyone ill-intentioned stirs up the flames of revolt. Those of us who defend biological nationalism must hope that the workers will organise, thereby sanctioning the work of nature ( ... ). That is socialism? It is preferable that it should be socialism - which on the other hand it is not - rather than anarchism or perpetual chaos". LP, 9 August 1913.  

72 LP, 17, 23 August; IRS, La Jornada...1913, pp. 543-551.
than any of its predecessors. Both these developments are of key importance for our understanding of the nature of social conflict in early twentieth century Catalonia.

Eduard Calvet, the president of the FTE, had been entrusted by the Government to find a solution to the dispute acceptable to the employers. Calvet was himself a substantial cotton textile manufacturer. Nevertheless, he was not a typical example of the cotton textile bourgeoisie. Like other leading figures in the FTE he adopted a conciliatory stance. Thus, when the strike began he emphasised that social legislation should be respected, and throughout he made great efforts to reach a compromise acceptable to both sides. Up until the end of the dispute it appeared that his efforts were supported by most of the employers. This, however, was soon to prove an illusion. Calvet had in the main consulted with large-scale employers with factories in Barcelona. For these men the reduction in working hours conceded would not be a great sacrifice. In the Alta Muntanya, however, where working hours were considerably longer, the industrialists had far more to lose. This was especially the case because the introduction of electrical power in Barcelona during these years was reducing the cost advantage the Alta Muntanya industrialists had in the past enjoyed. Accordingly, these Alta Muntanya employers were the first to complain at the Royal Decree. They were, nevertheless, followed by a large number of Barcelona industrialists. Apparently, these men had been too afraid to voice their dissatisfaction at the compromise proposed by Calvet whilst the strike was in progress. Once it was over, however, they quickly rallied against the Royal Decree.

The industrialists' first move was to organise a meeting on Monday 25 August, the day work was supposed to restart, at the headquarters of the FTE. It was presided over by Josep Muntades, the director of La España Industrial, and attended by 230 employers from the Barcelona Pla and Alta Muntanya. The most important step taken at the meeting was to elect a commission to inform the Government of its views. The following day this commission presented the civil governor with a memorandum which called for the Decree to be suspended until 30 September, and for it to be implemented only after the question had been studied by the Instituto de Reformas Sociales; for traditional holidays to be included in the calculation of working hours; for government assurance that the workers would make no further demands over the next ten years; and for a series of limitations on the fines which could be imposed in case of non compliance. The Minister of the Interior quickly rejected these demands, thus provoking a very violent reaction from the employers. Josep Muntades, the president of the commission, stated that the workers had been forced out on strike, and suggested that the movement was part of an international conspiracy which had also affected the industrial centres of France and Italy. He claimed that most employers had known nothing of the negotiation which had taken place and that the few who had been
involved had always maintained that a study would have to be carried out of reform's viability before it were implemented. The note concluded threateningly: 73

Once the public authorities have taken this path they will find it increasingly difficult to maintain their independence, and the industrialists whom they have so deplorably abandoned and offended will have no choice but to prepare for a terrifying struggle in the near future (...). The Minister is mistaken if he thinks that he has brought peace. The facts will soon demonstrate that his Royal Decree means a civil war in the factories.

This campaign had important repercussions within bourgeois circles. In a meeting held on 21 September at the headquarters of the FTN, Eduard Calvet handed in his resignation. He stated that while negotiations with the Government had been in progress he had heard no complaints. He then lamented that since the Royal Decree's publication he had been the subject of personal attacks, and concluded that he could not support the statements made by industrialists in the previous weeks. He was, nonetheless, backed by the FTN leadership. 74

A division had, therefore, opened up between the cotton textile industrialists and the FTN. Indeed, these industrialists had themselves found it difficult to maintain a united front. Thus there was disagreement between some Barcelona manufacturers, who were prepared to accept a 62 hour week, and others from the Alt Llobregat, who opposed any concessions. 75 Nevertheless, Josep Muntades was soon able to reunite a large number of the mill-owners from both the Pla and Alta Muntanya, and in their name called for the Royal Decree's withdrawal. Then on 7 October he organised a meeting which was attended by a large number of industrialists from throughout Catalonia. At this meeting a new regional federation of cotton textile employers, known as the Federació de Fabricants del Pla i de la Muntanya was founded. This federation was formed in clear opposition to the FTN. This was made clear when the FNT's acting president, Josep de Caralt, made a call for co-operation between the two bodies, to which Muntades replied, "the manufacturers have lost their confidence in the Foment and, consequently, they cannot accept its collaboration". 76 As a result of the 1913 textile strike, then, a majority of Catalonia's cotton textile industrialists formed a hard-line employer federation. This federation opposed the reformism of the FTN's leadership, was hostile to government social legislation, and refused to deal with independent trade unions.

73. LP, 26, 29 August; IRS, La Jornada...1913, pp. 550-558. Anuari d'Estadística Social de Catalunya, Vol.II., 1913 (Barcelona, 1915), pp. 96-97.
74. IRS, La Jornada...1913, pp. 611-613.
75. LP, 30 August, 11 September; IRS, La Jornada...1913, pp. 572. 590-591. 608-610.
76. Ibid, pp. 611-613.
Indeed, this federation was to a large extent able to ensure that the Government's decree was a dead letter. In Barcelona, when the workers began to resume work, some industrialists refused to implement the decree. At best a number agreed to work 62 rather than 64 hours a week. Similarly, in the Alta Muntanya, especially in those areas where there had been no strike, the industrialists made no move in the direction of reducing working hours. This attitude produced a feeling of great bitterness amongst the labour force, yet there was little union leaders could do to pressure the mill owners. Many of the unions which had participated in the dispute had been seriously weakened. La Consència in particular went into rapid decline. Disappointment over the result of the strike had led many female weavers to withdraw, whilst there also developed an internal feud over the role played by the strike committee during the dispute. Moreover, the textile workers received little support from the state. Once the Royal Decree had been published the Government made very little effort to ensure it was enforced.

It was to try and stop the textile barons from ignoring the decree that the Mataró hosiery unions suggested that a congress be held to convert the Federació Regional into a national body. The congress was held in Barcelona between 25 and 27 December 1913. Only two unions from outside Catalonia affiliated, and delegates were in fact largely drawn from the same areas as previously. Nevertheless, the congress did give the textile unions an opportunity to express their reaction to the events of 1913. Many adopted a very radical tone. Thus, the TCV was excluded and declared "yellow and bourgeois". Indeed, as a direct result of this accord the historic textile federation was to be ignominiously wound up in the following year. During the sessions the Government was heavily criticised for not having ensured the implementation of its own decree, and in a manifesto published by the delegates the Instituto de Reformas Sociales was declared "A useless body". It was furthermore agreed that if the 60 hour week were not in the future enforced the federation's committee would, after having consulted with the membership, declare a general strike throughout the industry.77

Before the outbreak of the First World War, however, the only group of workers in a position to challenge the industrialists' refusal to implement the decree were those of the Ter and Freser valleys. In the Ter union organisation remained weak between 1910 and 1913. However, the Government decree of 25 September 1913 heralded a revival of trade unionism in the area. The Ter and Llobregat employers had argued their workers had not asked them for a reduction in working hours, and that there was, therefore, no reason for them to accept the decree. It was left for the Ter Valley workers to prove them wrong. Here, the desire to ensure that the 10 hour day was respected provided a great stimulus to trade union organisation. Consequently, the months of October and November 1913 witnessed a febrile campaign to strengthen the unions on the Ter and

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77. On this congress see, LP, 27, 28 December 1913; SO, 1 January 1914; LJS, 3, 10 January, 7 February 1914.
By the beginning of 1914 these unions felt they were strong enough to issue their employers with an ultimatum. They, therefore, called for “a 10 hour day together with a 10 per cent increase in piece rates”, and threatened immediate strike action if their demand were not met. The industrialists, however, refused to budge.

The workers responded by coming out on strike on 2 May 1914. The strike was seconded by over 15,000 workers throughout the Ter and Freser. Nevertheless, it was to prove a failure. The employers, whose profit margins were still under heavy pressure, would not hear of concessions. Moreover, after the strike of the previous year, the textile federation could offer little help. Yet, despite this failure, in the principal Ter Valley towns the unions ensured the return to work on the Ter was orderly, and that no workers were sacked. They, therefore, maintained a united front and, in the words of the correspondent of the Socialist weekly *La Justicia Social*, successfully opposed any attempt on the part of the employers to impose “a regime of terror, similar to the one operating in the Alto Llobregat”.

By 1914, then, bitter industrial conflict was endemic within much of the Catalan cotton textile industry. This was by no means the case in all European states. In England the cotton textile workers - and in particular the spinners - were regarded as amongst the most reformist elements within the labour movement. A comparison of the economic and social development of the cotton textile industry in Catalonia and England might, therefore, shed light on the reasons behind the instability of labour relations apparent in Catalonia. In England, large weaving and spinning labour federations were consolidated in the 1860s and 1870s. These federations soon entered into collective bargaining arrangements with the employers. These employers, in general, respected the workers’ right to form independent unions, and negotiated wages and working conditions with them.

In weaving, as in Catalonia, by the end on the nineteenth century most of the workers were female. Nevertheless, no major assault was launched on the weavers’ unions. It is, however, in spinning that the greatest differences between the position adopted by the English and Catalan mill owners was to be seen. In England the ring-frame made its appearance in the 1870s. Yet, the English industrialists made no attempt to oust the male spinners and replace them with female workers. On the contrary, despite the higher productivity of the ring-frame, English industry continued to use male workers on the self-acting mules. In order to counter the challenge of the ring-frames the spinners co-operated in the intensification of labour on the mules, and industrialists moved into higher counts of thread where the competitive advantage of the ring-frame was less notable.

The English employers appear to have adopted this stance because they were loath to

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78. LJS, 1 November 1913: 17, 31 January, 21, 28 February, 28 March, 4 April 1914; SO, 26 March 1914; AMT, T. Trabajos Varjos (2); AMM, Gobernació, S 152, A 398.

provoke major confrontation in the industry, and at the same time to undermine a tried and tested hierarchy system. They were able to do this because they operated large highly productive concerns, which provided for a wide internal and overseas market. Despite these advantages foreign competition did intensify from the 1870s. However, English industrialists still had the alternative of falling back on exclusive Empire markets.

With the exception of Spain’s few remaining colonies the Catalan industrialists had no such possibility. Moreover, as has been seen, the Spanish internal market was limited in size and, as a result, the individual cotton mills were relatively small-scale. The limits to the growth of Catalan industry posed by Spain’s archaic agrarian economic and social structure became clear in the 1880s. From this date cotton textiles was faced with an almost permanent recession, and it was for this reason that the industry’s mill owners showed themselves willing to push through cost cutting reforms at whatever price. The price was an escalation of class conflict in much of the industry. 80

Cotton was by far the largest of the textile industries. It was, therefore, the pattern of industrial relations in cotton textiles which had the greatest impact on the shape of Catalan trade unionism. Nevertheless, woollen textiles predominated in the industrial towns of Sabadell and Terrassa. The industrialists' attempts to restructure the labour process and cut costs was at the root of the labour troubles in the cotton textile industry. In woollen textiles, however, as was noted in Chapter One, there was no concerted effort to undermine the position of the male workers within the industry, and for this reason industrial relations were on a very different from those in cotton.

In Sabadell woollen and worsted spinning remained a relatively highly paid male dominated profession. This fact probably explains why this group of workers had a moderating influence on the Sabadell labour movement. It was the woollen power-loom weavers who formed the backbone of trade union organisation in the town. Power-loom weaving also remained male dominated, but the weavers felt rather more threatened than their colleagues in spinning. Many amongst the first

80: During the 1880s the establishment of industrial relations on a pattern similar to those in the English cotton industry had been the goal of the TCV leadership. In 1889, therefore, it sent a commission to England to study the reasons behind the greater stability of labour relations in that country. It concluded that the low level of industrial militancy in England was the result of two factors. First, the implementation of a large body of social legislation. Second, the existence of collective bargaining arrangements between workers and employers. On this second point the commission stated that: "(...) the docility (quietismo) of the English workers is the result of the assurances they receive from the employers' union, which maintains the collective agreements reached without any variation. It thereby offers confidence to the worker who, in return, offers peace to the employer. By this means the industry acquires continuity, that is to say life. The situation is very different to that of other countries and especially our own, which is the most in need of not suffering upheavals. Despite this, most industrialists do not accept the rights of labour, and prefer strikes, with the accidents that go with them, to a collective agreement with the workers". The commission then went on to point out that in Catalonia over the past seven years the only branch of the industry in which a collective agreement had been in force was cotton printing. Memoria Descriptiva, op cit, pp. 6-7.
generation of power-loom operatives appear to have been recruited from hand-loom weavers, and they brought with them these workers traditions of union organisation.

Unlike the female weavers of Barcelona, the Sabadell weavers were able to maintain a continuous trade union presence within the town. The task of maintaining trade union organisation intact was made easier by the fact that the industry's employers were generally prepared to negotiate with the men. The first collective agreements regulating wage rates in the various branches of the industry were signed between 1898 and 1900. The woollen textile employers then founded an Industrial Union to negotiate with the workforce, and in subsequent years it ensured that agreements signed were to a large extent respected. The employers willingness to negotiate with independent unions was in contrast to the state of affairs in much of cotton textiles. Their stance was facilitated by the fact that much of the woollen textile industry was very small-scale and retained a familial air. In Sabadell, moreover, geographical class divisions were not very marked, hence providing a favourable climate in which negotiations could take place.

Nevertheless, the closeness of industrial relations in the industry should not be overdrawn. Already in 1883 Sabadell's woollen textile workers had been involved in a seven week strike to reduce working hours from 65 to 56 a week. When the strike was over the employers victimised union militants and set up their own friendly society. It operated along lines similar to those in cotton textiles. Workers who joined received a pension at the age of sixty, but could no form part of any other union. The Caixa dels Morts or Dead Box, as it was popularly called, did not receive a great deal of support, but at the turn of the century it was still operating.

In the mid-1890s the woollen workers faced an even more serious threat. As was seen in Chapter One, at that time two French firms moved to Sabadell in order to circumvent the high tariff barriers established in 1891. The largest of these was the integrated spinning and weaving concern Seydoux and Company. The other was a worsted spinning factory under the name of Harmel Hermanos. Both these concerns took a strongly anti-unionist line. Labour was also more intensive in these factories. Furthermore, they adopted piece rates, and undercut the rates paid by local manufacturers. For a number of reasons, then, the Sabadell woollen workers were fearful that faced with competition from the French firms the Sabadell manufacturers might be forced to resort to the same methods. Their determination to force the French mills to conform to the work practices predominant in Sabadell was to poison industrial relations in much of the industry over the next fifteen years.

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81. Esteve Deu, op cit, p. 4.16.

82. Andreu Castells, op cit, Vol.II., pp. 10.50-10.60.; ET, 23 December 1899.
The first conflict over methods of production in the French factories occurred in 1899. The Sabadell labour movement had rapidly reorganised over the previous two years. By the end of 1899 2557 workers formed part of the local labour federation, the Federació Obrera Sabadellenc (FOS). This figure represented nearly a quarter of the Sabadell working class. The largest union was that of the power-loom weavers, which had 812 members, “a number of affiliates as great or greater than in its best moments”.

In these circumstances the woollen textile unions felt they could move against the French concerns. On 25 May, therefore, they orchestrated a strike of 25 spinners at Harmel Hermanos. The workers had two basic grievances. First, that they were prevented from unionising. Second, that they had to mind two spinning machines while workers in the rest of Sabadell’s factories only minded one. The FOS was able to give mass support, and large numbers of workers congregated outside the factory gates each day. The owners at first refused to negotiate. However, when the factory’s female weavers joined the strike they began to waver. The Mayor of Sabadell advised them, “there is nothing one can do but follow their (i.e., the workers) simple customs if one does not wish to be sacrificed”. They followed his advice and gave way on 16 June.

By far the most important strike of the year, however, was in Seydoux and Co. The Seydoux factory was by late 1899 the only non-unionised plant in town. Nevertheless, the FOS had forged links with the factory’s workforce, and as a result of these contacts the workers agreed to call a strike for union recognition, the abolition of piece rates, and a wage rise. The strike began on 27 August. The French management again refused to give way and proceeded to recruit blackleg labour from outside Sabadell. The strike, therefore, dragged on, and with no solution in sight the social atmosphere in the town became increasingly rarified. It was in these circumstances that a single incident - a blackleg firing on a group of workers congregated outside the factory gates - provoked an extremely explosive situation. In response the workers called a general strike, which spread rapidly through Sabadell. On the first day of the strike the panic-stricken Mayor wrote to the civil governor to call for police reinforcements. His fears were, however, exaggerated. There was no attempt to storm the factory, and the general strike was to end on 2 December. Seydoux was then able to recruit the blacklegs it needed, and the factory, which was surrounded by civil guard, continued production.

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84 AMS, 11.4. Conflictos Laborales 1899, Huelgas de Cerrajeros y Trabajadores de la Fábrica Harmel Hermanos.

85 AMS, 11.4. Conflictos Laborales 1899, Huelgas de los Trabajadores de la Fábrica de Tejidos y Hilados Seydoux y Ca; LP, 29, 30 November 1899.
The strike defeat was a serious blow to the Sabadell labour movement. Yet, there was no parallel to the events in the Alta Muntanya in the following year. In Sabadell, the defeat of the Seydoux strike was not followed by an employer offensive against organised labour. The woollen power loom weavers union in fact remained strong through to 1902. Indeed, at the beginning of that year the weavers signed an improved wage deal with their employers, which gave them a minimum of 27 pesetas a week.86

Sabadell's autochthonous industrialists had little sympathy for the French plants. They maintained no personal contact with the management, and neither of the French firms formed part of the local employers' federations. However, there was pressure on the Sabadell employers to meet the competitive challenge of Seydoux and Co and adopt some of its methods. The workers themselves realised that this was the case. Thus, in 1901 there were rumours that the industrialists had come to a secret agreement to introduce piece rates and sack the most militant trade unionists.87

These fears were not to be realised. However, as the economic climate further deteriorated in the Autumn of 1903 voices again warned that the mill owners would attempt to restructure working conditions in their favour. Over the next six years the Sabadell unions struggled to retain their membership at a time when the entire Catalan labour movement found itself on the defensive. During these years the power-loom weavers faced a number of challenges to their position on the shop floor. In 1904 there were once again rumours that the mill owners were thinking of replacing time rates. However, only one weaving factory actually tried to introduce piece work. The workforce immediately responded by taking strike action. The outcome of the strike appears to have been favourable, and nothing more was heard of employer attempts to pay by the piece for the rest of the decade. An even greater threat to the male power-loom weavers was the possibility that they might be replaced by female workers. During 1904 some males were replaced by female weavers in two factories. Strike action was again taken, and every attempt made to ensure the trend were halted. In this the weavers' union was again successful. At the same time the weavers tried to maintain the 27 peseta minimum wage, and 11 hour day. In this respect they were also successful. Between 1904 and 1906 there were a number of small conflicts over wage rates, but a 27 peseta minimum wage remained the norm.88

86. ET, 18 January, 1 February 1899.
87. La Protesta, 13, 19 July 1901.
88. AMS, Conflictess Laborals 1903, Vaga de Teixidors de la Fàbrica Can Guash. That the employers had wished to introduce piece rates was made plain in a letter the Industrial Union sent to the inquiry into the textile industries conducted by the Institute of Social Reforms during 1913. It lamented that the Spanish worker, "is an enemy of piece work in the industries in which by custom fixed rates are the norm, and even when a lot of industrialists want to change the way that the workers are paid they do not out of fear of serious conflicts, of which they are considered the instigators". IRS, La Jornada... 1913, p. 269. ET, 10 December 1904.
Although, then, the employers provoked a number of strikes between 1904 and 1906, they remained small-scale. Furthermore, between 1907 and 1909 there were absolutely no disputes in the industry. Some weavers had come under pressure from their employers, but they had been able to head off any attempt to undermine their position on the shop floor. Indeed, a large number of the town’s weavers continued to work in so-called “strong houses” in which collective bargaining agreements were respected, and who did not in consequence feel it was necessary to join the local union. 89

It was not until 1910 that the Sabadell woollen workers were involved in another industry wide conflict, and as in 1899 Seydoux and Co. was to be at the centre of this dispute. During 1910 there had been a marked increase in sale of woollen garments. The industry’s unions were to take advantage of this favourable conjuncture to recruit new members. An important number of power-loom weavers still refused to join their local union, but by the Summer of 1910 it was as strong as at any time since the beginning of the century. In what was almost a re-run of the situation in 1899 the woollen textile unions began to recruit workers from the Seydoux plant. The management quickly responded by sacking three workers from the factory’s worsted spinning section. The deep resentment the Sabadell unions felt towards Seydoux and Co. then burst to the surface. Thus, on 5 August 1910 the Worsted Spinners’ Union called out all the factories spinners. Along with the reinstatement of the sacked workers, it demanded the replacement of piece by time rates. In addition, in a hard hitting letter addressed to the firm’s Parisian owners it stated that the workers were: 90

(...) ready to come out and adopt a strategy very different from that of the peaceful strike, because they are tired of suffering the mockery and ridicule they are subjected to by that irascible character (the director) Mr Martin. They are also fed up of living in poverty, of working a lot and of being paid little, and they do not wish our fellow employers to be obliged by the competition to cut wages and introduce piece rates.

At first the Industrial Union tried to play a conciliatory role. However, as a result of the tactics followed by the Sabadell unions it was increasingly drawn into the dispute. When the FOS tried to extend the strike to the rest of the factory it found that the workers who, “are from the recruitment drive made through the country and mountains of Catalonia during the last strike eleven years ago”, refused to come out. 91 It, therefore, hit upon the idea of declaring a boycott of all those establishments which supplied raw materials to, or worked for, the Seydoux plant. This boycott was enforced by demanding the payment of a fine and the breaking off of any contact with

89. ET, 16 April 1909.
90. Boletín de la Cámara de Industria y Comercio de Sabadell, October 1910.
91. SO, 19 August 1910.
the French factory from all those employers who traded with Seydoux. If the fine were not paid then the employer's labour force was withdrawn, and additional expenses for maintenance of the strikers were demanded.

By taking this action the FOS could bypass the problem of lack of support amongst the workers of Seydoux and Co. Yet it had the disadvantage that it antagonised Sabadell's other manufacturers. Matters came to a head on 15 September after the workers of a textile finishing shop walked out. The Industrial Union responded by immediately declaring a lock-out in all the town's finishing shops. Over the next two weeks the situation continued to deteriorate.

Negotiations failed and as a result at the beginning of October the lock-out was extended to the entire industry. At the same time the Industrial Union called for more police to be sent to Sabadell, and put pressure on the authorities to take legal action against the FOS. Neither side, however, presented a united front. El Trabajo admitted: "Amongst the workers there was opposition to the tactic of the boycott amongst those weavers, who are generally occupied in good houses and do not know what it is to go on strike." The FOS for its part claimed that it was the owners of relatively large-scale plants - the so-called "big fish" - who were behind the lock out. Some workers indeed showed considerable sympathy for those small-scale employers who had been forced by the Industrial Union to second its action.92

In fact, the Industrial Union was forced to call off its action after a week because of divisions within its ranks. Nevertheless, the leadership of the FOS maintained a hard line. Thus, the Federation's acting president, Bru Lladó, stated that the workers would not return to work until the owners had paid the men locked-out compensation for the days they had been idle. Furthermore, he stepped up pressure on the industrialists by declaring a general strike of all Sabadell industry on 27 October.93

The decision further to radicalise the conflict appears, with the benefit of hindsight, clearly mistaken. It was probably taken for two reasons. First, the woollen workers were desperately keen for the Seydoux factory to fall into line. Second, the FOS leadership was carried along by the increasingly radicalised atmosphere of these months. In Barcelona there had been a surge of industrial militancy in the Summer of 1910. Moreover, a new national syndicalist labour federation, to be known as the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, was to be founded in Barcelona at the beginning of November. Bru Lladó hoped that the delegates at the founding congress would take decisive action in favour of the woollen workers. Thus, in a meeting on 31 October the FOS agreed to call a "revolutionary general strike" if it were approved by the congress. However, the FOS was to be disappointed. When the congress met it took a considerably more

92. ET, 29 October, 30 September 1910; ED, 11 October 1910.
cautious line, agreeing that if the dispute had not been solved by the following Friday the Sabadell workers should abandon the town en masse. Should they be prevented from doing so a general strike would then be declared.\textsuperscript{94}

In the following week the FOS began to prepare for the exodus which was to take the workers of Sabadell to the Barcelona Ramblas. Nevertheless, there appears to have been considerable opposition to such a move amongst the rank and file. For this reason the FOS began to work for a negotiated settlement and, it seems, finally decided to put off the march. Argument over this question was, however, soon to be made academic. From the beginning of November the Liberal Government, under the premiership of Antonio Canalejas, launched a full scale assault on union organisation in the town. Leading union militants were arrested and great pressure was put on the strikers to return to work. With the labour movement decapitated this return began in the following week. Not all the strikers, however, were readmitted. According to El Trabajo a “hunger pact” was declared against 500 families.\textsuperscript{95}

Industrial relations in Sabadell had now reached their nadir. The part played by the employers in inciting the authorities to move against the FOS, and their victimisation of union militants, created great bitterness. Nevertheless, union organisation in the town was to recover surprisingly quickly. Indeed, in the following year the power-loom weavers union felt strong enough to present the industrialists with a demand for a 50 cents rise in wages, and the abolition of unofficial holidays. In order to maintain “harmony between labour and capital” the Industrial Union then offered the compromise solution of a 62 hour week which was accepted by the weavers.\textsuperscript{96}

The Sabadell woollen textile industry was, therefore, set apart from cotton textiles by the fact that the employers were prepared to bargain with independent unions throughout the period under study. These employers maintained that there remained a strong sense of community in Sabadell. Thus the Industrial Union stated in 1910 that:\textsuperscript{97}

\begin{quote}
He who knows life in our locality; he who has been able to appreciate that in Sabadell there are no class differences; he who knows that here the workers beliefs, ideas, aspirations, and even his foibles are respected. He knows that the Sabadell employer does not know
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{94} SO, 26 October; ET, 29 October; Congreso de Constitución de la Confederación Nacional del Trabajo. Prólogo de Juan Peirats (Barcelona, 1976), pp. 88-89, 94-95.

\textsuperscript{95} Cited in SO, 9 December 1910.

\textsuperscript{96} LP, 24 May, 15 July 1911; Boletín de la Cámara de Industria y Comercio de Sabadell, September 1912. Moreover, when in 1913 the Government introduced its Royal Decree limiting working hours to 10 a day it was respected in Sabadell woollen textiles.

\textsuperscript{97} ED, 5 October 1910.
how to dislike or hold a grudge against his workers, and will always be found to be unselfish and generous.

The picture given was of course idealised. Nonetheless, even the leadership of the FOS had stated at the end of 1910 that, “up until today the Sabadell bourgeoisie has pretended to be humane, almost a friend to the working class”.98 The closeness of social relations should perhaps not be exaggerated. As has been noted, the Sabadell manufacturers did set up a friendly society, and in 1910 called on the state to break union power and then sacked a number of workers. However, they had also been willing to negotiate agreements over working conditions. And, with the exception of the 1899 and 1910 disputes, industrial conflictivity in the industry remained low.

Fear that other industrialists would follow the lead of the Seydoux factory and introduce new work practices led industrial relations to become increasingly tense. Yet, the most notable feature of Sabadell’s economic and social development was that the industrialists never, in fact, attempted to take on their workforce and try to recast work structures in their plants.

The contrast between industrial relations in cotton and woollen textiles in this respect was very marked. In cotton the industrialists had been prepared to break the back of trade union organisation in order to reduce labour costs. In the Alta Muntanya many tried to impose social control through a mixture of paternalism and labour discipline. They were aided in this task by the Spanish state, which usually backed up the employers. This was particularly the case when the Conservatives were in power. Yet, as the example of the 1910 strike in Sabadell shows, the Liberals were also prepared to act decisively against labour if they felt there was a revolutionary threat to the Restoration System. However, in contrast to the iron and steel barons of the German Ruhr, the cotton textile industrialists often lacked sufficient resources to act decisively against organised labour. They were most successful in the company towns of the Alt Llobregat, but in other areas they met with staunch worker resistance. This resistance was to be greatest in the Ter Valley. In other towns the workers were often non-unionised for years on end. However, when they were finally to organise the anger and frustration which they felt made them very volatile. This was most notable in Barcelona during 1913 when the female power-loom weavers became a highly radical force. The cotton textile barons had by no means, therefore, completely been able to stem the tide of labour protest, and when worker discontent did explode - as during 1901 and 1913 - the fabric of Catalan urban society was shaken.

98. SO, 23 December 1910.
Worker resistance in cotton textiles, then, was not successfully overcome by the bourgeoisie. Industrial conflict in the industry contributed to the belief held by contemporary observers that the Catalan workers were the most rebellious in Spain. This image was not undeserved. No strike data is available for Spain before 1905. From this date the Instituto de Reformas Sociales began annually to publish a quantitative survey of strikes. The data it used was by no means reliable. Nevertheless, it does provide us with a general picture of the intensity of strike activity in the various regions.

Table 4.1. Strikes in Barcelona Province and Spain, 1899-1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1905-6</th>
<th>1907-8</th>
<th>1909-10</th>
<th>1911-12</th>
<th>1913-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barcelona Province</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Strikes</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Strikers</td>
<td>5144</td>
<td>4084</td>
<td>35,391</td>
<td>12,336</td>
<td>72,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Strikes</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Strikers</td>
<td>47,762</td>
<td>25,419</td>
<td>42,580</td>
<td>36,306</td>
<td>133,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcelona as a % of Spanish Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Strikes</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Strikers</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Instituto de Reformas Sociales, Estadística de Huelgas, 1905-1914 (Madrid, 1906-1917).

As the table suggests a high proportion of strikes in Spain were carried out in Barcelona Province, which comprised almost all the region's major industrial centres. This was particularly

1. The Institute gathered strike data from the juntas locales de reformas sociales, and tried fill in gaps by using information found in the press. Where, therefore, the juntas locales did not function, or did not fulfil their obligations, strikes may not have been reported. For the city of Barcelona, between 1903 and 1914 the catholic publicist, Miguel Sastre i Sama, undertook his own detailed study of strikes. Our own investigation shows the data collected by Miguel Sastre generally to have been more accurate. While, therefore, in the tables analysing strikes in Barcelona Province, Catalonia and Spain we have used data from the the Instituto de Reformas Sociales, for the tables we have elaborated analysing strikes in Barcelona city have used information from the study by Miguel Sastre. From 1912 the Barcelona Museu Social published an Anuari d'Estadística Social de Catalunya(AESC). It included a section on strikes in Catalonia, which also proved more accurate than that elaborated by the Institute.
the case as class conflict became more intense after 1909. Thus, between 1910 and 1914 31.2 per cent of the strikes in Spain and 56.8 per cent of the strikers were from Barcelona Province.

Strike action in Catalonia - as in other parts of Spain - was not constant but concentrated in bursts. The years 1890 to 1892 had seen a great upsurge in labour militancy. In the repressive climate of the mid-1890s, on the other hand, labour was largely quiescent. Between 1899 and 1903 another strike wave swept the country. The years between 1904 and 1909 again witnessed a rapid decline in the number of strikes, a trend which was reversed in the more favourable economic climate of the years 1910 to 1914. These cyclical swings were especially clear in the case of Barcelona city. Thus, strike data published by Miguel Sastre i Sama shows the number of strikers plunge from the figure of 61,174 in 1903 to only 987 in 1909. There was then a rapid recovery, with the number of strikers reaching its high point of 80,071 in 1913, the year of the great cotton textile dispute. (see Graph 4.1.).

Graph 4.1. Strikes and Strikers in Barcelona, 1903-1914.

![Graph 4.1. Strikes and Strikers in Barcelona, 1903-1914.](image)

Source. Miguel Sastre y Sama, Las Huelgas en Barcelona y sus Resultados los Años 1903-1914 (Barcelona, 1904-1915).

Barcelona was the focal point of this conflictivity. Thus, nearly 50 per cent of the Catalan proletariat lived in Barcelona, and despite bitter industrial strife in parts of the Alta Muntanya in most years the city accounted for over 50 per cent of strikes in the region. (see table 4.2.).

2. However, as table 4.2. indicates, for the years 1913-1914 data taken from the AESC give a significantly lower percentage of strikes in Barcelona than that taken from the Institute for Social Reforms. This reflects the fact that - as our empirical observations have born out - the Institute's figures missed a significant number of strikes outside Barcelona city. The Institutes data, therefore, tends to exaggerate the percentage of Catalan strikes which took place in the capital.
Table 4.2. Strikes in Barcelona as a Percentage of all Strikes in Catalonia, 1905-1914.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>1905-6</th>
<th>1907-8</th>
<th>1909-10</th>
<th>1911-12</th>
<th>1913-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institute for Social Reforms</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anuari d'Estadística Social de Catalunya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Instituto de Reformas Sociales, Estadística de Huelgas, 1905-1914; Anuari d'Estadística Social de Catalunya, Les Vagues a Catalunya, 1913-1914 (Barcelona, 1914-1915).

It was noted in the previous chapter that to form trade unions was far easier for workers in a strong position on the shop floor. In Barcelona, therefore, artisanal workers often formed the most robust unions. Many artisans were also at the forefront of strike activity. Table 4.3. outlines the propensity of workers to strike in the city's main industries between 1899 and 1914. Data for the years 1903-1914 has been elaborated from the statistics collected by Miguel Sastre. That of the years 1899-1902 is based on press reports. As in Chapter Two the 1905 worker census has been used as the best guide to the number of workers in each industry. 3

The table has been ordered in terms of the relative propensity of workers in the various industries to come out on strike, with the most strike prone industry first, and the least strike prone last. The data has been arrived at simply by adding together the yearly figure of strikers, average length of strikes and working days lost. The two most strike prone industries were clearly construction and metallurgy. 4

Over the whole period the number of strikers as a percentage of the workforce was highest in construction. Nevertheless, metalworkers were not far behind. Moreover, it was in the metallurgical industry that strikes tended to last longest. In construction it was the journeyman bricklayers, carpenters and painters who were the most militant. In metallurgy, as was seen in Chapter Two, many workers retained an apprentice system and hence could still be regarded in many ways as artisans. Within the industry it was these skilled mechanics, foundrymen and boilermakers who were the first to come out on strike.

3. Only one alteration which has been made to Miguel Sastre's figures. Sastre claimed that 63,870 textile workers came out on strike in 1913. This is a great exaggeration, and the number has therefore been reduced to the 26,729 textile workers which according to the 1905 Censo Obrero laboured in Barcelona at that time.

4. The carpentry trade straddled construction and woodworking, and the carpenters unions developed close links with both construction and woodworkers. Following the classification adopted by the 1905 Censo Obrero, however, the carpenters have been taken to be construction workers. Because carpenters proved highly militant the effect has, of course, been to boost the figures elaborated for the propensity to strike in construction.
A similar picture prevailed in a number of other industries. In the leather trades it was the skilled tanners who were the most militant. In the textile finishing trades skilled male workers predominated, and it was they who organised the strikes in the industry. In the woodworking and furniture trades it was the artisanal power-sawyers, wood turners and cabinetmakers who were behind the labour unrest. In printing the only trade beset by strikes was that of the journeyman compositors. In the clothing and food industry skilled male workers were in a minority.

However, it was still these workers who were best able to organise to defend their interests. In the clothing industry, as has been seen, the majority of workers were female. Most of them worked in their own homes as seamstresses and dressmakers. They were paid very low wages and were highly exploited. Yet they found it totally impossible to unionise and present any demands for higher wages. Within the industry it was only male workers employed in workshops and factories, of which the shoemakers and tailors stand out, who took strike action. The situation within the food industry was in some ways similar. There were a large number of unskilled male and female workers employed. However, the only large trade whose workers were able to take strike action effectively was that of the bakers. Bakers were not highly skilled, but they had retained an apprentice system which served to limit entry into the profession.

Table 4.3. *The Propensity of Barcelona Workers to Strike by Industry, 1899-1914.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>No. of Workers</th>
<th>No. of Strikers</th>
<th>Av. Length Strikes (Days)</th>
<th>Days Lost</th>
<th>Strikers as per cent of Workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>15,277</td>
<td>43,274</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>1,636,218</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metallurgy</td>
<td>8,943</td>
<td>26,305</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>1,591,735</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Transport</td>
<td>4,437</td>
<td>9,924</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>316,879</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Transport</td>
<td>17,890</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>604,200</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather Trades</td>
<td>1,621</td>
<td>1,872</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>73,464</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile Finishing</td>
<td>7,678</td>
<td>8,637</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>225,134</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>26,729</td>
<td>29,660</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>634,913</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture Trades</td>
<td>2,686</td>
<td>2380</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>76,222</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>20,479</td>
<td>16,920</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>386,351</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodworking Trades</td>
<td>3,858</td>
<td>2,901</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>94,134</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Industry</td>
<td>8,129</td>
<td>5,551</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>72,648</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass and Ceramics</td>
<td>3,069</td>
<td>1,970</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>74,224</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas and Electricity</td>
<td>2,224</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>7930</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>7,495</td>
<td>2,931</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>76,779</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach, Cart and Boat Makers</td>
<td>2,206</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>93.1</td>
<td>54,546</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper and Chemicals</td>
<td>6,183</td>
<td>1,063</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources. AECB, "Censo Obrero de 1905"; La Publicidad, 1899-1902; Miguel Sastre, *Las Huelgas en Barcelona y sus Resultados, 1903-1914.*
Nonetheless, it was not only artisanal workers who came out on strike. In the previous chapter we saw how, despite the difficulties they faced, female textile workers were able to launch a general strike in 1913. Industrial unrest was also common amongst industrial workers on the Barcelona waterfront. Here the dockers - included under the heading marine transport - proved particularly strike prone. In addition, the city’s carteros - who often worked at the docks - also took strike action at regular intervals between 1900 and 1914.

Trade union organisation strengthened rapidly between 1899 and 1902. Thus by February of this latter year there may have been as many as 45,000 workers unionised in Barcelona. During these years it became clear that artisanal workers formed the backbone of the Barcelona labour movement. However, the unions these workers formed in general remained small in size. As was seen in Chapter Two the towns on the Barcelona Pla were co-opted into the city of Barcelona in 1897. Nevertheless, the transport system between the old city and the industrial towns remained poor. In towns such as Gràcia, Sants and Sant Martí the sense of local community, therefore, remained very strong. Workers lived and worked in the towns and only went down to the centre of Barcelona on special occasions. The result was a great fragmentation of trade unionism. Thus, in 1903 there were 7 bricklayers unions and 6 carpenters unions, and overall at least 111 unions in the city. In 1899 the largest union in Barcelona was that of the Sant Martí tanners with about 1,500 members, but most had less than 500. These unions, therefore, had limited resources. Many did not own their own premises, but had to sublet rooms in taverns or cafés. The dues paid by members varied between 10 and 25 cents a month. With this money union officials usually built up a strike fund, and they also sometimes provided sickness benefit. However, the provision of more wide-ranging friendly benefits, such as retirement pay, was beyond the resources of these unions. Union organisation in Barcelona was also very unstable. Thus, many of the unions which operated at the turn of the century were only founded in 1898 and 1899. In addition, as shall be seen, the loss of a strike or government repression could easily lead to a unions break up. Consequently, workers who could afford the 1 peseta a month quota, preferred to rely on independent benefit societies (montepíós or germandats) for accident benefits.

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6. “Sociedades Obreras”, in AECB 1903. Miguel Sastre stated there were 123 unions in Barcelona in 1903 and there were no doubt more. See, Pere Gabriel, “Sindicats”, p. 381.

7. These Germandats proved very popular with the petty bourgeoisie, small scale employers and skilled workers. (artesanos and menestrales in the words of the AECB). Thus in 1901 there were 116 Germandats with 25,034 members affiliated to the Unió i Defensa dels Germandats de la Ciutat de Barcelona. By 1913 the number of Germandats had risen to 685 and that of affiliates to 159,579. At the same time there were over 1000 Germandats in the rest of the province. AECB, 1904, p.563; 1907, p.589; AESC, 1913, p.158; 1914, p.150. As was pointed out in Chapter Two, however, most Barcelona workers did not have good sickness cover.
Unions, therefore, were primarily seen as instruments to obtain improvements in working conditions. In fact, most unions were run on a very informal basis. There were no paid officials, and committee men were simply workers who dedicated their spare time to union business. The unions were also very democratic. The committees were renewed at regular intervals, and there were sometimes rules to stop the same persons from being reelected continuously.

From the turn of the century an increasing number of regional, and even some national, craft federations were founded. Yet, they tended to operate on lines similar to those of the unions themselves. The location of the central committee was decided at conference time. Again, there were no paid officials, and the town which elected the committee was usually changed after each yearly congress. These federations, therefore, seem largely to have served to co-ordinate protest action. The only clear exception to this pattern was that of the coopers federation. The federation had been founded in 1882. Uniquely, it was able to survive right through to 1914. This federation, as might be expected, was far better organised than its contemporaries. Thus, in the 1890s it set up a friendly benefits fund, which provided for accident and retirement payments. 8

The geographical isolation of many Catalan unions could lead them to become very exclusive. To give one example, at the turn of the century some of the bricklayers unions outside Barcelona tried to stop bricklayers from other areas obtaining work in their town. 9 As was seen in the previous chapter male workers often found it difficult to regard women as part of the labour movement. Artisans, moreover, often adopted an exclusive stance with respect to the unskilled in general, and excluded them from their unions. Behind this attitude lay the artisans' belief that they worked in “honourable” professions. As was seen in chapter two, their spokesmen saw the artisans as trained workers, perhaps even as “artists”, and argued that in order to be a journeyman a worker need to be cultured and have a good general education. 10 Such descriptions involved a deal of wishful thinking. 11 Yet, artisans often looked down upon workers who had not been apprenticed and learnt a trade. This was particularly clear in the case of workers from the more elitist trades, such as coopers and glassblowers. Yet, even poorly paid artisanal workers like bricklayers were guilty of such attitudes. Thus, it proved very difficult for syndicalist labour leaders to convince the Barcelona bricklayers that they should form a single union with their labourers. In 1913, during one such attempt, the union leadership concluded an address:

8. Most of the coopers' federation's congress reports for the years 1885 to 1905 have been conserved.
9. This was the case of the Reus and Badalona bricklayers unions. El Productor, 20 December 1902; Joaquín Ferrer, Simó Piera: Pèril d'un Sindicalista (Barcelona, 1975), p.31.
10. See, for example, Boletín, December 1904; May, August 1905.
11. Many workers in even the best qualified artisanal trades could not read or write. Thus in the late nineteenth century the coopers' federation faced the problem that most union members were incapable of carrying out administrative duties.
"recommending that all the bricklayers deign to recognise the labourers as their colleagues because, unfortunately, there are many who (...) consider their colleagues in exploitation to be slaves."\(^{12}\)

By the turn of the century, however, this exclusiveness was breaking down, and from various quarters moves were being made towards greater working class unity. At the root of these moves was the need, as industrial conflict intensified from 1899, for closer co-operation to combat capital. The artisanal workers pursued a number of basic demands. As was seen in chapter two the general level of wages in Catalonia was low. In addition, prices began to rise steadily from 1897. Workers responded with calls for wage increases. These calls were most vociferously made by workers in the more lowly paid artisanal occupations. Thus, for example, in the construction industry the bricklayers and their labourers, carpenters and painters, made an increase in wages one of their principal demands during these years.

Nevertheless, what is at first sight surprising is that most artisanal workers laid greater emphasis on the need to reduce working hours. There were a number of clear reasons behind this attitude. As was stressed in chapter two, many artisans felt they had been adversely affected by the advance of capitalist relations of production. Technological innovation, the employment of a growing number of poorly qualified apprentices, speed ups and moves to deskill the labour force not only made the position of the journeymen within the labour process more vulnerable in many trades, it also led to a growth in unemployment. Catalan workers could not fail to note the impact of these developments. In particular, the argument that the advance of machinery was leading to a growth in unemployment was very common during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century, and the main remedy proposed was almost invariably the reduction of working hours. To give a couple of examples, the shoemakers were faced with the growing use of machinery in the trade. In 1900 the shoemakers union La Igualtat reacted by making the following plea to the workforce:\(^{13}\)

> We have to reorganise for the forthcoming struggle, a struggle in which we will have to defend progress and ensure that the bourgeois class does not seize control of it and use it as an instrument of exploitation.

> The use of machinery advances at an enormous pace and soon the installation in and outside all the factories will be a fact.

> We must not allow thousands of our workers to be left poverty stricken.

\(^{12}\) SO, 16 November 1913.

\(^{13}\) LP, 1 June 1900, NE; It was not only the artisanal workers who put forward these arguments. Thus the central committee of one of the many Catalan textile federation founded before 1915, stated in 1905: "As a result of the alarming desequilibrium which has developed between demand and supply it had been impossible to reduce the working day, and this despite the rapid advance of technology." ET, 12 August 1905.
When the shoemakers came out on strike in 1903 one of their foremost demands was an 8 hour day. The Barcelona compositors' union, L’Arte d’Imprimir, developed a similar line of argument. From the beginning of the century the compositors’ position within the labour process had been threatened by the introduction of the linotype and monotype. The union maintained that the only way the resultant unemployment could be remedied was through an eight hour day. Furthermore, it argued that only when there was full employment in the industry could other demands be pursued. Thus it stated: “There also exists the probability, almost the certainty, that after finding work for those unemployed we could demand higher wages, put forward our claim over the employment of apprentices, abolish piece rates and carry out other reforms. All these measures are as urgent as they are necessary, but they are very difficult to carry out while there are colleagues on the streets.”

Some workers, no doubt, simply wished to prevent the introduction of new machinery. However, more thoughtful labour leaders argued that they were not opposed to technological innovation per se, because it should serve to ease the burden of work. They were opposed to the fact that under present conditions only the bourgeoisie benefited. This, for example, was the stance taken by the syndicalist printer Joaquin Bueso, who argued that, “mechanical progress, if we were prepared and studied its introduction, could serve to save our strength (…), but in the hands of the bourgeoisie it is a weapon used to exploit. In this case greater production does not lead to a reduction in our hours of work, but to the number of hands employed in the workshops”. It should be emphasised that this analysis of the impact of technical progress under capitalism was not limited to the workers of those trades most under threat. It was very common throughout the working class and trade union press. Moreover, no voices were raised in dissent. In this respect, therefore, it could be seen as labour’s alternative to bourgeois political economy with its stress on the inevitably beneficial effects of technological advance. It was also analyses of this kind which opened the door to the advocacy of collectivist or communist solutions to the problems which faced the artisans.

The journeymen, however, did not only try and bolster their position through the reduction of working hours. They also tried to prevent employers from undermining apprenticeship by “regulating” it. The regulations outlined by the artisans’ unions usually sought to limit apprenticeship to children over the age of 14 who could read and write. Most important, there were invariably provisions setting the ratio of apprentices to journeymen, the number of years an apprenticeship should last, and the rates of pay of apprentices. Apprenticeship regulations also sometimes included the proviso that apprentices should not be made to undertake unskilled tasks.


15. SQ, 19 February 1910. See also, for example, Boletín, March 1905, February 1906; La Cuna, 1 January 1905; ET, 7 April 1906; Joaquin Ferrer, Pérfíl, pp.189-190.
which served no training purpose. These, the unions maintained, should be left to labourers. Finally, in those industries in which piece rates were the norm artisans called for their abolition.

Demands for a reduction in working hours and other measures to bolster the the position of the journeyman on the shop floor were not lightly accepted by most employers. Indeed, it appears that between 1899 and 1903 only the cabinetmakers and stonemasons were able peacefully to obtain a reduction or working hours. In other trades strike action had to be taken. In the construction industry the attempts by bricklayers and bricklayers labourers not only to increase wage rates but also to reduce working hours from 9 to 8 a day resulted in a number of hard fought strikes. Thus, in October 1901 5000 bricklayers came out for an 8 hour day and to be paid on site at the end of the daily shift. In the following year increasingly close links were forged between the bricklayers and bricklayers labourers. As a result in 1903 a federation of Barcelona bricklayer and bricklayers labourers unions was formed in Barcelona with about 13,000 members. The federation was then able to launch a general strike in the trade for a 50 cents increase in wages. The carpenters soon followed suit. Already in 1898 a recently formed regional carpenters' federation had called for a minimum 4 peseta a day wage and an 8 hour day. Between February and March 1903 over 3000 Barcelona carpenters took strike action to enforce this demand. The Barcelona painters, on the other hand, did not have time to down tools. When in June 1900 the painters' union La Fraternal called for an 8 hour day, a minimum wage of 5 pesetas and the "regulation" of apprenticeship it was met by an employer lock-out. Construction workers has some success. All the trades within the industry were able to reduce working hours from 9 to 8 a day, and the wages of bricklayers, bricklayers labourers and painters were raised by 50 cents.

In the buoyant economic climate of these years other groups of artisanal workers were also able to press home their demands successfully. In the furniture trades the cabinetmakers were able to secure a 9 hour day and the abolition of piece rates in 1899, and only had to carry out a number of partial strikes in the following year to ensure the agreement's observance. In woodworking the coopers already worked an 8 hour day. Yet, in the industry's other trades a 10 hour day was the norm, and the workers set their sights on a one hour cut in working hours. This the powersawyers and lathe operators achieved after taking strike action in 1903. In the textile finishing trades a strike of the industry's 3,700 workers in 1903 also forced employers to reduce working hours from 10 to 9 a day.

However, not all the artisans' strikes met with success. The most spectacular failure was the 1903 shoemakers' strike. As was seen in Chapter Two, in shoemaking by the first decade of the century skilled workshop or factory based male workers formed a minority of the trade. Women were employed in factories to do the simpler task, and much work was put out to highly exploited homeworkers. In addition, the male workers also faced the threat of mechanisation. As a result all shoemakers were badly paid and forced to work long hours. In 1899 the factory based
shoemakers had been able to form a union, and by 1903 it had over 1000 affiliates. It was therefore felt that the time was ripe to present a series of demands which aimed to defend the skilled shoemakers position. These included an 8 hour day, the abolition of piece rates, and a minimum wage of 2.7 pesetas a day. When their employers rejected the demand, 10,500 workers came out on strike. Yet the strike was to end in defeat, largely because it was not seconded by the homeworkers. This strike defeat was to prove a watershed for the journeyman shoemakers. Their union was never to recover, and it undertook no other major strike before 1915. Consequently the shoemakers working conditions continued to deteriorate, and shoemaking was slowly transformed to a semi and unskilled mass production industry.

Stress has so far been placed on industrial conflict within the artisanal trades. However, it was not only artisans who came out on strike. On the waterfront, and amongst tramworkers and carters there was also a great deal of unrest. Industrial workers found it more difficult to unionise than skilled men. However, the case of the dockers, carters and tramworkers showed that when the Barcelona labour movement as a whole was relatively strong it was also possible for the unskilled to organise. In part this was due to the support these men received from the skilled workers. Perhaps the fact that they worked in the open air, and on the docks in teams, also made it more difficult for their employers to maintain close supervision, and thereby effectively pursue an anti-unionist policy. Whichever the case, these workers still found it very difficult effectively to press home their demands. This would give their strikes a certain desperate quality, which could lead them easily to burst into violence.

The first union of unskilled workers to launch a strike were the tramworkers in 1900. At that time Barcelona and the surrounding towns were served by a network of trams operated by several different companies. Horse-drawn trams were the norm, although electricity was being introduced on some lines. The tram workers, who had not until that date been able to unionise, were subject to poor pay, extremely long working hours, and strict - often arbitrary - labour discipline. In 1900 workers from one of the largest companies, La Anónima, formed a union. It then presented the company with a series of demands which included a 5 peseta daily wage and a 10 hour day. In order to force the company to accept its demands the union took strike action on 8 March, and won a series of concessions. The relatively favourable result of the strike resulted in workers from other companies joining the union.

Spurred on by this success the tramworkers union called a general strike in order to achieve a closed shop in the industry in April 1901. On this occasion, however, the companies offered far stiffer resistance. This led the strike to become increasingly violent. There were clashes between

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17. LP, 8 March, NE, 9 April, NE; 19 April, NE, 1900.
strikers and blacklegs, in which firearms were used. Youngsters and women also prevented the trams from restarting by stoning them as they came through working class areas. These last actions demonstrated the high level of working class solidarity which existed. This became clear in the following month when a number of Barcelona unions agreed to call a general strike in the city if the tramworkers demands were not met. The general strike was called on 25 May with the support of 25 unions, including the Barcelona bricklayers, foundrymen, carter and coal unloaders. On the morning of the 25th strikers, along with working class women and youngsters, used intimidation to try and stop work at the docks and in the centre of town. This led to violent clashes with the police, and as night fell martial law was declared in the province. There then followed the arrest of a large number of union militants. The general strike had had a considerable impact in Sant Martí, Sants and Hostafrancs. Nonetheless, work was back to normal on the following day. The failure of the general strike also led the tramworkers to return to work. They were all readmitted but their call for a closed shop was not accepted. 18

From this date the companies began to move against the tramworkers' union. The agreements reached in 1900 were increasingly ignored and union militants victimised. In response the tramworkers carried out a number of defensive strikes during 1903. They were to end in failure. From the Autumn of 1903 the economic climate deteriorated rapidly. Union organisation throughout Barcelona was in consequence weakened. This gave the tram companies the opportunity to launch a direct assault on the tramworkers. Thus, after a strike in September 1903 in one of the most important companies, La Compañía General, the workers were forced to abandon their union. A similar fate befell the workers of La Anónima in the following year. The management appointed a new director, Mariano de Foronda, in order to restore social control. Foronda's first move was to sack most of the tram drivers. A compulsory friendly society was then set up, and any worker caught trying to form an independent union was faced with instant dismissal. At the same time he began to cultivate a highly paternalist regime. For example, the workers were allowed to travel on the trams free of charge, and their children received free gifts at Christmas. 19

As in the case of some textile companies, therefore, the management of La Anónima tried to maintain their workforce union free through the use of a friendly society. Such a policy was indeed common amongst the employers of unskilled labour. On the docks between 1899 and 1903 the underlying cause of industrial strife was the coal unloaders opposition to a compulsory employer sponsored friendly society. Work on the docks required great physical effort, but was largely unskilled. Consequently, the waterfront acted as a magnet for immigrant labour in search

18. LP, 7 May 1901, NE.
of employment. The result was a chronic oversupply of hands. Thus, by 1910 about 1000 coal unloaders turned up for work each day, but only between 600 and 700 could find work. The dockers were employed on a daily basis, and hence though they earned over 7 pesetas a day when in work, many were only employed two or three days a week.\(^{20}\)

During 1900 the coal unloaders undertook four strikes which aimed to force the coal merchants to recognise their own independent union. The coal merchants reacted by taking on blacklegs. Given the unskilled nature of work at the docks, there were no lack of volunteers. The employers were, as a result, able to maintain the docks open during the strikes. This led to frequent clashes between the blacklegs and strikers. The last strike of the year held in October was a particularly violent affair, and ended in government repression. In these circumstances the employers were able to sack 550 strikers, and retain the 750 workers taken on during the dispute. The coal merchants did agree that membership of the friendly society would no longer be compulsory, but still gave preference to those workers who affiliated.\(^{21}\)

The dockers were, therefore, in no better a position at the end of the year than they had been at the beginning. Furthermore, it was clear that they would have to strengthen their organisation before again attempting to challenge the authority of the coal merchants. The opportunity was provided by the unionisation of Barcelona's carters in 1900. At the end of 1901 the carters' union presented its employers with the demand for an increase in wages, and the establishment of collective bargaining arrangements. In order to enforce this demand it called a general strike in the trade at the beginning of 1902. The result of this strike was confused. The two employers' associations formally accepted a compromise solution. Some employers, however, refused to implement the compromise, and sacked a number of the strikers. The carters, therefore, also had good reason to want further to strengthen their union. The carters regularly worked on the waterfront, and maintained close contacts with dockers. This was the background to the decision taken in June 1903 to form a Local Transport Federation, which included both dockers and carters. At the outset it had nearly 4000 members. The coal unloaders now felt they could take on the coal merchants' friendly society. Thus they called a strike for 15 June. The carters and workers from other dockers unions came out in solidarity several days later. The strike was, however, to end in total disaster. The coal unloaders were forced to return to work defeated on 17 July. As a result, 700 of the 1,200 strikers were sacked, and the coal unloaders' union was completely destroyed. The authority of the coal merchants was not again to be challenged until 1910.\(^{22}\)

\(^{20}\) ES, 25 November 1900; LP, 15 December 1910, ME.

\(^{21}\) LP, 17 March, NE, 27 March, ME, 1 April, NE; 26 October, ME, 29 October, NE.

\(^{22}\) LP, 3 January 1902, NE.; Miguel Sastre, Las Huelgas...1903, pp. 28-29.
In Barcelona, then, class conflict became increasingly bitter in a number of branches of industry between 1899 and 1903. Yet, the greatest disputes of these years were to be fought out in the metallurgical industry. In metallurgy, as in construction, the working day was still 10 hours in 1898, and like their colleagues in the construction industry the metalworkers gave top priority to reducing working hours. However, they were faced with the determined resistance of the metallurgical bourgeoisie. As was seen in Chapter Two, the Catalan industry was faced with heavy foreign competition in the home market. This led Catalan industrialists to argue that any reduction in working hours would increase costs so much that they would be totally unable to compete with foreign suppliers. They were, indeed, to show themselves willing to go to any length to ensure the 10 hour day were maintained.

The first group of metalworkers to call for a reduction in working hours were the iron foundrymen. In 1899 they asked their employers for an 8 hour day to remedy the heavy unemployment in the trade, the result so they claimed of the employment of large numbers of children. They came out on strike in August of that year, and were in fact very successful. Thus, they achieved a 9 hour day, limitation of apprenticeship to boys over 14 years of age, and the setting up of a commission to settle any future disputes. However, social relations in the industry remained tense. At the beginning of 1900 foundrymen from outside Barcelona began to press for a 9 hour day, and in Barcelona there were a number of disputes over the application of the 1899 agreement.

In these circumstances the foundry owners decided to roll back the rising tide of trade unionism in the industry. They had already founded an Association of Catalan Foundry Owners, and in a meeting held in April the Association decided that no striker be employed in any other Catalan foundry, that all those employers affiliated would be obliged to carry out any work needed for those foundries subject to strike action, and that any worker who wished to change foundries would need a good conduct letter - the so-called Llibreta - before being admitted to a new establishment. The foundry owners intended to make strike action far less effective, and through the llibretas to impose greater social control. It was, indeed, to secure the abolition of the Llibreta that those Barcelona foundrymen whose establishments belonged to the employers' association again came out on strike in June 1900. Once again they were victorious. Internal divisions soon began to appear within the employers' association and, as a result, the Barcelona foundry owners

23. AMS, Treball 11.4, Conflictos Laborales 1899-1900.

24. LP, 18 April 1900, ME. In order to understand the first accord account needs to be taken of the high geographical mobility of artisanal workers. During disputes it was common practice for he men to move on to work in another town until a solution had been reached.

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were obliged to accept the outlawing of the *Llibretas*, and promised to respect the 1899 agreement.25

The success of the iron foundrymen prompted other groups of metalworkers to follow suit. Trade union organisation amongst the mechanics had also grown rapidly during 1899. By May 1900 the Barcelona mechanics' union had about 1300 members. This prompted it to issue a demand for an eight hour day, the abolition of piece rates in the industry, and for the installation of a closed shop. The employers refused to consider its proposals so the worker downed tools on 29 August. Yet despite the fact that the strike spread to Sabadell, Terrassa and Manresa it ended in defeat.26

It was as a result of this defeat that the Barcelona iron foundrymen and mechanics unions began negotiations aimed at creating a united front. These negotiations crystallised at the end of November in the formation of The Barcelona Metalworkers Federation.27 However, it was not only the metalworkers who looked to strengthen their organisation. The employers had also founded an association known as the Society of Barcelona Mechanical and Metallurgical Industrialists. Already in the Summer of 1900 it had organised a friendly society. This society was open to all those workers whose owners were members of the employers federation, who did not support, "inopportune or unfounded strikes or demands".28 This move was indicative of the policy the employers would in the future pursue. At the same time it also resolved to resist any attempt by the workers to reduce working hours. When, therefore, the Metalworkers' Federation called for a 9 hour day shortly after its formation the response of the employers' association was predictable.

There was no possibility of reaching a compromise. The Metalworkers' Federation, therefore, called a general strike for 16 November 1901. The workers' response was mostly favourable. Nevertheless, workers from the larger Barceloneta factories, and especially *La Maquinista*, were reluctant to come out. This was, indeed, a problem which had plagued metalworkers trade unionism since the 1870s. The large Barcelona concerns had since that date adopted an anti-trade unionist policy. The implementation of this policy was made easier by the fact that they had the resources at their disposal to root out union militants. As in the case of *La España Industrial*, they also tried to operate paternalist regimes. *La Maquinista*, for example, had its own friendly society, the so-called *Agrupación Humanitaria de los Obreros de los Talleres de la*

25. *La Protesta*, 25 May; LP, 6 June, ME, 2 July, ME.
26. LP, 29 August, ME, 25 September, ME.
27. LP, 6 November 1901, ME.
28. LP, 14 August 1900, ME.
The resentment of the metalworkers was, therefore, most clearly directed at the management of "that feudal fortress". It was most clearly expressed in September 1910 during another general metalworkers' strike, which had been called for exactly the same reasons. On this occasion the Barcelona union commented bitterly:

(...) where our strength, our enthusiasm, our energy, have to make themselves felt is in that monster, La Maquinista, which is the cause of all our misfortunes and a hindrance to our aspirations. Since the 1870s this enterprise has opposed all our demands. Already in those times it took longer than the other factories to reduce our working hours, and since then during all the struggles we have maintained it has put up the same tenacious resistance.

In May 1901 a large number of workers in La Maquinista had seconded the mechanics strike. The factory had responded by sacking those workers "who had been involved in coercions and the ringleaders of the disturbance". When the general strike was declared at the end of the year it then issued a warning stating that it would sack any worker who struck, and that if it was forced to close it would not reopen again for six months. This was enough to ensure that only a minority of the workforce downed tools at any one time.

A large number of workers from the smallest workshops also continued working. In this case, however, the reason was that their employers had agreed to accept the 9 hour day. The existence of close social relations between masters and men in these very small Barcelona workshops is a well documented phenomenon. The best data on their number and size refers to the 1910 general strike. On this occasion the strike affected 180 of Barcelona's 326 metallurgical establishments. Nevertheless, at its high point 9000 of Barcelona's 11,600 metalworker had seconded the strike, and some of those who had not were from the large Barceloneta plants. This data suggests that in the small workshops which continued production the ratio of employers to workers was lower than 1:15.

As was noted in Chapter Two many were found in the Old Quarter of Barcelona, and they represented what was left of the highly skilled artisanal tradition of Catalan manufacture. In 1910, the employers' Society maintained that they could afford to grant a 9 hour day because they were only involved in repair work, and consequently they did not have to face foreign competition. The masters in these workshops refused to form part of the employers association, and many of the workers did not wish to unionise. They therefore lived in a world apart from the social conflicts

30. ED, 25 September 1910, EE.
31. Alberto del Castillo, op cit, pp. 292-293; LP, 15 January 1902, NE.
32. LP, 14 September 1910, NE, 16 September, NE; ED, 15 September, ME.
which affected much of Catalan industry. This was brought out in 1910 by the fact that many of
the workers whose employers had accepted a 9 hour day refused to subsidise those still out on
strike. The existence of close contacts between masters and men in marginal workshops was not
in fact, limited to metallurgy. In both construction and the woodworking trades employers also
tended to give way to the men’s demands far more quickly in the smallest workshops. 33

In the metallurgical industry strikes tended to last longest in those medium sized enterprises
(medium sized for Barcelona that is) with between about 30 and 60 workers. The owners of these
plants proved every bit as intransigent as those who ran the large Barceloneta factories. However,
they found it more difficult to combat trade unionism. The Catalan employers, as was noted in
chapter two, had not in general been able to modernise their plants, and replace the artisans with
semiskilled workers. Instead they had tried to keep costs down by keeping working hours long,
reducing wages, and undermining apprenticeship restrictions. This was a perfect recipe for severe
industrial conflict. As the 1901 general strike proved, outside the Barceloneta plants the
journeymen metalworkers were still able to organise effectively. Their unions were not, however,
by themselves strong enough to defeat the employers’ federation.

The resulting impasse led the 1901 strike to become increasingly bitter. Thus, the president
of the iron foundrymen’s union was enthusiastically applauded in a meeting at the beginning of
November when he asked: 34

Where do all those immense ill gained fortunes come from? They have been robbed from
the proletariat who by the sweat on his brow produced them. The employers are not
ignorant of the misery which faces the workers, but as they are moved only by greed and
selfishness. What do they care if the workers die of hunger, what do they care if the
workers drop exhausted in the streets, what do they care if when the workers little ones ask
them for bread they can’t give it to them?

As the strike dragged on the level of violence also escalated. There were constant clashes
between pickets, blacklegs and the police, and as in the case of the docks strike the use of firearms
was common. The two most serious incidents occurred in February of the following year. In the
first incident a number of strikers burst into a factory in Gràcia to stop production and stabbed the
owner. Mounted civil guards then charged the strikers and four arrests were made. Six policemen
tried to take the captured men to prison. However, they were soon surrounded by an angry
crowd. The men escaped and four of the policemen were finally forced to take refuge in a house,
where shots were fired at them. These events illustrate the widespread support for the
metalworkers’ strike within the working class. Thus, the republican daily El Diluvio commented:

33. For the cases of the carpenters, power-sawyers and printers see, AESC, 1913, pp. 106-107, 112-
115; SO, 13 March 1913.

34. LP, 6 November 1901, ME.
which affected much of Catalan industry. This was brought out in 1910 by the fact that many of the workers whose employers had accepted a 9 hour day refused to subsidise those still out on strike. The existence of close contacts between masters and men in marginal workshops was not, in fact, limited to metallurgy. In both construction and the woodworking trades employers also tended to give way to the men's demands far more quickly in the smallest workshops.  

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34. LP, 6 November 1901, ME.
“News of these events spread rapidly throughout Barcelona. They were much commented on by all the various factions, and everybody agreed that they were very serious, and showed the restlessness which exists in important sections of the working class.”

The second incident occurred after workers from an employer sponsored association, *La Fraternal Obrera*, had held a meeting in a local Catalanist club known as “Catalunya i Avant”. Many of the men worked in *La Maquinista*. As a result, when they came out of the meeting they were attacked by a large group of striking metallurgists armed with guns and clubs.

As these clashes demonstrate, by this time the striking metallurgists were growing desperate. Elements within the workers' Metallurgical Federation had tried to reach a compromise solution. However, not only had the employers' association refused to negotiate, it had also encouraged the authorities to suppress the strike. Consequently, the more moderate voices were finally silenced, and a growing number of workers came to the conclusion that the strike could only be won if the entire Barcelona working class launched a general strike in solidarity. Some anarchist labour militants indeed seemed to be pressing of a “revolutionary general strike” which would result in the overthrow of capitalism.

Such indeed was the level of working class support for the metalworkers that on the morning of 17 February 1902 flying pickets had little difficulty in bringing the Catalan capital to a standstill. Furthermore, the solidarity strike quickly spread to all the surrounding industrial towns. It was to last for a week. The authorities were at first slow to respond. However, in the evening they declared martial law, and troops were then dispatched to all points of strategic importance, to the main squares and some side streets. There was no generalised uprising. Nevertheless, a number of barricades were constructed, and there were clashes between small groups of workers on the one side, and the Civil Guard and army on the other. The most reliable figures for casualties were probably those elaborated by the FTN, which gave the figure of 12 dead and 44 injured.

The general strike was to end in failure, and in consequence the metalworkers were left no choice but to return to work defeated shortly afterwards. The entire labour movement, in fact, paid a heavy price. As soon as the strike began the authorities began to close down union headquarters, and in all several hundred workers were arrested. This should not, however, detract from the

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35. ED, 16 February 1902, ME.;
36. LP, 17 February, ME.
37. LP, 18 January, NE.
major significance of the strike. As Joan Connelly Ullman has pointed out, for the first time in a major European city the working class had been able completely to halt production. This fact sent a wave of fear through bourgeois public opinion, and helped confirm the presence of labour as an active force in Catalan politics and society.

The events of the years 1901-1902 also illustrate the way in which, in a context of acute industrial conflict, artisanal workers looked for the support of other sectors of the working class. This was by no means a natural phenomenon. In Britain between the 1850s and 1870s, for example, craft workers and some factory operatives had built up solid labour federations which tended to isolate themselves from the unskilled. Professor H.A. Turner, indeed, had demonstrated how in England the elitist mule spinner unions actually obstructed the organisation of the industry's unskilled workforce. These workers had little need for outside help. They were in a secure position on the shop floor, and had developed collective bargaining procedures to negotiate conflicts with their employers. Moreover, even though industrial relations deteriorated in some sections of British industry from the 1880s there was considerable resistance on the part of skilled men to the broadening of their unions to embrace the growing class of semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

In Catalonia, however, state repression precluded the formation of any such federations. During the nineteenth century unions had been able to function openly only during brief periods, and between 1893 and 1897 there had been blanket repression. The situation improved after 1899, but unions were never totally free from state harassment. One aspect of this problem was that at a local level control of the police remained in the same hands, and Barcelona's police officers always found it difficult to distinguish between criminals and labour leaders. In addition, government policy towards labour was never clearly defined. In 1899 unions were able to operate virtually without interference. This was, however, to change in the Spring of 1900. In March of that year martial law was declared in Barcelona province after Catalanist supporters had booed the Minister of the Interior during a visit to the city. During the following months the number of strikes grew rapidly. In response the Government used the martial law decree to back up an increasingly anti-union policy. Union meetings were frequently suspended, a number of arrests were made, and in August the press was even prohibited from reporting strikes. The Government's attack on labour


was finally to culminate its overt support for the textile lock-outs at the end of the year.\textsuperscript{41} Government repression eased again when the Liberals came to power in 1901. However, the continuous shift back and forth from toleration to repression was a characteristic of the first decade and a half of the century.

Moreover, as has been seen, many unions faced determined employer resistance. As was noted in Chapter Two the economic difficulties experienced by much of Catalan industry, especially from the mid-1880s, made industrialists reluctant to negotiate with their workers. The combination of these factors explain why few Barcelona unions had developed any kind of solid bureaucratic structure. Most, as has been seen, were founded between 1899 and 1900. Despite the rapid growth of union membership during these years, therefore, they remained still very much in an embryonic state, and the loss of a strike or government closure of their headquarters could easily lead to their disappearance. In such circumstances, in those sectors of Barcelona industry in which industrial conflict was most severe, and in which skilled workers were under serious pressure from the development of capitalism, union leaders sought to overcome the parochialism of some of their members and link up with workers in other branches of their industry. It was such a need which quickly led the metalworkers to form an industry wide federation in 1901. The need for support from other sectors of the working class also led anarchist labour leaders to try and break down the cultural barriers between skilled and unskilled and form unified bodies. The best example during these years was the federation of Barcelona bricklayers and bricklayers labourers formed in 1903. For similar reasons, later in the decade a number of skilled workers unions which had in the past excluded women from their union decided for the first time to admit them. As in the case of cotton textiles, the male workers were threatened with substitution by the women, and reasoned that if they could organise them and bring their wages up to the level of the men the threat could be averted.\textsuperscript{42} Finally, in their desire to strengthen the entire Barcelona labour movement skilled workers also helped the unskilled of other professions to organise. The example of the Barcelona power-loom weavers has already been discussed in this respect, but other groups of worker such as the dockers and tramworkers never lacked support.

The Barcelona metalworkers were the clearest example of a group of workers who could not by themselves defeat their employers. They had been very quick to come out on strike in November 1901. This was also very typical of the Barcelona unions. During the 1890s the metalworkers had not been able to voice their demands. The rapid growth of the union during 1901 generated immense enthusiasm, and the workers felt they should present their demands

\begin{flushleft}\textsuperscript{41} ES, 30 November 1900; Chapter Three, pp. 89-91.\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}\textsuperscript{42} Women were allowed to form part of the tailors union for the first time in June 1908. The bookbinders also encouraged women to form part of their union from this time. Nevertheless, the need to prevent more women from being employed remained a top priority in both trades.\end{flushleft}
quickly before it waned. By the new year, however, it had become clear that the metalworkers only chance of victory was to turn their strike into a general movement of protest. They were able to do this because workers from other trades came to feel that the defeat of the metalworkers, coming on top of the destruction of the FTE the previous year, would represent a heavy blow to the whole Catalan labour movement. The anarchist weekly, *La Huelga General*, therefore probably gave a fair reflection of working class opinion when it stated: "It is necessary that the Catalan workers support a common act (in favour of the metalworkers), because disasters are very common, and we still haven't got even with the Ter Valley assassins."43 As Ramón Homades, president of the metalworkers’ federation, stated in a meeting called on 15 February to canvass support for the general strike: "Let no one think that we are defending the metalworkers here, because we are defending all the workers."44

Those workers who predicted that the defeat of the metalworkers strike would lead to the collapse of union organisation in that industry were not mistaken. On returning to work all the leading figures in the strike were sacked. Moreover, the Society of Mechanical and Metallurgical Industrialists took a number of urgent measures aimed at breaking the back of the metal unions. In the case of a strike, it was agreed, the employer would immediately give the committee the names and addresses of all those workers involved. During the strike the committee would then subsidise the industrialists affected so long as the number of strikers did not exceed 20 per cent of the industry's workforce. Finally, no industrialist affiliated to the Society would employ workers involved in the dispute until the strike was over.45

This anti-union policy became easier to operate from the Autumn of 1903 when, as a result of a poor Spanish harvest, a deep industrial recession hit Catalan industry. The economic conjuncture was to remain depressed until 1909. The level of unemployment, therefore, rose rapidly. Thus at the beginning of 1906 it was estimated that 35,000 of the city's 150,000 strong labour force was out of work.46 Already by the Spring of 1904 there were between 3 and 4000 textile workers unemployed. These workers asked for a public subscription to be opened on their behalf, and staged a number of "hunger marches" down the Ramblas, "perhaps without enough heart to carry out a more vigorous protest campaign than to parade their rags and squalid frames amongst the luxury of the street". The poor agricultural harvests of the years 1904-06 also led to the


44. ED, 17 February 1902, ME.

45. Miguel Sastre, *Las Huelgas...1905*, pp. 16-17.

flight of peasants from the land, and this led observers to talk of, “the city being overwhelmed by an invasion of delinquents”. 47

The combination of employer harassment and industrial recession led to a drastic decline in affiliates to the metalworkers' unions, with the result that the Barcelona Metalworkers Federation collapsed in 1905. It was not, however, only the metalworkers that were affected. Almost all the unions lost members. In Barcelona industrial workers -except for the carters - found it almost impossible to unionise. It was therefore left up to skilled workers to maintain a skeletal union presence in the city.

This situation was only to change with the revival of the Catalan economy in 1910. As in the years 1899-1903 the economic upturn sparked off a rapid growth in trade union activity. Trade unionism was between 1910 and 1914 to touch sectors of the working class which had in the past played only a minor role in the labour movement. Thus, the cotton textile and railway workers organised in numbers and successfully launched general strikes. 48 In other industries, however, the pattern of industrial conflict remained similar. Artisanal workers continued to oppose employer encroachments on their position at the workplace, leading to general strikes amongst power-sawyers, cabinetmakers, dyers and compositors. Metalworking, the waterfront and construction were also focal points of conflict during much of this period, and in each of these cases the escalation of social tensions again provoked the extension of union and employer organisation beyond the individual trades.

The cabinetmakers launched general strikes in 1911 and 1913 aimed at securing an 8 hour day, the “regulation” of apprenticeship and a wage increase. On both occasions they were defeated. In this latter year the power-sawyers came out for similar motives, and also met with the defeat. In 1912 the dyers met with failure after a particularly dramatic strike. There were about 2,400 dyers in Barcelona. As has been seen, dying was, like all the textile finishing trades, a skilled, male dominated, profession. Yet, the dyers were faced with the growing use of child labour. In 1870 an agreement had been signed limiting the number of apprentices to 10 per cent the total number of workers in the trade. This agreement had, however, long since been ignored by the employers. In 1912, therefore, the dyers union called for a return to the 10 per cent rule and for a 24 pesetas a week minimum wage for journeymen. In order to enforce their demand the dyers downed tools on 6 March. Their union spokesmen maintained that, “it is not a fight to increase wages or reduce working hours, it is a moral fight by men who want to work instead of

47. La Ilustración Obrera, 14,16 April 1904, 14 May 1904.
48. The railway workers were involved in an important strike in 1912. This group of workers did not, however, appear in the 1905 workers census, and none of the various sources used include wage data for railway workers. We have, therefore, decided not to include this group of workers in our study of strikes in Barcelona
their children”. At its high point about 1,700 dyers joined the strike. In mid April, however, they were forced to call it off, in part because they had received no support from the highly qualified silk dyers.49

The following year saw a strike of key importance for the future of Barcelona’s compositors. As was noted in chapter two, by this time the journeyman competitors faced a number of pressing problems. The Barcelona compositors union, L’Arte d’Imprimir, had been suspended after being involved in an attempted general strike in September 1911. In order to get round this suspension the compositors formed a new union, which they called La Unió Obrera de l’Arte d’Imprimir, in March 1912. By May 1913 the union had as many as 1,300 affiliates. This was without doubt the greatest number of members any compositors union in the city had ever had. The Unió Obrera was, therefore, in a strong position to improve its members' working conditions. Between June 1912 and May 1913 it elaborated a series of demands. These included an 8 hour day, aimed at reducing unemployment, and measures designed to “regulate” apprenticeship. The threat of typesetting machinery was also to be countered by limiting the new machines’ production, and ensuring that only qualified compositors could be employed on them. Thus when a linotype or monotype was introduced into a new shop only skilled operatives already employed there could be trained on it, they would earn high wages, work 7 hours a day, and the machines would not be able to type more than a certain number of lines per day. To counter the rising cost of foodstuffs, the union called for a minimum 30 peseta a day wage, and finally it asked for piece rates to be abolished.

These demands were presented to the employers' federation, the Associació Patronal de Impresors de Barcelona, on 27 March 1913. The major newspapers did accept the union’s demands. This was an important victory for the workers, as it was the newspaper publishers who were introducing mechanised typesetting most rapidly. However, few print shops followed suit. The employers' federation replied that it could enter negotiations on all the demands except of the 8 hour day, because a reduction in working hours would result in their not be able to compete with producers from abroad and from other Spanish city’s. More moderate union leaders argued that a compromise solution could be reached, and that the demand for an 8 hour day should be dropped. They were, nevertheless, outvoted, and the strike began on 27 March 1913.50

Moderates formed a majority in the unions' strike committee, and they were able to negotiate a series of concessions on the question of wages, apprenticeship restrictions, piece rates, and the use of typesetting machinery. Their efforts, however, were in vain, for the majority of the

49. LP, 12 April 1912.; AESC 1912, pp. 122-125.

50. Boletín de la Unión Obrera del Arte de Imprimir, 30 June, 31 March, 30 June-30 September 1913; LP, 28 April 1913; AESC 1913, pp. 103-104.
union's rank and file refused to drop any of the original demands. As it was they got very little. From the outset the strike had been enthusiastically supported by between 700 and 800 compositors, but a large number of print shops were able to keep working. In addition the compositors received little support from workers in the industry's other trades. The compositors had in fact tried on more than one occasion to organise a federation of all the industry's workers, but had met with little success. The main problem appears to have been the limited enthusiasm of the lithographers and photoengravers. These workers, unlike the compositors, were under no threat from the employers, and therefore felt they had little need for inter-trade co-operation. In these adverse conditions the strike started to break up after about three weeks, and the compositors finally decided to return to work empty handed on 18 June. Some compositors as a result lost their jobs. On the other hand, a large number of print houses did act to calm tensions by increasing wages to 5 pesetas a day and abolishing piece rates.\textsuperscript{51}

The path taken by the compositors union during 1913 gives an important insight into the dynamics of social conflict in Barcelona. The union's moderates were later to claim that on seeing that the union had grown rapidly over the previous year its affiliates, "thought that they should take advantage of the opportunity to launch the struggle in order to prevent the union from breaking up, when what would have been more logical, what would have been in the interests of everyone, would have been clear proof that it was not a selfish or momentary enthusiasm that had drawn the membership".\textsuperscript{52} As we have seen, this pattern of labour organisation, by which the rapid growth in affiliation to a previous weak or non-existent union was quickly followed by a general strike in the trade or industry, was very common. Its root causes were poor industrial relations, and the instability of the trades unions concerned. Once the strike had started, the moderates maintained, in the union meetings it was those workers who were in favour of all or nothing that were the most vociferous and who won the day. The majority of workers, the moderates continued, wanted a compromise solution, but only said so outside the meetings.\textsuperscript{53} These comments are clearly biased, but they do convey something of the flavour of trade unionism in the city. Decisions regarding industrial action were usually taken on a show of hands after mass meetings. In the highly charged atmosphere of these meetings it was easy for militants to win the day, and the lack of any union bureaucracy meant that there were no full time officials to hold the rank and file in check.

In metallurgy strikes followed a similar pattern to those of the years 1899-1902. From 1910, nevertheless, the metal unions were to be somewhat more successful. Economic growth in the metallurgical industry was particularly rapid, and union organisers were able to take advantage

\textsuperscript{51} LP, 7 May 1913; SO, 18 September 1913; Boletín, June-September 1913; AESC, 1913, op cit.

\textsuperscript{52} Boletín, June-September 1913

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
of the new conjuncture to break the stranglehold of the Society of Mechanical and Metallurgical Industrialists over the industry’s workforce. A so-called Metallurgical Union had been founded in 1905, but in 1909 it had only 300 members. In 1910, however, it launched a recruitment drive, and by August its membership had risen to 2,200. As has been noted the metalworkers quickly became involved in a dispute, which in many respects appeared to be a rerun of the 1901-1902 strike. As soon as it became clear the Metallurgical Union was growing in strength a number of employers took measures to halt the recruitment of workers in their factories. The union saw these measures as a provocation on the part of the employers’ federation. In response it adopted an increasingly radical discourse, and threatened to call a general strike in the industry. The final straw was the sacking of three shop stewards by the country’s largest car manufacturer, La Hispano Suiza, on 3 September. The union reacted on 10 September by presenting its employers with a series of demands, which included a 9 hour day, union recognition, and that all disputes in progress should be resolved on terms favourable to the workers concerned. The Society’s refusal to consider these demands led the union to declare a general strike in the industry two days later.

As in 1901 the strikers had great difficulty in convincing the workers of the larger Barceloneta plants that they should down tools. Thus, it was only after 1,500 strikers had marched down to the Barceloneta on 13 September that they seconded the strike. Alberto del Castillo comments: “The news that even the workers of La Maquinista had joined the strike caused real concern.” However, this support was not to last. The Barceloneta was swamped with police in the following week, with the result that a high proportion of the district’s strikers went back to work. La Maquinista, therefore, soon returned full production.

As in 1901 the employers federation remained totally intransigent. Again it concentrated on encouraging the authorities to take action against the union. In order to justify such action, indeed, it came up with the remarkable theory that: “Up until now, except in the odd uncertain case, there has been no difference of opinion between the workers and bosses (...) What we have is a forcible stoppage, provoked by a commission with no relation to the workshops and factories, a kind of clandestine power which uses coercion to impose itself.” And concluded: “It is not so much a labour conflict as a problem of public order.” The metalworkers, therefore, once again faced an uphill struggle. From October there was a slow drift back to work and by the end of November the 5 to 6000 workers still on strike were in a desperate situation. As a result violence again flared.

54. La Internacional, 5 February 1909.
55. SO, 29 July, 19 August; LP, 11 August, NE, 14 September, NE; ED, 1 August, EE, 2 September, ME.
56. Alberto del Castillo, op cit, p. 332; ED, 19 September, EE.
57. Miguel Sastre, Las Huelgas...1910-1914, p. 41.
with the most violent attacks reserved for the management of La Maquinista. Thus in one incident an overseer at the plant was assassinated, and in another the director was wounded in a knife attack.58

There were, as in 1902, calls for the strike to be extended to the rest of the working class. On this occasion, however, they were resisted, perhaps because the consequences of the 1902 general strike was still vivid in peoples minds. The final blow was the Government's decision to prosecute the union's central committee and strike committees, supposedly because of inflammatory remarks made in a meeting in September. In such circumstances the union was left with no alternative but to call off the strike on 12 December. There then followed the by then routine sacking on the ring leaders, with over 1000 workers loosing their jobs.59

As in 1902, then, the workers had been totally defeated. In the following years, however, the employers' federation was not able to reassert control over the labour force. The main reason was that, unlike the years 1904-1909, between 1911 and 1914 the industry remained buoyant.60

With labour in short supply the metalworkers unions were able to recover relatively quickly from the 1910 defeat. Thus a new metalworkers federation functioned by the beginning of 1913, and during the year workers in a number of metal trades once again struck for a 9 hour day. The largest strike of the year, that of the iron foundrymen, ended in defeat. However, despite the fact that the employers society boycotted any industrialists who conceded a reduction in working hours, the tinsmiths, locksmiths and bronze foundry workers all consolidated a 9 hour day. These trades only accounted for a small percentage of the industry's workforce. But, for the first time, the employers united front began to crumble.61

At the same time industrial strife spread outside Barcelona. The need for mutual support led to a strengthening of ties between the metalworkers unions of Barcelona, Manresa, Sabadell and Terrassa.62 The employers also looked to extend their organisation. Since 1912 the Barcelona employers' federation and the metallurgical section of the FTN had been planning to hold a national congress of iron and steel industrialists. The congress was held on 13 April 1913. Most of it was taken up with discussions on tariff policy and the economic problems which faced the industry.

58. Miguel Sastre, op cit, pp. 47-48.; ED, 10 November, ME.
59. LP, 9 November, ME; SO, 25 November; ED, 12 December, EE, 14 December, ME.
60. Thus the Barcelona metalworkers could state at the beginning of 1914: "In the recent past, particularly in Catalonia, the metal industries have grown at a rapid pace. So much is this the case that in some of them more workers could be taken on than are at present employed. This has not been the case for a large number of years." SO, 14 February 1914.
61. LP, 16 February, 5 March, 17 March, 21 July 1914; AESB, pp. 46-47.
62. SO, 13 November 1913.
Nevertheless, the congress's organisers specifically referred to the need for unity in order to combat union demands, and according to *La Publicidad* one of the congress's resolutions stressed the need to support and foment the creation of Christian trades unions, which were "the only guarantee of social order".63

The congress delegates took the decision to form a National Association of Metallurgists. In response to this decision the Catalan metalworkers then decided to form their own regional federation. The initiative was taken by the Sabadell metalworkers union, and its reasoning was quite clear:64

The Spanish metallurgical bourgeoisie, which is already regionally organised in Catalonia, has recently held a congress in Barcelona and formed a national federation. All the struggles undertaken by our colleagues in the various towns are flattened by the bourgeoisie's strong organisation. It uses the argument that this or that demand has not been accepted in Barcelona, and then when there is a strike in the capital employers from other towns come to the aid of those from Barcelona. The workers should, therefore, form a regional federation for now, and form a national organisation as soon as possible.

The federation was formed at the beginning of 1914, and by April it had 1,500 members. These Catalan unions were also the main supporters of a new national metalworkers federation formed in Alicante in July.65

Between 1910 and 1914 in metallurgy, then, the industrialists' grip over the labour force was broken. During these years the dockers and transport workers were also to call into question their employers' right to outlaw independent unions. The tramworkers had little success. In 1910 Barcelona's two largest tram companies, *La Anónima* and *La Compañía General*, merged. Mariano de Foronda then took over management of the new company, and continued to operate his anti-union policy with success. The tram workers were briefly to form a new union in 1914. However, the decision was precipitately taken to call a general strike in the trade, resulting in the union's collapse.66

The dockers were to reorganise far more quickly. Thus in 1910 they were once again to challenge the coal merchants' right to force all their workers to belong to their friendly society. The

63. Primer Congreso Nacional de Industrias Metalúrgicas, Exposición del Cuestionario (Barcelona, 1913), pp. 27-28.; LP, 13 April 1913. This conclusion was not, however, reproduced in the industrialists own exposition of the agreements reached. See, Primer Congreso Nacional de Industrias Metallurgicas Celebrado el 13 de Abril de 1913 (Barcelona, 1913).

64. SO, 13 November 1913.

65. Federación Regional Catalana de Obreros Metalúrgicos, Memoria del Congreso Metalúrgico Celebrado en el Palacio de Bellas Artes los Días 12 y 13 de Abril de 1913 (Barcelona, 1914). SO, 4 July, 11 July 1914.

carters had already been involved in a general strike in March. Two months later, for the first time since 1903, the coal unloaders were able to form an independent union, which by the end of July had 1,305 affiliates. The coal unloaders were still faced with the problem of a chronic oversupply of labour on the docks. Indeed, the problem had worsened during the first decade of the century. As has been seen, the Barcelona docks were modernised during this time. Larger wharfs now allowed ships to dock sideways, and greater use was made of unloading equipment. Consequently, demand for labour was reduced. It was in order to counter this problem that the new union called for an eight hour day and for unloading equipment only to be used when at least six ships were at anchor. The employers refusal to consider such demands quickly resulted in strike action. On this occasion, however, a compromise solution was reached. The coal merchants agreed to recognise the dockers' union, and to negotiate a new contract with the workers.67

No agreement was, however, reached over the question of unloading equipment. Over the next few months, therefore, both sides manoeuvred in order to be in the best position if a new conflict did erupt. In September the dockers and carters formed another federation of waterfront unions, which by December had about 7000 members. As in 1903, therefore, the coal unloaders felt they were strong enough to take matters into their own hands, and as in that year they were to be mistaken. On 9 December the union gave the order that ships which were not moored "correctly", and ships unloaded with the use of equipment, should be boycotted. There then followed a rapid escalation of hostilities, which soon culminated in another coal unloaders strike. Despite a solidarity strike by the carters and other dockers unions the coal unloaded was once more defeated. The achilles heel of union organisation at the docks again proved to be the ease with which the employers could recruit blackleg labour. Thus, when the strike was finally called off on 19 January most of the strikers were unable to find work. Union organisation at the docks was, therefore, shattered. Moreover, the carter also found when they wished to return to work that many of their places had been taken by blacklegs. As a result they stayed out on strike another month, but were finally also forced to admit defeat. Their union was almost totally destroyed, and the carter employers' federations then followed the lead of the coal merchants and founded their own friendly society.68

The coal unloaders and carters' strikes of the years 1910-1911 had again made plain the great difficulties faced by the unskilled when they tried to unionise, and this despite the fact that they had formed a dockers and transport workers federation. In construction, workers also

67. ED, 21 July, EE.

respond to a build up of social tension by extending their organisation. The skilled construction
workers, however, pressed their demands with considerably more effect. Already in 1910 the
Barcelona painters had formed a local federation. The Catalan bricklayers also set up a new
regional federation in this year. In 1913 this federation split, and the more dynamic Confederation
of Catalan Bricklayers and Bricklayers Labourers was founded. As the title suggests it aimed to
break down the barriers between the various trades in the industry, and its long term aim was to
organise a Spanish construction workers federation.69

It was, however, a general painters strike at the end of 1913 which provided the greatest
impetus to unity amongst the Barcelona construction workers. In the Spring of 1913 the Barcelona
painters federation presented the Unió i Montepió de Mestres Pintors de Barcelona with a demand
for the “regulation” of apprenticeship, the abolition of piece rates, a minimum wage and a closed
shop. No agreement was finally reached, the main sticking point being the unions' refusal to drop
the demand for a closed shop. Consequently, over 1000 painters downed tools at the beginning of
November. Despite the fact that the unions' demands were accepted in a large number of small
workshops, about 650 workers had to return to work defeated in the following month.

The strike was, however, of far greater importance than these statistics would suggest, for
the master painters had sought and obtained the support of the employers organisations in the rest
of the industry. Accordingly, many construction workers came to the conclusion that they would
have to establish closer links in order to defeat their bosses. The painters, therefore, received
strong support during the strike, and a general strike of the whole industry was, in fact, only
narrowly avoided. More importantly, the strike stimulated the formation of a federation of
Barcelona construction workers. This federation, officially founded on the last day of the year,
was the first in the history of the Barcelona labour movement which encompassed workers from
almost all of the city's construction trades.70

The unity of the construction workers was further strengthened in the following year.
Carpenters, as has been seen, were a group of workers astride both the woodworking and
construction industries. They had been the leading force behind attempts to articulate industry
wide federations in woodworking. Thus, the regional carpenters federation they had set up in
1898 still functioned. In 1903 the decision had been taken to admit all woodworkers, though it
still remained dominated by the carpenters. More important, in 1911 they were behind the

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69. LP, 20 June 1910, ME, 17 August, ME, 14 October, ME; SO, 26 February, 26 March, 12 August
1910, 10 July, 16 October 1913.

70. SO, 4 December 1913; LJS, 6 December 1913; LP, 31 December 1913; AECB, 1913, pp. 114-122;
Miguel Sastre, Las Huelgas...1910-1914, pp. 248-253.
foundation of a federation of Barcelona woodworkers. As in the case of construction, this was the first time most Barcelona woodworkers unions had formed part of the same federation. 71

Two years later the Barcelona carpenters' unions were once again set on a collision course with their employers. In the Spring of 1913 they presented their employers with demands for a minimum 5 peseta wage, the "regulation" of apprenticeship, the abolition of piece rates and the closed shop. After their demands had been rejected over 3000 carpenters downed tools at the beginning of May. The strike was called off at the beginning of June after the employers accepted the formation of a mixed commission to study possible improvements in working conditions. The commission, however, made little progress, for the master carpenters would only agree to an increase in wages, and would not even discuss the question of a closed shop.

In order to bring matters to a head, therefore, in December the Sant Andreu de Provençals union again put forward the carpenters original demands, and declared a boycott of all those employers who refused to capitulate. The Barcelona employers responded by declaring a lock-out throughout the city, and the carpenters unions then brought their members out on strike. The conflict was further escalated by the decision of the the master carpenters to call for the help of the federation of construction industry employers, which had been set up shortly after the 1913 painters strike. The federation responded positively. Its members agreed that all the carpentry workshops should reopen on the 10 February 1914, and that if the carpenters did not return to work under the old conditions they would declare a lock-out throughout the construction industry from the 21st. The Barcelona construction workers' federation argued that this decision represented a clear attempt on the part of the employers to destroy their organisation. It was also the second time in two months that the construction industry was on the brink of a generalised conflict. On this occasion it was averted by the civil governor, who convinced the employers federation it should call off the lock-out, and managed to set up an arbitration committee. The employers organisation continued to try and hold out against the workers demands but many individual masters began to give way, so it finally agreed to accept a 50 cents wage increase. 72

During the years 1899-1903 and 1910-1914, then, there was severe industrial conflict in much of Barcelona industry. The dockers, tramworkers, carters and cotton textile workers were all involved in important strikes. Yet many disputes affected skilled workers who laboured in relatively small workshops. This fact surprised bourgeois observers. Thus, during the 1910 Barcelona metalworker and Sabadell woollen worker strikes, El Trabajo Nacional stated that the

71. ET, 12 September 1903; La Cuña, 1 April 1911.

72. SO, 13 May, 19 June 1913; 5, 12, 19, 26 February 1914; AESC, 1913, pp. 109-111.; Miguel Sastre, Las Huelgas... 1910-1914, pp. 275-283.

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“period of disorders and worker agitation without precedent” the Province of Barcelona was experiencing was difficult to explain because.\textsuperscript{73}

The owners of factories and workshops are found alongside their workers not only in the factories - where the employer and workers mix daily - but also in the cafe, the theatre and other centres of entertainment, and in the towns during the \textit{fiesta mayor} and on hunting trips.

Here those social cleavages which separate the workers and industrialists in the great industrial centres are unknown. Our factories are only just evolving out of domestic workshops. Our employers are in the main workers of yesteryear, and in no part of the world has the intelligent worker got the same possibilities of becoming a small-scale employer.

These observations have been supported by some historians.\textsuperscript{74} They were certainly not totally without foundation. It is true that in many artisanal crafts there was a significant degree of social mobility and, as was emphasised in Chapter Two, geographical class boundaries in Barcelona were not rigidly defined. Most evidence also points to the existence of a significant degree of social intercourse between skilled workers and their masters. Such contacts were particularly common in workshops which employed a dozen or so workers, many of which were to be found in the Old Quarter of town and Gràcia. Strikes in this branch of Barcelona industry, it will be remembered, were not common, and those disputes which did arise were usually settled with ease.

However, the picture painted by \textit{El Trabajo Nacional} was overdrawn. Many of the workshops in Barcelona, though small by international standards, were not minuscule. This was the case in metallurgy, where most workers laboured in establishments which employed between about 30 and 60 men. In such an environment social advancement became far more difficult; a fact which prompted “a metalworker” to respond to the article written by \textit{El Trabajo Nacional}:\textsuperscript{75}

It is true that during their free time, in cafés, the theatre, and other places where they can relax, the Barcelona workers more or less mix with their employers. But class distinctions are always apparent.

It seems impossible the writer should state that the class divide between workers and employers is unknown here.(...)

I do not agree that the worker has a greater chance of becoming a small-scale industrialist here than in any other country. For my part I can say that on many occasions I have been rebuffed when asking for help to set up my own business. May others are in the same position as me.

\textsuperscript{73} ETN, 16 September 1910.

\textsuperscript{74} See especially, Enric Ucelay Da Cal, op cit, pp. 52-54.

\textsuperscript{75} SO, 14 October 1910.
Furthermore, social mobility was by itself no guarantee of class harmony. Thus, in the
labour press of the period there were many reports of ex-workers who were now, unfortunately,
the most tyrannical of employers. As has been suggested, the threat posed to many skilled
workers by the development of capitalism ensured that in all but the smallest workshops labour
relations were often poor. Class divisions in Barcelona were not, therefore, primarily the result of
a growth of large scale industry. They were to a large extent the consequence of a growing social
divide within the artisanal trades.

Strikes in Barcelona were often very dramatic. This was in part the result of employer
intransigence. Thus, especially in industries involved in unskilled work and in metallurgy,
employer organisations often ran friendly societies with the aim of countering union influence. In
addition, in a large number of artisanal trades employers put up a staunch resistance to the workers
demands. This fact is illustrated by data elaborated by Miguel Sastre, which shows that 7,937
workers were sacked for going on strike between 1903 and 1914. This was by any standards a
very high figure. Table 4.4. divides the number of workers sacked by industry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>No of Workers Sacked</th>
<th>Sacked Workers as per cent of Labour Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marine Transport</td>
<td>1775</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metallurgy</td>
<td>1440</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas and Electricity</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile Finishing</td>
<td>1072</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture Trades</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Transport</td>
<td>1369</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather Trades</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass and Ceramics</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Industries</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodworking</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach, Cart and</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boat Makers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Miguel Sastre, *Las Huelgas en Barcelona y sus Resultados, 1903-1914*; AECB, “Censo Obrero
de 1905”.

A large number of the unskilled workers, and in particular dockers and carters, were
sacked. This is not surprising as it was the unskilled that were most easily replaced by
blacklegs.76 However, the metallurgical bourgeoisie also took every opportunity available to sack

76. This explains why the gas and electricity workers appear so high in the table. In 1903 the city's 550
gas workers came out on strike. Of these 350 were sacked, and a friendly society was then set up by the
employers. Miguel Sastre, *Las Huelgas...1903*, pp. 52-55
labour militants. In the other artisanal trades the men were in a stronger position to prevent sackings. Nevertheless, in the most conflictive artisanal trades employers still took advantage of strike defeats to attack the labour unions. Thus, large numbers of workers in the textile finishing and leather trades, shoemaking and bricklaying lost their jobs.

In those industries in which blacklegs were commonly used and in which unions were in a weak position there was also a high degree of strike violence. Thus, between 1910 and 1914 25 employers and 344 workers were assaulted during disputes. Of these attacks 134 involved metalworkers, 66 involved carters and 22 involved dockers. Amongst the other artisanal trades it was only during a strike called by the carpenters, in which 26 assaults were reported, and strikes affecting the locksmiths (a trade closely related to metallurgy) and textile finishing, with 25 assaults apiece, that these figures were approached.77

It was the artisans who found it easiest to organise and who, therefore, formed the backbone of the labour movement. In trades in which there was a high level of industrial conflictivity the unions looked to the rest of the working class for support. This explains why it was the likes of the metalworkers, bricklayers, carpenters and carters who were at the forefront of attempts to form inter-trade and industrial labour federations. Indeed, given the problems workers generally faced in forming strong stable unions and in pressing home their demands effectively, strikers on a number of occasions looked to the rest of the working class to carry out solidarity strikes in support. The need for support also explains why skilled workers often took such an interest in organising the unskilled and, on occasions, even female workers. It was this quest for mutual aid that led to the development of an awareness of common interests between workers in different trades, or put another way, to the appearance of class consciousness.

This sense of solidarity between the various trades was facilitated by the fact that the real wages of both the skilled and unskilled were low, and that most workers had little cover to protect them in case of sickness and during all age.78 Several factors, however, militated against the coalescence of a working class culture. As has been suggested, skilled workers still maintained frequent contacts with their employers, and their overriding goal could still be to set up as a small master. As shall be seen, the desires of this section of the working class found its expression in the movement of the Ateneus Obrers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Within the working class itself the fragmentation of the trade unions acted as an obstacle to co-operation. So did the cultural divisions between skilled and unskilled. In effect, artisanal workers continued to view their unskilled colleagues with a certain disdain. This, as was suggested in Chapter Two, was particularly so in the case of highly skilled workers such as glassblowers and coopers, who

77. Miguel Sastre, Las Huelgas...1910-1914, p. 87, 129, 193, 269, 331, 338.

78. Chapter Two, pp. 74-75.
were relatively well paid and faced no threat to their position within the labour process. Indeed, the unions such workers formed felt little need to ally with other unions of the skilled, and therefore generally remained aloof from attempts to co-ordinate action. Thus, for example, the Barcelona compositors found it impossible to get the lithographers and photoengravers to form a local printers federation. The coopers did not join the woodworkers federation founded in 1911, and when the bricklayers set up a construction workers federation in 1913 they faced the opposition of the plasterers, stonecutters and brickmakers. Craft exclusiveness in fact took a long time to die away, as the Catalan anarchists found to their cost in 1918 when they decided to do away with craft unions and set up industrial federations (Sindicats Unics) in each Catalan town or city.

Yet by the first decade of the century in Barcelona most workers clearly felt they belonged to a particular class. Thus, even the coopers, though they would never come out on strike in solidarity, gave the workers of other trades strong monetary support during strikes. This working class culture rested on an emphasis on solidarity rather than self advancement, and at an ideological level on a critique of the consequences of technological progress under capitalism. The specificity of this culture can be demonstrated by comparing the outlook of the workers with that of the shop assistants and clerks, two groups of employees sandwiched between the working and middle classes.

There were about 35,000 clerks and 30,000 shop assistants in Barcelona. The wages of most of these employees were no higher than that of the average skilled worker. Most clerks, however, refused to unionise, or develop any links with other labour unions. The Socialist militant, Arturo Gas Berenguer, was clear as to the reasons:

They form part of the exploited classes, but do they see themselves as such? No If you talk to them you will see that they do not consider themselves to be workers and, indeed, they are indignant if you refer to them as such. Instead of thinking about the emancipation of the class, they only think about their own personal emancipation. That is to say that though they hate their bosses their only goal is to climb up the ladder of promotion and become one themselves.

80. Manuel Lladonosa, El Congrés de Sants (Barcelona, 1975), pp.80-111.
81. During the 1910 metalworkers strike only two unions gave more than 1000 pesetas. These were the carters and the compositors. The coopers unions followed in third place by donating 540 pesetas. LP, September-November 1910.
83. SO, 9 October 1907.
Some shop assistants adopted a more combative stance. Thus in 1898 a group of these workers formed a union known as the Associació de Dependència Mercantil (ADM). The union developed close links with the rest of the labour movement, and its leaders argued that the shop assistants formed a part of the working class. However, the union never attracted the support of more than a fraction of the city's shop workers. In 1900 it reached a maximum of over 800 affiliates, but by 1909 this figure had dropped to little more than 300.84 In 1903 a more moderate organisation known as the Centre Autonomista de Dependents del Commerç i de la Indústria (CADCI) was founded. It kept on good terms with the shop owners and was in fact, until about 1913, more of a cultural association than a trade union. The CADCI was far more successful than the ADM with over 2000 members by 1912. The reason was given by one of the ADM's leaders in 1907 when he stated that, "we are not ignorant of the fact that there are shop assistants who are contemptuous of being called workers. Even worse, that they treat their brothers the manual workers with a certain disdain". In fact, such views were held by a majority of shop assistants, and they were only to begin to change between 1914 and 1918, when as a result of a process of capital concentration social advancement in commerce became increasingly difficult.85

The feeling of contempt between workers and shop assistants was mutual. Moreover, in an age in which "the form of dress reflected social class"86 it was reinforced by the shop workers attire. Thus, M. Sans Orenga, a young shop worker before World War One, states:87

What really annoyed the workers about the shop assistants and clerks was their collar and tie; the way they imitated the bourgeoisie; and the fact that they laboured apart from other workers. To show their contempt they called the shop assistants "table jumpers" (saltataullels) and the clerks "pen-pushers" (pixatinters). These phobias even affected union organisation. During years workers in commerce were considered to lack trade union spirit and to have copied their ideas from the bourgeoisie, whose policies they supported.

Indeed, though the workers dress varied somewhat from trade to trade it served clearly to differentiate them from other social classes.88 This fact disquieted middle class publicists such as

84. LP, 3 September 1900, ME; Xavier Cuadrat, op cit, p. 325.
86. Claudi Ametlla, Memòries Politiques, 1890-1917 (Barcelona, 1963), p. 108.
88. M. Sans Orenga states: "A worker's dress depended in his work. Lads employed in warehouses wore striped overalls. Mechanics and metalworkers wore a blue cotton jacket. Construction workers were clad in a light blue shirt and neckerchief. A large number of corduroy overalls were also worn, chiefly by dockers and carters. The men always put on rope sandals and some type of cap. When they grew up they sported..."
Guillermo Graell, a leading figure in the FTN, who argued that: “Rope sandals, overalls, a peaked cap and neckerchief shame no one. The opposite is largely the case. But one senses that a gulf separates those who so dress from their superiors, and that their dress is seen as a little humiliating and even degrading.” By this time, however, dress was merely a reflection of the growing social divide visible within Barcelona urban society.

moustaches. They bought a dark suit to get married. This suit was thereafter only taken out of the wardrobe to go to other weddings, and to be used as a shroud”. Op cit, p.42.

89. ETN, 1 November 1907.
PART TWO

THE CATALAN LABOUR MOVEMENT

1897-1914
By the turn of the century Socialists and anarchists were the two primary points of reference for Spain's labour unions. This is, of course, not to say that all workers were either anarchist or Socialist. This was clearly not the case. Most workers were, in fact, non unionised. Moreover, many unions were not affiliated to any particular ideological or political grouping, and maintained an independent existence. Finally, it would be grossly to over-simplify to imply that all those workers who formed part of anarchist or Socialist labour federations were fully conscious supporters of their respective cause. In fact, during the first decade of the century the majority of workers who voted at election time voted republican, and this included many trade unionists. Nevertheless, it would be true to say that it was only the anarchists and Socialists who had founded labour federations whose goal was to group together the largest number of workers possible irrespective of their occupation. Independent unions looking for working class solidarity outside the narrow confines of their trade, and groups of workers who needed help in order to set up their own union, therefore, tended to gravitate towards either the anarchists or Socialists.

Both anarchists and Socialists were, naturally, also active in the cultural institutions of the working class. Thus, they played an important role in the lay schools, free-thinking clubs and working class choirs that were formed in the late nineteenth century in urban areas. However, they were only in contact with workers on a day to day basis through their unions. In addition, it was the decisions taken by the unions which impinged upon the workers vital material interests. Thus, consequent upon the decision taken at a union branch meeting and the result of negotiations between the union officials and the employer the worker could find, for example, his wages improved, his working hours reduced, or alternatively could be asked to forgo his daily wage and come out on a strike. To gain influence in the working class community, therefore, it was vital for anarchists and Socialists to have a strong presence within the unions.

Workers were not in general interested in the minutiae of a party or labour federation's ideology. Instead they were attracted by the benefits which they felt they derived from giving it their support. In order to understand the relative success of the anarchists and Socialists it will,
therefore, be necessary to look in some detail at their respective trade union and political practices, and their relevance to the needs and aspirations of the Catalan working class.

In fact by the turn of the century anarchist and Socialist trade union policies were diametrically opposed. From the outset the Socialist labour federation, the UGT, adopted a highly moderate trade union strategy. It was agreed that wage claims should be modest so as not to provoke the employers. Moreover, after a claim had been presented UGT unions were to make every effort possible to reach a negotiated settlement. Strikes, the Socialists felt, should only be declared in the last resort, and then only if the workers were in a strong position to win the dispute. Other workers should give monetary and moral support, but never come out on strike in solidarity. It was up to the central committee to decide if possibilities of victory existed, and only if it were satisfied of this would it authorise strike payments. The Socialists, therefore, placed emphasis on the stability of their unions. The individual union was supposed to build up a large strike fund, and it was hoped operate a friendly society and perhaps a consumer co-operative. This system became known in Spain as *el sindicalismo a base múltiple*. Its corollary was the appearance of a body of officials who negotiated wage-rates and working hours. This became clear with the rapid growth of the UGT from 1899.2

The role of the any labour federation, according to the Socialists, was to improve the material conditions of its members. The task of social revolution was, however, left to the party. During the 1880s, Pablo Iglesias was president of the Spanish Socialist party, the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE). Following the lead of the French Socialist, Jules Guesde, he argued Spain was an fully developed capitalist state with an increasingly impoverished proletariat. The PSOE, he argued, would soon be called upon to lead the workers into battle against the bourgeoisie. This vision, however, paid scant attention to the real state of political organisation within the working class, and rested uneasily with the UGT's moderate trade union strategy. In fact, from the 1890s the party became de facto increasingly reformist. The revolution was still seen as inevitable. Yet many Socialists now seemed to argue that as a result of Spain's social and economic backwardness a modernisation programme would first be needed to bring her into line with the major capitalist states. This programme would be carried out by the most dynamic sectors of the bourgeoisie, which the Socialists often identified with the republicans. Meanwhile the job of the Socialists would be to build up their organisation, and improve the lot of the workers within present society. In reality this signified a shift towards electoral politics and a greater preoccupation with the need for social reform. The Socialists' stress on the need to reach negotiated settlements to industrial disputes, and their belief in the possibility of reform within capitalism, in turn, increasingly led them to make contact with representatives of the state.3

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It is more difficult to outline a policy to which all anarchists adhered, for they did not form part of a disciplined party, but tended to club together in groups which might have only the most tenuous links. The following is, therefore, a summary of the majority held position within Catalan anarchism between 1900 and 1903. All anarchists were antipolitical in the sense that they did not believe a social revolution could be brought about by any political party, but only through mass action. Consequently, they held elections to be a farce which only served to direct the workers' attention away from the real struggle. The belief that the bourgeois state could be reformed was, they argued, equally erroneous, and social legislation a trick which could in no way benefit the working class.

Anarchism unlike Marxism was not necessarily a class based philosophy. Thus, some anarchist thinkers stressed the need to liberate humanity from all forms of oppression, and not just the workers from exploitation at the hands of the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, anarchism was first introduced into urban Catalonia by supporters of Bakunin's wing of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA), and was from that moment on closely identified with the labour movement. This was reflected in the fact that at the turn of the century Catalonia's principal anarchist publications saw conflict between the bourgeoisie and proletariat as the motor of capitalist society. Within the anarchist tradition there was also disagreement over the agent of revolution. There was a strong individualist component in anarchism, with the consequence that some anarchists argued that it was only an audacious group of committed revolutionaries who could through attacks on bourgeois institutions spark off an uprising. In the late nineteenth century this became known as "propaganda by the deed". These anarchists usually felt trade unions had no revolutionary potential, and were inevitably drawn into reformist struggles over working conditions. This strand of anarchist thought was by no means absent in late nineteenth century Catalonia. Nonetheless, as a result of the upsurge of industrial conflictivity between 1899 and 1903, most anarchists came to recognise that the unions could be a revolutionary force.

However, in order to realise their revolutionary potential, the anarchists maintained, the unions would have to be constituted along lines very different from those which had affiliated to the UGT. The anarchists were opposed to individual unions forming co-operative or friendly societies as this might lead to the creation of conservative interests. They were even more opposed to the creation of any form of union bureaucracy whom, they argued, would inevitably lead the union into collective bargaining within the framework of capitalism. The anarchists most closely in touch with the labour movement supported the unions' fight for material gains. However, they totally rejected the Socialist view that strikes should only be declared as a last resort. On the

contrary, they declared, strikes should be called whenever possible. Moreover, they maintained that other unions should react not so much by giving monetary support as by declaring solidarity strikes. This was because, in their view, it was only through energy and enthusiasm that the bourgeoisie could be defeated. With the import of French revolutionary syndicalist doctrines at the turn of the century these tactics, which aimed to harness shop floor militancy to revolutionary goals, became known as direct action. From this date the anarchists were to argue that mass rank and file strike action would snowball into a revolutionary general strike, which by paralysing capitalist society would make possible the transition to the communist or collectivist society of the future.4

The history of anarchist and Socialist influence within the Catalan labour movement stretches back to the turbulent years between 1870 and 1873. Until then popular opposition to the state had been led by “progressive”, “democratic”, and finally “republican” political groupings. They all advocated the foundation of a modern, democratic, secular state, in which civil liberties would be guaranteed. However, their social programmes were very moderate. They in no way wished private property to be abolished, but simply favoured the extension of property ownership.

In 1870 Michael Bakunin’s Italian disciple, Giuseppi Fanelli, visited Spain, and made contact with groups of workers in Barcelona and Madrid. His preachings were, it seems, an immediate success. Fanelli’s stated aim was to introduce the IWMA or First International into Spain. However, he conflated the IWMA and Bakunin’s own secret Social Democratic Alliance, and gave the impression they were the same body. As a result, anarchism was given a head start over Marxism in Spain. This became clear at the founding congress of the Spanish branch of the First International held in Barcelona in June 1870. The new labour federation, known as the Federación Regional Española (FRE), adopted a series of resolutions which though not unambiguously anarchist showed a definite Bakunist influence.5 This became clear two years later when the IWMA split between Marxists and Bakunists. Marx’s nephew, Paul Lafargue, had recently visited Madrid, and managed to convert most of the FRE’s leading figures in the city to Marxism. However, by far the greater part of the Spanish branch’s local labour federations remained under Bakunist control.

Nevertheless, the extent of anarchist influence within the Catalan labour movement should not be exaggerated. In Catalonia in 1873 the FRE had between about 30,000 and 40,000 affiliates.


Yet, it was always an uneasy alliance between Bakunists, co-operativists, republican sympathisers and “pure” trade unionists. This was made plain in the early 1880s. After the fall of the First Republic in 1874 the FRE was forced underground. In the more open climate of 1881 trades unions were again able to function relatively freely, and a new Bakunist labour federation, called the *Federación de Trabajadores de la Región Española* (FTRE) was consequently founded. Its headquarters were set up in Barcelona and its leadership was Catalan. However, the FTRE never had the same strength in Catalonia as the old Spanish branch of the IWMA. Thus, at its high point in 1881 the FTRE had 13,201 affiliates, only about one third of the Spanish total.6

The reason was not that the Catalan labour movement was any weaker than in the early 1870s. This was patently not the case. The problem was that a large number of trade unions had broken with the Bakunists. These unions gravitated around the *Tres Classes de Vapor*. As was seen in chapter three the TCV had adopted a very moderate trade union strategy.7 Furthermore, its leaders sympathised with the republicans. Accordingly, they shunned the radicalism of the anarchists and, in Barcelona, founded an alternative local labour federation, which looked towards state intervention to improve working conditions.8

The boom conditions associated with the so-called febre d’or had, in fact, led to a certain stabilisation of labour relations in Catalonia. Thus, unions who could win concessions from their employers on the negotiating table were not likely to be attracted by anarchist insurrectionism. Indeed, even the Catalan leadership of the FTRE avoided overt revolutionary activity, and tried to limit the use of the strike weapon. These tactics have led the student of late nineteenth and early twentieth century anarchist ideology, José Alvarez Junco, to state: “Serrano Otieza (one of the FTRE’s leading figures) is the man that best personifies the dominant attitude of these years. He was a lawyer, and representative of the extreme right of Spanish Bakunism. Under his influence - and that of Llunas and Tomás - the labour movement could have taken a reformist, bureaucratic, road.”9 The febre d’or, however, ended in the economic crisis of 1885. Thereafter much of Catalan manufacturing was smitten by an almost permanent economic recession. Labour relations consequently became far harsher. In cotton textiles, as was suggested in Chapter Three, the result of the employer offensive of the years 1890-1891 was the TCVs almost total destruction.10 This offensive had wide-ranging implications for the entire Catalan labour movement, for the TCV was

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7. Chapter Three, pp. 79-80.


10. Chapter Three, pp. 80-83.
the fulcrum around which reformist politics revolved. From 1883 the intensification of social conflict was accompanied by state repression of organised labour. The combined result of these factors was seriously to weaken the reformists' position within Catalan labour.

Both Socialists and anarchists were, as a result, presented with new opportunities. During the 1870s the influence of Marxism in Spain had largely been restricted to a group of Madrid typographers. In 1879 they clandestinely founded the PSOE under the leadership of the ex-members of the First International, Pablo Iglesias and Francisco Mora. During the following decade Catalonia was the only region in which they experienced a significant growth in support. Thus, the first Socialist nuclei was founded in Barcelona in 1879, and over the next ten years a number of Socialist centres were set up in urban areas. At the same time two leading Socialist militants transferred from Madrid to Barcelona. The first, Toribio Reoyo, settled in Barcelona in 1879. He was followed by Antonio García Quejido eight years later. The growth of Socialist influence in Catalonia was made possible by the development of links between the party leadership and the TCV. This is illustrated by the fact that most of the Socialist nuclei established in Catalonia during these years were to be found in areas in which the TCV was strong.11

Collaboration between the Socialists and TCV was made possible by a number of similarities between their political and trade union practices. All Socialists of course were in favour of the formation of an independent party of the working class. Yet while Pablo Iglesias, under the influence of the ideas of Jules Guesde, argued that the PSOE should steer clear of the “bourgeois” republican parties, Francisco Mora maintained the Socialists should support the republicans, because under a republic the workers would be able to publicise their views and organise more freely. In Catalonia through to the turn of the century it was those Socialists who sympathised with Francisco Mora's views that had most influence. In the TCV camp, on the other hand, though most the leading figures favoured collaboration with the republicans, occasional statements were made in favour of the formation of a working class party. Both the Socialists' and reformists' political strategies were, therefore, in a state of flux, with enough points of contact to make collaboration possible.12 Furthermore, at a trade union level they had even more in common, for they both rejected the anarchist claim that the unions would be the harbinger of revolution, and placed emphasis on the need for a moderate trade union policy.

The Socialists, then, appeared to have a solid base on which to build. This was apparently confirmed in 1888 when they decided to form their own labour federation, the UGT, and put the PSOE on a more stable footing. The PSOE's central committee was set up in Madrid. This


reflected the fact that political power within the party was concentrated in the Spanish capital. The UGT's founding congress was, on the other hand, held in Barcelona, and its central committee elected by the unions of that city. This was not in fact surprising as Catalonia was the by far the most industrialised part of Spain, and at first it appeared that the UGT would largely be Catalan based. Thus, in 1899 2,381 of the 3,355 unions affiliated were Catalan. This predominance was, however, to be short lived. The UGT experienced rapid growth from the end of the century. Yet it was from Madrid, followed by Biscay and Asturias that these supporters were largely drawn. Thereafter Catalonia was to become increasingly marginal, for while 70 per cent of the UGT's affiliates were Catalan in 1889, by 1902 the proportion had declined to just 7.7 per cent. (see Graph 5.1.).

Graph 5.1. UGT Affiliates, 1889-1916.

150000-
100000-
50000-
0

1889 1892 1895 1898 1901 1904 1907 1910 1913 1916

Source: El Socialista, 1899-1914; Maria Dolors Capdevila i Roser Masgrau, La Justicia Social. Organ de la Federació Catalana del PSOE (Barcelona, 1977), p. 17.

In fact this record was not quite so bad as these figures suggest. As shall be seen, the Catalan UGT was to enjoy a considerable influence amongst a number of unions that were not affiliated. However, in the 1890s the Catalan Socialists already faced a number of difficulties. In the first place, in the late 1880s they split with the TCV. There were two reasons for this split. First, the TCV responded to the economic crisis in the cotton textile industry by becoming increasingly class collaborationist. Thus, it strongly supported the cotton textile manufacturers calls for higher duties on cotton imports, and jointly organised a number of demonstrations aimed at pressurising the authorities in this respect. This was a road down which the Socialists could not follow. Second, outside Catalonia Pablo Iglesias's "Guesdist" ideology was becoming increasingly dominant, leading the party to take a more sectarian line with respect to the
republicans. Indeed, the foundation of the UGT was itself a symptom of these tensions.  The split cost the Socialists much worker support, though in parts of the Alta Muntanya, such as Manresa and the Ter Valley, their staunch defence of established work practices earned them a good deal of sympathy.

The Socialists also soon found themselves at loggerheads with the anarchists. Faced with heavy government repression, an economic recession, employer attacks on union organisation and divisive internal wrangling, the FTRE entered into crisis from 1883, and was wound up in 1888. Power within Catalan anarchism now passed into the hands of a number of younger men, who enthusiastically supported "energetic" strike tactics, and the use of solidarity strikes to generalise strike action. They were able to put these tactics into practice between 1890 and 1893.

These years witnessed a short lived economic upturn following the tightening up of restrictions on the import of non Spanish goods into the last colonies. This boom was accompanied by a great surge of industrial unrest. The anarchists were able to ride on the tide of this unrest, and thereby increase their support. This is best illustrated by the events which surrounded the celebration of May day during these years. At an international conference held in 1889 the Socialists had agreed that from 1890 on 1 May each year the working class in each country would take action in support of an 8 hour working day. Spanish anarchists agreed to support this call. In Catalonia, however, this by no means implies that anarchists and Socialists were united. For, in consonance with their respective trade union practices, whilst the Socialists called for a one day stoppage, the anarchists supported an indefinite strike until their demands had been met. In the charged atmosphere of May day there were violent verbal and even physical clashes between Socialists and anarchists. As a result, the Spanish Socialist leadership developed a phobia of general strikes from which it was never to recover. In Barcelona, nevertheless, the anarchists' tactics seem to have been more popular. Thus, even Antonio García Quejido, the first president of the UGT, was forced to admit that between 1890 and 1891 there had been a swing away from the Socialists and towards the anarchists in Barcelona, and that: "During the second May day of 1891 they (i.e., the anarchists) were already in charge of the movement and were able to stage a general strike, although, as was to be expected, without any tangible results."

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However, the Catalan labour movement's revival came to an abrupt end in 1893. In that year the economic recovery began to falter, and between 1894 and 1898 Catalan industry suffered a severe recession. Furthermore, government repression of labour protest intensified after an uprising of landless labourers in the Andalusian town of Jerez. Thus in 1893 in Barcelona:

The first of May there was a demonstration and mass meetings. From the first the police repressed the movement. There were detentions en masse and many were imprisoned on war ships. These imprisonments were to have a great effect on the popular imagination, engendering those tavern songs, more melancholy than revolutionary, the words of which brought out a profound and constant hatred of the authorities.

The combined effect of state repression and the economic slump was to decimate the trade unions. And it was in these circumstances that some anarchists despaired of working through organised labour and turned to "propaganda by the deed". The first anarchist assassination attempt in Barcelona in 1893 - a bomb attack on an army general - was a response to the execution of a number of Jerez peasants, and the subsequent repression then led to a decisive shift to conspiratorial activity. 19

By no means all anarchists supported the use of terrorist tactics. Indeed, Catalonia's leading anarchist publication between 1887 and 1892, El Productor, argued that they were totally counterproductive. 20 Nevertheless, the next five years witnessed a spiral of action and repression which these anarchists were powerless to detain. It culminated in June 1896 in a massive round up of anarchists, labour leaders, and their sympathisers. They were then imprisoned in the military castle of Montjuïc, which overlooked Barcelona, where many were tortured in order to extract false confessions of terrorism. Five of those arrested were finally executed. At the same time the authorities conducted an onslaught on all aspects of working class social and cultural life. The result was to drive the anarchists underground. Their presence within the trade unions was, therefore, much reduced, but the authorities actions also led to the creation of the figure of the anarchist martyr to the cause. Thus Emili Salut, a young apprentice during the first decade of the twentieth century, recalls: "The repeated preachings of our journeymen in the workshops and constructions sites (served) to pass on to us the sad legacy of the Montjuïc anarchists, for in addition to constant oral propaganda, crusading weekly newspapers and small fascicles, they even reminded us of the wretched castle by singing the various songs they practised in the coral societies." 21

The anarchists, then, retained a great deal of diffuse sympathy, but were unable to play an active part in the labour movement. Socialist hopes of building up their unions organisations had also been dashed. This was pointed out by Josep Comaposada. Comaposada, a shoemaker who lived in Barcelona’s fifth district, had been a leading figure in Catalan Socialism since the 1880s. Looking back on the 1890s he recalled that in a context in which unions were unable to operate legally it was impossible to operate those “strong and stable bodies” favoured by the Socialists. Nonetheless, it was the Socialists who continued to work within the Catalan unions, and who in a number of towns played an important part in leading the revival of trade unionism from 1898.

In cotton textiles, as we have seen, the employer offensive of the early 1890s left the workers largely disorganised. By 1895 the TCV retained the support of only a few spinners from Barcelona, Badalona and Molins de Rei. Disgusted by the collaborationist policies of the TCV leadership other political groupings founded their own textile federations. The anarchists set up a Pacte Lliure in the early 1890s, which gained some support in Barcelona and the Ter Valley. It was, however, soon to founder. The Socialists had rather more success. They founded their alternative to the TCV, the Unión Fabril Algodonera, in 1894. At first it was centred on Málaga, but after the Málaga textile union had broken up after an employer lock-out at the end of the year its influence was limited in Catalonia. There were cotton textile unions affiliated from Sant Martí, the Ter Valley, Vilanova and Vilassar. The Mataró hosiery workers also joined, and Mataró indeed became a bastion Socialist support. Finally, the Socialists were also influential within the Manresa labour movement.

As a result the crisis which afflicted the labour movement during these years the Unión Fabril Algodonera remained very weak. Nevertheless, it represented the only organisational link between the various textile unions at that time. Yet when union organisation in textiles began to recover from 1898 it quickly became clear that the Socialists would not be able to integrate all the unions into a federation affiliated to the UGT.

This reflected a problem which affected both the anarchists and Socialists. In areas such as Madrid and the Basque country, it was largely due to the efforts of the Socialists that the first labour unions were founded. In these areas, therefore, many workers identified the Socialists with trade unionism, and hence saw them as the representatives of the entire working class. In Catalonia this was never the case. Here the history of trade unionism stretched back to the 1840s. When anarchism and Marxism were introduced into Spain between 1870 and 1873 there was, as a result, already a strong tradition of trade union organisation. Consequently, Socialists and

22. La Justicia Social, 2 July 1910.
anarchists who wished to establish their own unions were open to the charge that they were dividing the working class, given that workers of other political persuasions would not wish to join.

The Socialists and many anarchists tried to counter this charge by arguing that their unions were open to all those workers who wished to affiliate, whatever their political viewpoint. The UGT's statutes, in fact, stated that it was independent of any political organisation. This fact was used by the Catalan Socialists to claim that the aim of the UGT unions was simply to better working conditions, and that they had no intention of using the trades unions under their influence to indoctrinate the workers. It would appear more difficult for the anarchists to maintain that their unions were neutral, for they believed it was through a revolutionary general strike that capitalism would be overthrown. Some indeed felt that within the unions it would be the task of committed revolutionaries to guide the workers. However, at the turn of the century the majority of Barcelona anarchists denied that the unions they operated were specifically anarchist. Instead, these anarchists argued that without the need for indoctrination the workers would once organised, in the heat of the battle against the bourgeoisie, inevitably come to see direct action as the tactic which most favoured their interests whatever their original political beliefs.24

Not surprisingly, however, many workers were doubtful as to the neutrality of the Socialist and anarchist unions, and wished to operate independent "apolitical" associations. This was a problem both the anarchists and Socialists faced right through to 1914. Thus, for example, a number of regional craft federations remained independent even though a some of the individual unions were affiliated to either the anarchists or Socialists. It was a difficulty the anarchists were not to overcome until 1918, when they were becoming increasingly dominant in urban areas, and were therefore able to force most workers into their Sindicats Unics.25

At the turn of the century neither anarchists or Socialists were in this position. This was illustrated by developments within the Catalan textile unions over the next three years. In 1899 there was a revival of trade unionism in the cotton textile industry. As has been seen, in the Ter Valley in order to co-ordinate the textile unions' activities a district federation, known as the Commission for the Fourth District, was formed, under the presidency of the "well known anarchist" Gaspar Viñolas.26 This Commission played a prominent role in the formation of the new industry wide textile federation, the FTE, at the end of the year. The small pro-Socialist

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24. This was, for example, the argument advance by the pro-anarchist Barcelona bricklayers' union. See, La Protesta, 29 August 1900.


26. Juan de Cataluña, "Los Obreros...IV". Viñolas' anarchist beliefs could not, however, have been very orthodox, for not only was he a paid official but in 1899 he also stood in local elections in Manlleu. La Plana de Vich, 19 July, 1899.
Unión Fabril Algodonera held its VI congress in Mataró between 5 and 6 August. Roda was the strongest point of Socialist organisation on the Ter, and the local textile union sent its own delegate. The Manlleu union did not, however, attend as part of the Unión Fabril, but led a delegation of the Commission for the Fourth District. This delegation informed those present that it was considering calling a congress open to all the industry's workers. The reaction of the Unión Fabril Algodonera was favourable and, as a result, a commission made up of affiliates from both the Socialist federation and the Commission for the Fourth District was named to organise it.27

The decision taken by the Commission for the Fourth District reflected its desire to unify as many workers as possible in a single association notwithstanding political differences. The Catalan Socialists accepted this argument and, therefore, agreed to disband the UGT affiliated Unión Fabril Algodonera in order to form part of a larger organisation. The Catalan Socialists showed themselves to be, in this respect, very much in tune with the realities of the Catalan labour movement. They had since the 1880s been prepared to work with other political tendencies whose trade union practice they found acceptable, and the foundation of the UGT did not change this fact. On this question, it seems, the Catalans could be differentiated from the Madrid based leadership of the PSOE. For tactical reasons, these Socialists paid lip service to the need for labour unions to be independent from the tutelage of the party, but in reality they believed their should be a strong bond between party and union. In fact, this divergent approach to the relationship between union and party probably led to development of a good deal of tension between Barcelona and Madrid.

The attitude adopted by the Catalan Socialists allowed the FTE quickly to establish itself.28 Joan Codina, a Socialist activist who formed part of the Federation, was later to claim that it was from its inception totally anarchist dominated.29 There was an anarchist presence within the FTE's Manlleu leadership, and in the Fourth District generally. This could be seen at the beginning of 1900 when representatives from the FTE held a meeting with two pro-anarchist labour federations, the Ter Valley Craft Workers Union (Unió Comarcal d'Arts i Oficis de la Conca del Ter), and the Federation of Ampurdà Cork Workers. At this meeting a "solidarity pact" was signed, and it was agreed to form a commission which was organise the founding congress of a new Confederation of Spanish Workers.30

Clearly the idea was to form a new anarchist dominated labour confederation. The scheme, however, came to nothing, and the main reason was opposition within the ranks of the FTE itself.

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27. LP, 9 August 1899, ME.
28. See Chapter Three, p. 86.
29. Juan de Cataluña, "Los Obreros...IV".
30 LP, 4 March 1900, ME; La Protesta, 2 March, 8 April 1900.
This opposition was effective because, despite the claims of Joan Codina, the Federation was in no way anarchist dominated. This was indeed admitted by the anarchists themselves. For example the anarchist weekly, *El Productor*, was later to state that at the FTE’s founding congress, “there were delegates of various political persuasions (tendencias sociológicas), though the vast majority maintained a purely trade unionist perspective”.31

This political diversity was reflected in the FTE’s internal composition. The remnants of the TCV had affiliated and exercised considerable influence through its president, Ramón Fontanals. Within the FTE he held the important post of president of the First District, which encompassed Barcelona and the surrounding towns, and played a key role in the recruitment drives the FTE launched during the year. The Socialists, however, were in a stronger position. They maintained the support of textile unions in the towns of Manresa, Mataró, Sant Martí and Roda. They were also the dominant tendency within the FTE’s mouthpiece, *Revista Social*. The paper’s administration was to be found in Manlleu. However, its director was Toribio Reoyo, and it was the Catalan Socialists who therefore appeared most regularly in its pages. Moreover, another key figure in the FTE, Josep Genollà, was a Socialist. Genollà was president of the Fourth District when it was founded. He moved on to preside the Sant Martí textile union, then the Sixth District (Manresa and its surrounds), finally to replace the Manlleu union activist, Angel Aguilar, as the FTE’s president in August 1900. The anarchists were, in fact, the poor relations in the FTE. Their influence was almost entirely limited to the Fourth District, and depended on such figures as Gaspar Viñolas, and Jaume Romà, president of the Torelló textile union.32

The anarchists’ subordinate position within the FTE becomes even clearer if the policy it pursued is examined. The FTE never condoned the class collaborationism of the old Catalan wide TCV. On the contrary, in response to the mill owners attacks on working conditions and established work practices it bitterly criticised their greed and selfishness. Indeed, even the old TCV leaders had to adopt a more strident vocabulary to keep up with the times. Nevertheless, as was noted in Chapter Three, the FTE leadership counselled prudence in taking strike action. In addition, much of the old organisational structure of the TCV was resurrected, including the employment of paid officials. Both these decisions flew in the face of direct action. Moreover, the FTE’s General Secretary, Josep Guiteras, held the equally unanarchist belief that unions should form friendly benefit societies and operate strike funds.33 The FTE’s leaders also supported the implementation of the Government’s social legislation. Thus, in February 1900, Guiteras and Fontanals visited Madrid with the aim of convincing the Minister of the Interior and leading figures


32. For Genollà’s Socialist credentials see, ES, 27 December 1901.

within the parties of the opposition not to support a campaign launched by the cotton textile employers which aimed to ensure that the proposed law on female and child labour would permit them to work more than an 11 hour day and 48 hours per week night work. Fontanals and Guiteras were strongly criticised by a number of anarchists, who accused them of reformism and of collaborating with the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, their actions were vindicated at the FTE's second congress, which approved a resolution in favour of the setting up of local commissions to oversee the work of the juntas locales de reformas sociales the Government intended to set up to ensure its social legislation was implemented.

The FTE claimed to be an independent, "neutral", organisation, only concerned with trade union affairs. No labour federation could, however, be completely neutral. The trade union practice advocated by the Federation was clearly not anarchist inspired. And while no group was dominant, during 1900 the Socialists were able to play a leading role within the FTE. The majority of Socialists were, however, too astute to jeopardise their position by trying to force the Federation to join the UGT. This became clear at the FTE's second congress held in the Summer of 1900.

At this congress the Mataró branch proposed that the FTE affiliate to the UGT. Yet the proposition was not finally voted upon, and it was precisely Toribio Reoyo who opposed its discussion. Reoyo, though a compositor, represented the Ripoll cotton textile workers at the congress, and he presided over the session in which the question was brought forward. He replied that discussion of the subject would only lead to disunity, thereby playing into the hands of the bourgeoisie, and that the time was not yet ripe to join the UGT. Because of their interest it is worth quoting his subsequent arguments at some length. He continued:

Taking this into account, I have to declare that if as a compositor and Socialist I am in favour of the Spanish UGT and that all the unions, craft federations and unions of craft federations join, as a delegate of the Ripoll textile union I feel all attempts at confederation are premature. The Textile Federation has to adapt its plans to a series of special circumstances which do not effect the UGT nor any other association. Moreover, it has continually to intervene to solve disputes between workers and employers, and has to cope with an endless number of strikes. In these circumstances I repeat all attempts at confederation are premature. This (will be the case) while the Federation does not achieve the growth in the number of workers necessary, does not spread to all those provinces in which there are textile workers, and while there is not the conviction needed, on the part of the membership, to unite with another organisation (i.e., the UGT), and accept, comply with, and defend its goals, its statutes, and its leadership. Without this either one of the organisations which have united could be damaged, if not both at once.

34. Juan de Cataluña, "Los Obreros...IV".
The argument put forward by Reoyo that the FTE was not yet strong enough to join the UGT is by itself difficult to accept, for if the membership figures given at this congress are anywhere near the truth then the FTE had at least twice as many members as the UGT. Reoyo appears, on the one hand, to have been worried by the opposition any move to join the UGT would occasion. On the other, he was aware - and this was made quite clear in his statement - that the high level of industrial conflict in cotton textiles stood the FTE apart from those unions affiliated to the UGT. More than the FTE's overall membership, then, Toribio Reoyo seems to have had doubts, given the climate of industrial relations in the industry, as to the Federation's long term stability, and of its ability to follow the moderate strike policy advocated by the Socialist leadership. In this respect, as has been seen, he was not mistaken.

The vast majority of delegates at the congress, including Josep Guiteras and Ramón Fontanals, supported Reoyo's stance. However, at the end of the year, as a result of the employer offensive against the cotton textile unions the balance of political forces within the FTE was drastically to change.37 Already at the beginning of 1900 the FTE leadership had threatened the Ripoll employers with a general strike if they did not lift the lock-out they had imposed in the Freser. This was the first time that, in exasperation, it had contradicted its conciliatory approach to industrial disputes. The Freser lock-out, nevertheless, proved just a warning. The employers' assault on the FTE began at the end of the year and left the majority of its members either locked-out or on strike. In such circumstances drastic action had to be taken. Amongst the rank and file the belief had already been growing that a general strike would be necessary to halt the industrialists in their tracks. Once the offensive was underway a number of Barcelona trade unions went further and called for a solidarity strike of the entire Catalan working class. Its aim would be to pressure the Government into restoring constitutional guarantees, and to force the employers to reopen their factories.

This initiative was apparently supported by the FTE's central committee. The decision to support a general strike, however, immediately had the effect of alienating the Socialists. That this was the case could be seen when a delegate from the FTE, Joan Matamala, a leading figure in the Ripoll textile union, visited Madrid to ask Pablo Iglesias to sign a letter supporting the workers and protesting at the attitude of the authorities and the Catalan industrialists. The letter had already been signed by the Madrid anarchist, Federico Urales, and the leader of the Barcelona republicans, Alejandro Lerroux. Nevertheless, a meeting of the PSOE's National Committee refused to give its consent because, they argued, the effect would be to favour the declaration of a general strike to which they - unlike Lerroux and the anarchists - were opposed. The Socialists then accused the

37. For this offensive see, Chapter Three, pp. 88-91.
anarchists of being behind the general strike, and once it was clear by the middle of December that it had failed the mouthpiece of the Madrid Socialists, El Socialista, triumphantly announced:38

Let this misfortune serve as a lesson to the workers everywhere. Let them see who best advises them, the anarchists, who continually call for general strikes, or the Socialists, who recommend they flee from them and solidly organise themselves in order to demand little by little - because at present there is no other way - working conditions that better their sad state, and ensure that when they come into conflict with their employers they do not allow themselves to be influenced by pernicious sentimentalism, but calculate and reflect on their actions.

This attitude was endorsed by the Catalan Socialists. Thus, Josep Comaposada commented: “The general strike has passed off with its oft repeated victims: dreamers who took it seriously, and thought the time had arrived to launch a coup. And...until the next one.”39

The Socialists, however, did not make clear what their alternative was. They had, along with representatives of the TCV and independent trade unionists, been dominant within the FTE during 1899 and the first half of 1900. During this time they had pursued a moderate trade union policy under the belief that only through negotiation and by avoiding all out conflict would they be able to build a strong labour federation in cotton textiles. They hoped to fashion this federation along the lines of the British New Model or the German Free Trades Unions. Thus, it was to be staffed by paid officials, and offer strike pay and friendly benefits to its members.40 But the employer assault on the textile unions at the end of the year, backed up by police and civil guard, had made this vision unrealisable. In this respect the situation was very similar to that between 1889 and 1891. During the second half of 1900 the base had become increasingly convinced that to halt the industrialists a general strike would be necessary, and at the end of the year the FTE’s central committee saw no alternative but to endorse this policy. The Socialists phobia of the concept of the general strike led them radically to oppose the action. This was probably not the most sensible course to have pursued, for the anarchist press could easily respond by accusing the Socialists of abandoning the cotton textile workers. In the Alta Muntanya the general strike call seems largely to have been followed by those textile workers who were not already on strike or locked-out. Many of them, therefore, probably sympathised with the anarchists’ reaction. Although the failure of the strike may also have led them to reflect on the efficacy of the general strike weapon.

38. ES, 14 December 1900.
39. ES, 8 February 1901.
40. To quote A. Solà, a Socialist militant from Roda, they favoured the foundation of labour federations that, “are as solid as the powerful federations run by our brothers and sisters in the above mentioned countries (Germany, England and Belgium), and which imitate their tactics, discipline and cohesion”. La Guerra Social, 27 June 1903.
In 1900, then, the Socialists had played a key role in Catalonia's foremost labour federation. This seemed a good foundation on which to build up a strong presence within the Catalan labour movement. By 1901, however, this dream was in ruins, for not only had the cotton textile workers been forced out on a general strike, but the FIFE had been totally destroyed. In Barcelona between 1899 and 1903 events took a not altogether dissimilar turn.

In Barcelona in the mid 1890s only a handful of trade unions had been affiliated to the UGT. However, the Socialists had considerably more influence in the labour movement than this would suggest. The UGT headquarters, located in the fifth district, was the only labour federation which operated in Barcelona at that time. Moreover, it was open to all unions that wished to join even if they were not members of the UGT. Several unions took advantage of this fact to establish themselves in the UGT's offices, known as the Centre de Societats Obreres, without affiliating to the UGT. More surprising, not even all the UGT's leadership was Socialist. Thus, for example, the republican, Luis Zurdo Olivares, became president of the UGT in May 1896. He resigned several months later. Nevertheless, when a new UGT central committee was elected in November it included representatives of a number of unions that had not formally affiliated. During these years, then, the UGT was very much an umbrella organisation which allowed the Socialists considerable influence outside the limited circle of unions that were members.

As in cotton textiles, therefore, the Socialists appeared to be in a good position to take advantage of the trade union revival of 1899. Unfortunately they were hindered by a split which had since the early 1880s developed between the UGT leadership and the local branch of the PSOE. This split became particularly serious when at the end of 1898 the Barcelona PSOE decided to form its own labour federation, the Grup de Corporacions Obreres, in opposition to the UGT. It is difficult to pin-point the reasons for this split, for the Socialist press made absolutely no comment. The veteran Socialist militant, Juan José Morato, was later to state that it was the result of "internal personal rivalries", but this explanation seems inadequate. Possibly, tension between the two organisations was a result of the fact that the Barcelona PSOE was more in tune with the Madrid Socialist leadership, who emphasised the leading role of the party, and would probably have wished the UGT to be a more homogeneous Socialist organisation.

41. Thus of the 10 unions which resided in the Centre de Societats Obreres in May 1897 5 probably belonged to the UGT.

42. Santiago Castillo, "Los Origines", p. 239; La República Social, 22 September 1897.

43. ES, 30 December 1898.


45. The leading figure in the Barcelona branch of the PSOE, Josep Comaposada, wrote on Catalan affairs in El Socialista, and appears to have been closely allied to Pablo Iglesias.
Table 5.1. Trades Linked to the Centre de Societats Obreres and Grup de Corporacions Obreres during 1900.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre de Societats Obreres</th>
<th>Grup de Corporacions Obreres</th>
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<tr>
<td>Shopworkers, ADM</td>
<td>Shopworkers, ADM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Locksmiths</td>
<td>Locksmiths*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Union of Spanish Railway Workers*</td>
<td>Hatters&quot; Fulistes&quot;*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marblers* (UGT)</td>
<td>Power Sawyers*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carriage Makers*</td>
<td>Rollers and Pressers*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woollen Dyers (Joined UGT 1900)</td>
<td>Coachmen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coal Unloaders*</td>
<td>Harness Makers*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wood Unloaders*</td>
<td>Copper Boilmakers*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cereal Unloaders*</td>
<td>Imitation Cabinetmakers*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colliers and Haulers*</td>
<td>Sant Marti Cotton Textiles</td>
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<td>Tres Clases de Vapor*</td>
<td>Barbers</td>
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<td>Card Painters* (UGT)</td>
<td>Shoemakers, L'Igualtat*</td>
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<td>Installers of Mosaics*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sant Marti bricklayers</td>
<td>Hosiery Workers*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bookbinders</td>
<td>Brass and Tinsmiths* (UGT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compositors, L'Art d'Imprimir*</td>
<td>Arts and Crafts (UGT)</td>
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<td>Shirt Makers*</td>
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<td>Tavern Assistants</td>
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<td>Hatmakers &quot; La Fulla &quot;</td>
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<td>Various Trades*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trades Dependent on Tailoring*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Painters &quot; La Defensa &quot;* (Joined UGT 1900)</td>
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<td>Papermakers*</td>
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<td>Mechanical Embroiders*</td>
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<td>Blacksmiths*</td>
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<td>Wood Turners*</td>
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<td>Confectioners*</td>
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<td>Trades Being Organised in November 1900</td>
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<td>Electricians</td>
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<td>Hotel and Tavern Workers</td>
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Sources. La Publicidad, El Socialista, 1899.

Whatever the reasons for the split, it did not prevent the two Socialist headquarters from rapidly expanding during 1899. They remained the only labour federations to function in the city. As a result, a large number of unions were founded by members of one or other of the Socialist associations. Furthermore, some Barcelona unions which had at first set up in other premises subsequently moved to one of the Socialist headquarters. An idea of the relative strength of the UGT Centre and PSOE Grup can be attained by counting the number of unions which participated.
in the rival May day demonstrations the Socialists organised, along with the unions which were affiliated to one or other of the federations. (see Table 5.1.)

As the table indicates a total of 52 unions maintained some kind of contact with the Centre or Grup during the year. This represented the bulk the city's trade union organisations. The Centre remained the most influential association with between 16 and 22 unions affiliated between October and November, while about 11 unions formed part of the Grup. This division, but also the Socialists' relative strength was reflected in a comment by the anarchist weekly La Protesta that:

Last Tuesday 32 unions from Barcelona and its Llano met to try and organise a federation. However, as soon as the two bands of Socialists came face to face there was no holding back the storm. Poor working class in the hands of the Socialists!

The Socialists' influence should not, however, be exaggerated. Many of the unions that had made contact with the Socialists did so simply because there was no alternative. This was particularly the case of those unions that had participated in the May day demonstrations. The May day meetings of 1899 were the first to be held in seven years. Only the two Socialist federations had made preparations to hold meetings. Any union that wished to demonstrate its sense of working class solidarity and support such demands as an eight hour day would, therefore, have to contact the Socialists. Moreover, the loyalty of even those unions which resided in one or other Socialist headquarters was also in doubt. As has been seen the UGT had been prepared to take in unions that were not members of the UGT, and table 5.1. makes clear how few of the unions which operated from the Centre actually were members.

The precariousness of the Socialists' position became clear in the following year. During 1900, as was seen in Chapter Four, the labour movement grew rapidly in strength, and industrial conflict became notably more severe. Thus began a spiral of labour discontent that would peak in 1902 and 1903. The UGT headquarters had been moved to Madrid in September 1899. Nevertheless, the two Socialist federations operated as previously. They continued to play a key co-ordinating role within organised labour, and were indeed able to expand their membership.

46. Those unions under the title Centre de Societats Obreres with no symbol after their name simply supported the Centre's May day demonstration. Those with the symbol * were affiliated at some time during the year, and those with a + were affiliated at the end of October. In the case of the Grup de Corporacions Obreres, again, those unions with no symbol after their name merely attended the Grup's May day demonstration. Those with the symbol + were affiliated between June and August. The symbol (UGT) signifies they definitely belonged to the UGT. LP; 22 October 1899, ME; ES, 24 November 1899.
47. La Protesta, 27 August 1899.
Moreover, the Centre and Grup also entered into negotiations. These were to bear fruit in the following year when they were finally to fuse. However, by the end of 1900 the Socialists' profile within the labour movement was lower than it had been in 1899. This was reflected in the fact that the growth of the two Socialist associations had not kept pace with the overall expansion of union organisation in Barcelona. Evidence suggests there was a connection between the eclipse of the Socialists, and in growth of industrial conflict in the Catalan capital. As has been pointed out the Socialists had adopted a moderate trade union practice, and therefore argued that the workers demand should not be exaggerated, and that strikes should only be called as a last resort. During 1900, as a result, they were to be found not leading the unions into battle against the bourgeoisie, but trying to retrain them in. Consequently, the played practically no part in the major strikes which were declared during the year.

Two examples illustrate this situation particularly well. In 1899 the only painters union in Barcelona, La Defensa, formed part of the Centre. In 1900, however, a new painters union called La Fraternal was founded. From the start it adopted a more aggressive stance than La Defensa. This proved popular and as a result its membership rapidly outstripped that of La Defensa. Then in June 1900 La Fraternal called for a 5 pesetas minimum wage, an 8 hour day, and the “regulation” of apprenticeship. The employers reaction was to lock-out all the painters in the industry, including those affiliated to La Defensa. The Socialists were outraged, but their criticism centred on La Fraternal, which they maintained had provoked the lock-out though its “excessive” demands. Thus El Socialista informed its readership: “Thanks to the unpremeditated resolution of a union in Barcelona, founded by elements in favour of uproar and rowdiness, an attitude which endangers the existence of the unions, our companions from the painters and decorators union, La Defensa, have been obliged to suffer the consequences of an employer coalition, which has thrown them out of the workshops.”

The second example illustrates the extent to which the Socialists were out of step with the growing radicalism of many Barcelona unions. The largest strike called in 1900 affected 1,300 mechanics. It attracted widespread working class sympathy but was finally lost. The Socialists, however, were very critical of the way the strike was run. For example, Josep Comaposada argued that: “The principal causes (of the strike's defeat) were; the error of expecting simple enthusiasm to be enough; the rejection of the efficacy of strike funds to finance the workers resistance; and the hastiness with which the struggle was entered into, without the workers' organisation yet having the necessary consistency”. In other words the union's fundamental

49. ES, 15 June 1900.
50. ES, 23 November 1900.
The mistake was, for Comaposada, not to have followed the policies advocated by the PSOE and UGT.

The lack of Socialist support for aggressive union tactics, and hence their criticisms of the way in which the years major disputes had been conducted, laid them open to the charge - as in the Alta Muntanya - that they had no qualms about abandoning the workers if they were not part of the Socialists' organisation. The Socialists rejected this argument, and countered that there was no reason why “well organised and far sighted unions”, who were biding their time in order to call for improvements in working conditions when circumstances were favourable, should bail out other who had gone on strike without being sufficiently prepared.  

Nevertheless, the Socialists lost influence in the main branches of Barcelona industry during the year. They had from the start little support in the construction industry. The carpenters and bricklayers unions had almost without exception remained aloof from the Socialist associations, and during 1900 it became clear that only a minority of painters sympathised with the Socialists' trade union practice. In metallurgy they had had more success, but during the year the iron foundrymen and boilermakers left the Centre leaving the copper boilermakers and locksmiths as the only metal unions which supported the Socialists. Significantly, they were also the most reformist. This was especially clear in the case of the locksmiths, whose union flag consisted of two arms intertwined, representing harmony between labour and capital. In printing the Socialists experienced a similar haemorrhage of support. The compositors union, L'Art d'Imprimir, had actually been founded in the PSOE's headquarters in 1899, but left soon afterwards. It was followed in 1900 by the bookbinders, thereby leaving the Socialists with no influence within the printing industry.  

The difficulties faced by the Socialists represented an opportunity for the anarchists. As has been seen, they were driven underground in the mid 1890s, and only in 1900 were they again able to make their presence felt within the labour movement. The sharpening industrial conflict of these years, moreover, provided them with a favourable terrain on which to work, for while the Socialists tried desperately to halt the escalation in the number of strikes, they were happy to encourage the unions to present their employers with maximalist demands, support strike action if the demand were not met in full, and then call for solidarity strikes.  

As a result the anarchists speakers were to become increasingly in evidence at union meetings during 1900. None the less, the anarchists still remained in the shade of the Socialists.

51. ES, 19 October 1900.
52. LP, 24 April 1900, ME.
53. Boletín, 31 December 1899; LP, 12 August 1900, ME.
Thus, the efforts by a pro-anarchist carpenters union, *La Nova Unió*, to form a new local federation ended in failure.\(^{54}\) Furthermore, the anarchists were still in no position to organise a rival May day demonstration, though this year they were at least able to console themselves with the fact that they had disrupted proceedings at the Socialist gathering. It was not until 1901 that the tables were turned, and anarchist sympathisers came increasingly to dominate the Barcelona labour movement. Of key importance in this process was the meeting of 13 anarchists groups in Barcelona on 13 April 1901. At this meeting they decided to name a commission which would organise meetings and other acts; actively operate within the trade unions, "destroying the tutelage exercised by the authoritarian Socialist party"; and publish a weekly newspaper, to be called *El Productor*.\(^{55}\) The first number of *El Productor* was published on 6 July. In reality it was published by a group of anarchists who had formed around the shoemaker, Joan Baptista Esteve (pseudonym, Leopoldo Bonafulla). It combined some theoretical pieces with detailed information on the labour movement, and soon achieved a wide circulation in working class circles. Another anarchist weekly entitled *La Huelga General* was published from the end of the year. Its backer was Francesc Ferrer, a wealthy ex-republican who had been converted to anarchism during exile in France in the 1890s. His foremost collaborator was Anselmo Lorenzo, who had first become active in labour politics at the time of the First International. He was by the turn of the century considered the “grandfather” of Spanish anarchism. Ferrer was to become famous as the founder of the Modern School of rationalist education in Barcelona. However, though close contact was maintained with the group who published *El Productor*, Ferrer and Lorenzo had far less influence, and their publication took on a largely theoretical character.\(^{56}\)

During 1901 Leopoldo Bonafulla and his collaborators launched a large number of meetings in support of striking workers, and two major protest campaigns against the Government. The meetings were not specifically anarchist. Bonafulla's close collaborators did, of course, participate in them. The most famous was Teresa Claramunt. She was originally from Sabadell, but was now based in Barcelona and dedicated herself to organising the female textile workers. Yet, other speakers only accepted parts of the anarchist creed. Such was the case of Neugel Guitart. Guitart, as we have seen, had taken rather a moderate stance as General Secretary of the FIE in 1900. Seemingly radicalised by events at the end of the year, however, he moved down to Barcelona, and at these meetings combined fierce antipoliticism and calls for a bloody revolution, with continued support for the idea that unions should provide friendly benefits. Such

\(^{54}\) LP, 16 October 1900, ME; ES, 27 October 1900.

\(^{55}\) LP, 12 April 1901, ME; *La Protesta*, 18 April 1901.

was also the case of Luis Zurdo Olivares. Zurdo Olivares was still a republican, but at the
meetings he rather eccentrically combined support for an independent party of the working class,
with defence of the revolutionary general strike.57

Nevertheless, what all these speakers had in common was that they favoured a more
combative union strategy, and a more forceful opposition to government policy than that offered
by the Socialists. The first big meeting organised by the anarchists was held at the end of March to
protest at the conduct of the authorities and support a strike in Igualada. During the rest of the year
a number of meetings of this type were held. They were very popular and attracted two or three
thousand workers a time. In July and August the anarchists also launched a campaign against
government repression of a strike in La Coruña. The strike had been anarchist led and, therefore,
the Socialists refused to participate. Nevertheless, in Barcelona the campaign was a great success.
The anarchists were able to draw large crowds to their meetings and also received the support of
some republican elements. In November there followed a campaign against the Government's
proposed strike legislation. The Government had recently introduced a bill into the Cortes which
specified the lapse of several days between the calling of a strike and the actual withdrawal of
labour power in order for it to be declared legal. Both anarchists and Socialists argued that the bill
represented an attack on the right to strike. Nevertheless, in Barcelona it was the anarchists who
seized the initiative. Thus they formed a commission which then called a series of meetings the
largest of which, held on 24 November, received the support of 49 unions and was attended by a
crowd of several thousand.58 In all at least 68 Barcelona unions affiliated to one or more of the
anarchist organised protest meetings held during the year.

As a result of the escalation of social conflict and political tensions, then, the anarchists
confrontationalist style had attracted widespread working class sympathy. Support for the
anarchists was, however, strongest amongst workers in trades in which labour relations were
especially poor. The bricklayers and bricklayers labourers' unions had a high profile in the
anarchist camp. The same can be said of the painters union La Fraternal, and the carpenters union,
La Nova Unió. The anarchists also received strong support from the mechanics and iron
foundrymen's unions, and through them from the Barcelona Metalworkers' Federation when it
was founded in November 1901. By 1901 Anarchist sympathisers also dominated the
compositors' union, L'Art d'Imprimir, and the tanners', cabinetmakers' and carters' unions.
Finally, support within the cotton textile finishing trades was strong. As was noted in Chapter
Three it was workers in these trades, along with such figures as Teresa Claramunt, who
reorganised the female Barcelona textile workers at the end of 1901. Not surprisingly, then, the

57. LP, 31 March, ME; 14 July, NE, 1901.

58. LP, 24 November 1901, NE; EP, 30 November 1901.

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new union was anarchist led. It therefore represented a total break with the TCV, which had dominated trade union organisation in the city in the late nineteenth century. Indeed the cotton textile workers, able to speak for the first time in many years, were unanimous in their condemnation of the male TCV leadership, who they maintained had made no effort to improve their working conditions. The structure of the new union was, indeed, to be very different from that of the TCV. Thus dues were to be very low, and there were to be no strike funds for, in the words of Teresa Claramunt, “to fight the bourgeoisie and defeat it was is needed is energy”.

Between 1902 and 1903 some of the aforementioned unions were to work for the formation of specifically anarchist craft or industrial federations. This was the case of the Barcelona painters, who founded a regional painters’ federation at the end of 1902. The Barcelona bricklayers followed suit and set up a supposedly national federation of bricklayers and bricklayers labourers (in reality only Catalan unions were affiliated) in February 1903. Finally between 31 May and 2 June 1903 the Barcelona metalworkers were able to found their own regional federation. The bricklayers and metalworkers federations were organised in direct competition with the Spanish Socialists, who set up their own federations at a similar time. However, the UGT labour organisations had little impact in Catalonia, with only the Socialist bricklayers federation having a solitary Catalan union affiliated.

These Barcelona trade unions, then, were at the forefront of the anarchist recruitment drive. In addition, other unions, though less conspicuous, also sympathised with the militant speakers at anarchist organised rallies. This level of support allowed the anarchists finally to form a local federation in opposition to the Socialists at the end of 1901. *La Huelga General* stated that in line with anarchist postulates it would have no strike fund, for the workers would only triumph through “the energy and high level of consciousness they demonstrate in their acts”. Subscriptions would, moreover, be voluntary, and the federation’s funds would - once administrative costs had been dealt with - be dedicated to “acts of solidarity”.

The growth in anarchist support was not, however, limited to Barcelona. There had been a rapid growth in labour organisation throughout much of Spain. Social conflict had increased particularly dramatically in Andalusia, an area from which the anarchists had since the early 1880s received strong backing. These developments encouraged the anarchists to try and set up their

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59. EP, 30 November, 7 December 1901.
own labour confederation in competition with the PSOE and UGT. As we have seen, the attempt by a number of Catalan unions in February 1900 to organise such a confederation ended in failure. The Madrid based bricklayers union, *El Porvenir del Trabajo*, was to be more successful. In June it made a call for the celebration of a congress open to all workers in Joan Montseny's (pseudonym, Federico Urales) *La Revista Blanca*. Urales was originally a cooper. He had been active in the Catalan labour movement in the 1880s, but subsequently moved to Madrid. It was on his initiative that a campaign had been launched in 1897 to press for a judicial review of the Montjuïc trial, and his efforts gained him widespread recognition on the left. He published *La Revista Blanca* from the following year. It was the only nation-wide anarchist publication of any note at the time, and it was therefore through its pages that the Catalan anarchists largely relied for information on the rest of Spain. 63

When the note from *El Porvenir del Trabajo* appeared, then, it did not fall on deaf ears. The congress was finally held in Madrid in October 1900. From Catalonia there were delegates from unions in the Ampurda, Terrassa, and from the Barcelona bricklayers. The new confederation founded at this congress was known as the *Federación Regional Española de Sociedades de Resistencia* (FRESR). Federico Urales claimed in his memoirs that 52,000 workers were represented, though this was no doubt an exaggeration. 64 The so-called Regional Office was at first fixed in Girona. This was a recognition of the strength of the Ampurda cork workers, who had affiliated with between 6000 and 8000 members. Soon after, however, they suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of their employers, so the Regional Office was moved to Barcelona in the new year.

This congress was not, in fact, very well organised. Indeed, during its first year in existence the FRESR barely functioned. This is illustrated by the fact that in April 1901 the Barcelona Regional Office complained that most of the unions which had affiliated had not sent any money to cover costs. 65 It was in order to lay more solid foundations that the confederation's second congress was held, again in Madrid, between 14 and 16 October 1901. It was a far more important affair than the congress of the previous year, with 50 delegates who represented 175 unions present. The expansion of anarchist influence in Catalonia can be seen by the fact that there were 11 Catalan delegates representing 23 unions at the congress. 11 of these unions were from Barcelona, and there were also delegates representing unions from the industrial towns of Terrassa

63. For the Montjuïc campaign see Chapter Six, pp. 204-209. More information on Federico Urales and *La Revista Blanca* is to be found in, E.R.A. 80, Els Anarquistes, Educadors del Poble: “La Revista Blanca” (1898-1905), Pròlog de Federica Montseny (Barcelona, 1977).

64. Federico Urales, *Mi Vida*. Vol. I. (Barcelona, 1930), p. 72. *El Socialista* maintained that at most 34,000 workers were represented. ES, 26 October 1900.

and Sabadell near Barcelona, Reus and Valls in the province of Tarragona, Sant Feliu de Guixols on the coast near Girona, and Castellvell and Catellar in the Alt Llobregat.

The congress aimed to set out the Confederation's organisational structure and define its political goals. At the congress the delegates signed a "solidarity pact". This pact outlined the internal structure envisaged by the delegates. On the one hand there were to be district labour federations which grouped together all the workers in a particular area. On the other hand there would be national craft federations made up of all the workers of the same or similar trades. Great stress was, however, laid on the autonomy of the individual parts. Before going on strike unions were advised to consult with the leadership of their respective craft federation, but once a strike had been declared the workers were to receive all possible support. Moreover, there were - in typically anarchist fashion - to be no dues: the expenses of the Regional Office were to be met by voluntary subscriptions.

The congress dealt with a number of questions involving working conditions, such as the need to abolish piece rates, and to take measures to prevent the employment of female and child labour. Nevertheless, attention focused on the role of the general strike. A rather ambiguous resolution was passed which stated: "We propose to the congress that as the principle of the general strike has been accepted in order to achieve an 8 hour day and to free political prisoners (presos sociales) it now be put into practice when the injustices of the bourgeoisie and abuses of the authorities make it necessary." Much clearer was a manifesto signed by the delegates which combined virulent antipoliticism with support for a "universal strike" to overthrow capitalism.66

The congress's concentration on the question of the general strike reflected a concern felt by anarchists throughout the country. In Barcelona during 1901, indeed, it became an obsession. The pro-anarchist meetings held during the year were punctuated by continuous calls for a general strike. As a result, the general strike assumed a talismanic quality, and came to be seen by many of the speakers as a panacea for all the workers' ills. Thus the general strike was recommended to force employers to recognise the workers right to form trade unions and in solidarity with striking workers; to pressure the government into releasing political prisoners or to withdraw its strike legislation; and finally as the only means of overthrowing capitalism. Nor were these calls so much hot air. As was seen in Chapter Four, on 9 May a number of Barcelona unions tried to organise a general strike in support of the tram drivers. There were as a result clashes between strikers, backed up by women and youngster, and the police, resulting in the declaration of martial law. Several days previously clashes had accompanied the May day celebrations. This year the anarchists were finally able to celebrate their own meeting and demonstration. At the same time in

order to ensure the stoppage was general gangs of workers - with women and children at the forefront - stoned any trams that were running, and broke the windows of factories whose employers had refused to stop work. 67

Nevertheless, it was as a result of the metalworkers strike, which began in November 1901, that the anarchists were finally to realise their dream and preside over a general strike of the entire working class. The anarchists were influential within the Metalworkers' Federation, and its first president, Ramon Homades, was a strong anarchist supporter. When the strike was declared, as was noted in Chapter Four, the metallurgical employers took a totally intransigent line. The leadership of the Metalworkers' Federation, therefore, came to the conclusion that a solidarity strike of the entire working class would be necessary for the metalworkers to be victorious. Such action was, of course, strongly advocated by the pro-anarchist leaders of other Barcelona unions. Accordingly, at a meeting held on 1 January 1902 it was agreed that if the civil governor did not come up with a solution to the dispute by the 3rd a general strike would be declared. 68

The general strike went ahead as planned but proved a failure. The Metalworkers' Federation reacted by adopting a more conciliatory tone. A commission was formed by a number of republican counsellors along with members of the more liberal wing of the Catalan regionalist party, Lliga Regionalista, in order to try and find a solution. This commission suggested that a committee of worker and employer representatives be formed, along with two engineers, to see if it was feasible to reduce working hours. These discussions did not finally bear fruit. However, the fact that they were taking place at all provoked harsh criticism from the anarchist press. Thus the anarchists accused the metalworkers of having kept them out of sight in order not to be accused by the Government of being led by "foreign elements". Consequently, they maintained, the metalworkers had not pursued an energetic line of action and had let the strike drag on interminably. Leopoldo Bonafulla, indeed, went so far as to say that the strike was now lost. 69

Within the Metallurgical Federation, then, there were elements in favour of a negotiated settlement. The refusal of the metallurgical bourgeoisie to make concessions, however, made their position untenable. After the negotiations had failed it again became clear that action by the rest of the working class would have to be taken if the metalworkers were not to be defeated. Moreover, workers from other trades came to see the victory of the metalworkers as vital to the whole labour movement. The anarchists also reassessed their position. They still criticised the handling of the

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67. LP, 2 May 1901, ME.
68. LP, 2 January 1902, ME.
dispute but once again stressed the need for the working class to take decisive action on the metalworkers behalf.

It was in these circumstances that a mass meeting attended by about 5000 workers was held on 15 February. At the meeting anarchist speakers made repeated calls for a general strike. There was some confusion as to whether the strike would simply be in solidarity with the metalworkers or aimed at overthrowing capitalism. Most of the trade union rank and file probably believed the former to be the case, but some anarchist speakers hinted at the latter. Thus, for example, Mariano Castellote, the president of the Barcelona bricklayers' labourers union: “Supported the general strike because in his opinion it was the only means by which the workers could be victorious. For once production had been brought to a halt, despite the army, the civil guard and the police, the bourgeoisie must necessarily succumb.”70 As we have seen, the general strike was successfully declared on the following day. There was, however, to be no generalised uprising against the authorities.

The 1902 general strike represented the high point of anarchist influence within the Barcelona labour movement. The extent of this influence was recognised by La Publicidad when it stated that anarchists and Socialists, “have for some time now competed for the leadership and organisation of the Barcelona and Catalan working class. The libertarians have prevailed, perhaps because there are more of them and they are more active”.71 As has been emphasised, the growth of anarchist influence over the past two years had been made possible by the escalation of industrial conflict and social tension between 1899 and 1902. It was against this background that they anarchists confrontationalist tactics seemed to make sense. One of the defining characteristics of Catalan anarchism was the way in which its sympathisers constantly mobilised the working class against the authorities and bourgeoisie. Indeed, it could be argued that anarchism could only flourish as a mass movement in societies in which such mobilisation was viable. This was also probably the greatest difference between the anarchists and Socialists, who took a far more conciliatory stance, and looked for negotiated settlements to disputes with the state and employers.

The anarchists continued to enjoy considerable support during 1903. 24 unions were affiliated to the local anarchist labour federation, and through campaigns and protest meeting they were once again able to extend their influence further afield. They were favoured by the fact that the level of industrial conflict remained high. Strikes peaked in June and July. Pro-anarchist trade unionists were involved in many of these disputes, leading Leopoldo Bonafulla at one point to predict that another general strike was shortly to be declared. It was not, however, to be. In fact,

70. ED, 17 February 1902.
71. LP, 25 February 1902, ME.
the anarchists attempted to declare two further general strikes during the year, and both ended in failure.\textsuperscript{72}

The first was called in solidarity with the workers of Reus. In January the Reus carters had come out on strike, and at the end of the month the rest of the town's labour force had downed tools in support. The Barcelona anarchists called a solidarity meeting on 2 February. Several thousand workers attended and 30 unions gave the meeting their backing. Encouraged by these results the anarchists planned a general strike for 9 February. However it was a total flop, with very few workers seconding the call.\textsuperscript{73}

The second attempted general strike was rather better prepared. The escalation of class conflict in Catalonia and other parts of country encouraged the Barcelona based Regional Office of the FRESR to launch a campaign for the release of Spain's political prisoners. The campaign was a considerable success. Simultaneous meetings were held in urban areas in many parts of the country on 14 June. The Regional Office planned to keep the pressure up by holding further meetings until the beginning of August. If the political prisoners had not been released by then, a three day general strike was to be called throughout the country. The general strike was finally restricted to 3 August. However in Barcelona, despite the fact that 65 unions had published a fly sheet giving their support, the strike's repercussions were to be limited.\textsuperscript{74}

For many workers, then, the credibility of the general strike weapon was open to question. The February 1902 general strike had received almost unanimous support in Barcelona. Yet the metalworkers had still been defeated, many workers detained and their unions closed down. These workers did not, therefore, wish to see a repeat performance, especially for causes which did not seem as vital as the victory of the metalworkers. The workers' reticence struck at the heart of anarchist ideology. The anarchists had been able to harness rank and file militancy, but seemed unable to channel it in a positive direction. Thus between 1901 and 1903 they had tried constantly to declare general strikes, often without it being clear what exactly they wished to achieve: whether to win a specific battle or provoke a revolutionary general strike. Indeed the answer to this question seems to have been unclear to many anarchists, and their line of reasoning was probably that a general strike was the best means to achieve a partial victory, and that with any luck the stoppage might become a revolutionary general strike. By the Summer of 1903, however, a rethink was obviously needed. Of course it would be difficult for anarchists to question the validity of the whole concept of the revolutionary general strike. Yet some anarchists had begun to

\textsuperscript{72} EP, 7 February, 21 March, 20 June, 27 June 1903.

\textsuperscript{73} EP, 7 February, 7 March 1903.

\textsuperscript{74} EP, 4 July, 11 July, 18 July, 25 July, 1 August, 8 August 1903.
ask whether it was advisable to declare general strikes on all possible occasions. For example before the strike in solidarity with the workers of Reus there was division within the anarchist ranks, with some anarchists arguing that the Reus working class had undertaken no consciously rebellious acts, and that if a general strike were declared merely to support economic demands its revolutionary significance would be lost. Nevertheless, it was not until after 1907 that there was any serious debate on this question.

It was worker disaffection with the anarchists' constant calls for a general strike that the Socialists hoped to tap in order to win back support. As we have seen the Socialists began to fade from centre stage in 1900. In 1901 the pace of their decline quickened as a number of unions left Centre de Societats Obreres and set up their headquarters elsewhere. Nevertheless, the Socialists maintained their complete opposition to the anarchists' trade union practice. This could be seen in the aftermath of the 1902 general strike. From the first the Madrid Socialists did their utmost to prevent the extension of the strike outside Catalonia. El Socialista maintained that if the Socialists had seconded the movement the result would have been the formation of a military government (gobierno de fuerza) and a bloody repression. Moreover, it argued that the general strike had been totally ineffective. There had been no plan and no leadership, and consequently only the workers had suffered. Finally it concluded that if the workers had been in a stronger position than the bourgeoisie then they should have attempted a social revolution.

By adopting this line of argument what the PSOE was doing was reaffirming its reformist trade union and political policy, while at the same time trying to maintain the goal of social revolution intact. The line taken by the Madrid party leadership was strongly supported by the Catalan Socialists. However, as in the case of the general strike called by the FTE in January 1901, the Socialists' unequivocal condemnation of the general strike probably lost them support in Catalonia. Certainly they could point to the ineffectiveness of anarchist tactics. However, as has been emphasised, by February 1902 many workers genuinely believed that for the metalworkers to win their strike there was no choice but to call a general strike in solidarity. In this atmosphere it was relatively easy for the anarchists to portray the Socialists as collaborating with the authorities, and working for the defeat of the Catalan labour movement because it was not in their hands. Indeed, Josep Comaposada was later to admit that, “support for the idea of (a general strike) spread like lightning, making it totally impossible for its detractors to use reasoned argument against it. Whoever did so was not only considered to be anti-revolutionary and therefore and

75. See the comments of the Barcelona correspondent of the Mahon anarchist weekly El Porvenir del Obrero, quoted in ES, 13 May 1903.

76. ES, 27 February, 7 March 1902.

77. ES, 18 April, 14 October 1902.
enemy of the working class, but was also seen as working for the defeat of the metalworkers. Such was the general belief. Comaposada was, in fact, able to experience this reaction at first hand, for along with three other Socialists he was expelled from the Barcelona shoemakers union, La Igualtat. Toribio Reoyo, for his part, was expelled from the compositors union, L'Art d'Imprimir.

Despite this experience the Catalan Socialists maintained the same stance in 1903, and took advantage of the failure of the general strike in favour of the workers of Reus to form what could be called an anti-general strike front. Under Socialist guidance a number of unions held meetings on 9 and 14 February, in which they rejected the use of the general strike. They also decided to form a new local federation and published a manifesto. This manifesto did not reject the general strike per se, but argued that it could only be put into practice when bourgeois society was ripe to be overthrown. At present, it maintained, the working class's lack of culture and consciousness made this impossible. And in these circumstances, it concluded, the declaration of general strikes could only result in repression of the labour movement and, therefore, would strengthen the bourgeoisie.

The manifesto was signed by 19 unions, most of which had been in close contact with the Socialists between 1899 and 1902. The UGT central committee also sent a letter of support, and urged these unions to form a new labour federation which would wean the working class away from anarchist influence. Nevertheless, the Barcelona Socialists did not significantly increase their support in working class circles during the year. In February they did form a Catalan Socialist federation, and they began publishing a new Catalan Socialist weekly called La Guerra Social. However, its impact in Barcelona was limited. Thus, the Centre de Societats Obreres had been closed down after the February 1902 general strike, but despite the intentions of the unions which had signed the manifesto no replacement was opened during the following year. Clearly the high level of class conflict was still a barrier to Socialist recruitment in Barcelona, with the result that in the Summer of 1903 La Guerra Social was forced to admit that it was the anarchists who had the greatest influence in working class circles.

78. La Justicia Social, 16 June 1910.
79. La Guerra Social, 4 April 1903; EP, 8 August 1903.
80. ES, 27 February 1903.
81. ES, 14 February 1903.
82. La Guerra Social, 27 June, 4 July 1903. The connection between fierce social conflict and anarchist influence was, indeed, recognised by El Socialista. Thus, in the Summer of 1903 it commented disapprovingly on the large number of strikes that had broken out in Barcelona and a number of Andalusian towns. It the stated that in Barcelona the unions lacked the necessary cohesion to put forward such ambitious demands, and claimed that: "The object of these strikes, more than to achieve a positive result,
Between 1888 and 1903, then, the Socialists failed to conquer the leadership of Catalonia's labour unions. One of the main reasons for this failure, it has been argued in this chapter, was that by the turn of the century their trade union practice was unsuitable to Catalan conditions. It was the Madrid Socialist leadership who had first emphasised that in order to build up a strong organisation it was necessary to adopt a prudent trade union strategy. Such a policy was easy to pursue in a city in which capitalist development had had only a limited impact on the dominant artisanal trades, and where, consequently, relations between masters and men were still relatively cordial. The UGT was, as a result, a great success in Madrid, and by the first decade of the century about half of its members came from Madrid province.

Madrid was the power base of Spanish Socialism, and it was therefore the conduct of industrial relations in Madrid that shaped official union and party practice. In Catalonia, moreover, the Socialists first taste of trade union organisation had been within the reformist TCV. This fact tended to reinforce the Catalan Socialists' support for the policy of the Madrid based PSOE. Indeed, the Barcelona Socialists had never totally split with the TCV, and they would often work together against the anarchists. Thus, between 1890 and 1893 members of the TCV participated in the Socialists' May day demonstrations. Later in the decade, in 1899, the remnants of the Barcelona TCV joined the Centre de Societats Obreres, and two of its leading figures, Ramón Fontanals and Joan Vidal, became members of the Centre's committee. In addition, between 1899 and 1903, the TCV once again attended the Socialists' May day meetings.

However, in Catalonia from the mid-1880s class conflict became increasingly intense. Furthermore, until the late 1890s the authorities dealt with labour protest with a heavy hand. From about 1900 the state made some attempt to put labour relations on a more stable footing but, as the example of the destruction of the FTE demonstrates, it was still on occasion prepared to take decisive action against union organisation. Of course, class conflict and state repression were closely interrelated phenomena, for it was in areas in which there was a high level of class conflict that the state felt it necessary to defend the interests of capital and "restore order". The break up of the FTE was a particularly severe blow for the Socialists, because it deprived them of their principal trade union base in Catalonia. Nevertheless, in some of the Alta Muntanya textile towns - especially in the Ter Valley - the Socialists still retained some support. This was probably because traditions of bureaucratic union organisation, which stretched back to the days of the old Catalan TCV, still put a break on anarchist recruitment in these areas.

seems to be to produce the stoppage of the greatest number of trades possible. This is what the anarchists long for." ES, 3 July 1903.

83. Santos Julí, op cit, pp. 29-30, 87-92, 166.

84. LP, 30 May 1899, NE.
Unlike the Socialists, the anarchists thrived on intense social conflict. Between 1899 and 1903, therefore, they were able to organise a coalition of forces in favour of militant union tactics, and the mobilisation of working class protest against state policies. The anarchists were favoured by the fact that most Catalan workers had been unable to structure professionally run craft or industrial labour federations. On the contrary, as was emphasised in Chapter Four, outside the textile industries paid officials were not employed. Union committees were highly democratic and were made up of workers who dealt with union business in their spare time. Most workers had found it impossible to organise effectively in the 1890s, and so between 1900 and 1903 (as between 1910 and 1914) they were eager for their grievances to be redressed. In addition because there were no union bureaucracies to hold back rank and file militants in the heated atmosphere of the mass meetings it was easy for the most radical propositions to win the day. This was especially the case as unions tended to be unstable, and so shop floor activists feared that if action were not taken immediately enthusiasm would wear off and the chance would be lost. 85

It was within this context that anarchist direct action could seem a plausible strategy. The anarchists, therefore, tended to have the greatest support in trades in which industrial relations were poor. This support does not seem to have been limited to any specific group of workers. Thus the anarchists could gain the backing of artisanal workers, like the bricklayers and compositors, and of industrial workers such as cotton textile power-loom weavers and carters. What, however, does seem to have been a common element was that workers in unions under anarchist influence tended to look outside the narrow confines of their trade for support from other sections of the working class. Indeed, it was the anarchists rather than the Socialists who took the lead in advocating the formation of unions which cut across craft lines. From about 1907, in typically syndicalist fashion, this stance developed into a policy in favour of the formation of industrial unions. 86

In contrast, those unions which remained within the Barcelona Socialists’ sphere of influence for a number of years did not usually represent workers in the most conflictive trades. This, for example, was the case of the marblers in the construction industry, and the copper boilermakers in metallurgy. Both maintained close links with the Socialists from 1889-1890 right through to 1914. In each case the union represented a trade which remained somewhat aloof from the major industrial conflicts in their respective industry. It was also notable that during the 1890s the Catalan Socialists built up nuclei of support amongst artisanal workers in the towns of Tarragona and Sitges south of Barcelona. From the turn of the century they were also able to dominate union organisation in Reus and Tortosa. Indeed, by the end of the decade their relative

85. See Chapter Four, pp. 122, 138-139.
86. Chapter Seven, p. 260.
strength in these areas contrasted with their lack of support in Barcelona itself. A common denominator of the labour relations in the artisanal trades in these areas appears to have been a lower level of industrial conflictivity than that apparent in the Catalan capital itself.87

However, although the 60-odd Barcelona unions in some way linked to the anarchists favoured a more combative stance than that advocated by the Socialists, they did not accept all aspects of anarchist ideology. Many were clearly not committed supporters of the anarchist cause. Thus relatively few unions sent delegates or even adhered to the FRESR's national congress's, and less than 30 seem to have affiliated to pro-anarchist local federation formed at the end of 1901. Indeed, as has been stressed, not all the speakers at the 1901 rallies organised by Leopoldo Bonafulla and his colleagues were unambiguously anarchist. In fact once one descends from the level of the political leadership to that of the trade union rank and file it becomes increasingly difficult to fit workers into such neat categories as anarchist, Socialist or republican. Thus, as we shall see in the next chapter, many workers could quite happily go to anarchist trade union meetings and then vote republican at election time.

The gap between anarchist ideologues and the union base can also be seen over the question of the role of the state. Anarchists rejected all forms of state intervention. Yet many workers close to the anarchist camp did not see all social legislation as a sham, and indeed hoped that the implementation of the act limiting the use female and child labour would lead to an improvement in working conditions. The Barcelona mechanics, for example, explicitly came out in favour of such an act in a booklet they published in 1900 setting out their union statutes.88 Furthermore, there were tensions between the anarchist ideal of trade union organisation and reality. Few union statutes had such impeccably anarchist credentials as those of the Barcelona textile workers union formed in 1901. Thus, despite anarchist claims that not money but energy was needed to win industrial disputes, most Barcelona unions tried to build up some kind of strike fund, and some paid accident benefits. This last category included the Barcelona bricklayers.89

Moreover, the anarchists' claim that outside agencies should not be brought into negotiations over working conditions were not taken very seriously. In fact Barcelona civil governors were constantly involved in discussions aimed at solving industrial disputes. Such discrepancies could lead to serious policy disagreements between the anarchist elite and trade union activists. A good example such a conflict was the 1901-1902 metalworkers' strike. Despite the

87. For a quantitative survey of Socialist nuclei in Catalonia see, Xavier Cuadrat, Socialismo y Anarquismo en Cataluña (1899-1911). Los Orígenes de la CNT (Madrid, 1976), pp.17-37, 131-156.

88. Sindicato de Cerrajeros Mecánicos de Barcelona y sus Contornos. Reglamento Interior (Barcelona, 1900).

89. LP, 18 August 1900.
fact that the anarchists were very influential within the Metalworkers' Federation, in January 1902 the metalworkers' union leadership discussed a possible solution to the dispute with the civil governor and a commission of politicians. Indeed, it was only because of the total intransigence of the metallurgical bourgeoisie that the anarchists' arguments finally won the day and February general strike was called.

A particularly extreme example of the tension which could exist between the anarchist theoreticians and the trade union rank and file is provided by the example of Sabadell. Sabadell, one of the areas of greatest anarchist support outside Barcelona. Socialism never took root in the town. The reasons appear at least in part to have been contingent. As has been suggested the Socialists entered Catalan trade unionism through the contacts they established with the TCV. The woollen textile workers, however, never joined the TCV and were consequently less exposed to Socialist influence. Instead from the 1880s it was the anarchists who were to establish themselves as the dominant force in Sabadell trade unionism.

As was noted in Chapter Three, in 1899 the Sabadell trade unions were able to form a local labour federation, the Federació Obrera Sabadellenca (FOS), which was to publish El Trabajo. The most influential figure within the FOS, and the director of El Trabajo when it reappeared, was the woollen power-loom weaver, Carlos Piazza. Under Piazza's leadership the FOS stressed the need for the labour movement to be well organised. In practical terms this meant that unions affiliated to the FOS were required to pay dues, and it was agreed in 1901 that Carlos Piazza become a paid official.90 These decisions were defended in syndicalist terms. Thus it was argued that only when the the workers were united and their unions strong would they be able to carry out the revolutionary general strike.91 As in the case of the Socialists, however, this perspective tended to push the revolution into the indefinite future, and therefore set the FOS apart from the dominant tendency in Barcelona anarchism.

Paradoxically, there were at the same time a group of hard line anarchists in Sabadell who published articles in the anarchist weekly La Protesta. Between 1899 and 1900 La Protesta was published in Valladolid by Ernesto Alvarez. Ernesto Alvarez came from Madrid and was a compositor by trade. He had worked together with Pablo Iglesias in the Madrid compositors union, but had in the early 1880s been won over to anarchism.92 He had over the next ten years developed close contacts with the Catalan anarchists, and La Protesta therefore carried frequent articles on the Catalan labour movement.

90. For the FOS's statutes see, ET, 18 April 1903.
91. ET, 12 January 1901.
92. Santiago Castillo, "Orígenes", p. 27.
The Sabadell anarchists were more sectarian than those grouped around Leopoldo Bonafulla. Unlike Bonafulla they opposed co-operation with other left-wing groups and favoured overt anarchist control over the unions. Through La Protesta these anarchists maintained a constant critique of the FOS. During 1899 they argued that it was authoritarian and excessively centralised. Moreover, they maintained that through its support for industrial tribunals and because of its attempts to achieve an impossible harmony between capital and labour the FOS was in reality perpetuating the exploitation of the working class. 93

The veteran anarchist Jaume Sallent was the most regular contributor in La Protesta. As an example of the FOS's reformism he outlined its behaviour during the 1899 Seydoux strike. According to Sallent, when the Sabadell working class had declared a spontaneous general strike in support of Seydoux they had shown themselves willing to stay out until the dispute had been won. Despite this, he continued, a commission named by the FOS asked the industrialists to reopen their factories, and signed a document in which it promised that the blacklegs who worked inside the Seydoux plant would face no further harassment. Sallent finally went on to claim that, “the woollen workers are to blame for all that has gone on, because they are the most numerous and reactionary branch (of the FOS)”. 94 In January 1900 this group of anarchists stated that the Sabadell bricklayers, cabinetmakers and brickmakers had left the FOS and intended to form a separate local federation. 95 This comment seems to indicate which were the most radical unions in Sabadell. The anarchist hopes were not, however, to be realised, for no other federation was formed.

In order to gain more influence in Catalonia an agreement was reached between groups of anarchists from Barcelona, Sabadell and Terrassa to publish La Protesta in Sabadell from June 1900. The experiment was not, however, to be a success. These anarchists had a significant influence in the union of various trades (oficios varios) but not in the rest of the Sabadell labour movement. This can be seen from the memoirs of Alba Rosell. Rosell was at this time a young power-loom weaver who had recently been attracted to anarchism. On hearing that La Protesta was to be published in Sabadell he offered his help to Jaume Sallent, who informed him: “Some of us are active in the woodworkers, bricklayers and printers unions, but in general we do not intervene in La Obrera (i.e., the FOS) because the atmosphere is not propitious.” 96 La Protesta, therefore, received little support, and was forced to return to Valladolid in October.

93. La Protesta, 9 September 1899.
94. La Protesta, 19 January 1901.
95. La Protesta, 19 January 1900.
96. Alba Rosell, Recuerdos I, p. 78.
Nevertheless, during 1901 the FOS was to develop closer ties with the Barcelona anarchists. The Sabadell woollen power-loom weavers joined the FRESR in January 1901. In the same month Carlos Piazza died, and publication of *El Trabajo* was suspended until October. When it reappeared it took a more openly anarchist line. Moreover, two Sabadell delegates attended the FRESR's second congress held in October. After the congress the FOS decided to form a "Propaganda and Organisation Committee" to put into effect the resolutions passed at the congress, and hoped in the near future to organise another congress in Barcelona, which would found a district labour federation integrated within the FRESR.97

This period of open co-operation culminated in February 1902 when the Sabadell labour movement enthusiastically seconded the Barcelona general strike. In 1903, however, tensions began to resurface. Thus, no Sabadell delegate attended the FRESR's third congress held in Madrid in May 1903. Moreover, at the beginning of August *El Trabajo* declared that it was not sorry that the general strike to secure the release of Spain's political prisoners had failed, because badly organised stoppages always ended in bloody repression. Later in the month the woollen power-loom weavers attended a congress held by the Socialists in Badalona in order to set up a new textile federation.98 The federation failed to take off, but the uneasy relationship between the anarchists and Sabadell weavers was again exposed.

During the years 1899-1903, then, the Sabadell labour movement formed what might be termed the right-wing of Catalan anarchism. It operated within the sphere of anarchist influence, but laid great stress on the need for solid union organisation, and was wary of militant direct action tactics. The woollen power-loom weavers were the strongest supporters of this stance. Underlying their position was the nature of social relations in the woollen textile industry. As was stressed in Chapter Three class conflict in cotton textiles had not reached the extremes it had in some other branches of Catalan industry, with the result that the woollen weavers were - with the exception of those in the Seydoux factory - able to reach negotiated settlements to industrial disputes. Consequently, they were suspicious of the anarchists' all or nothing tactics.

This does not, however, mean that the criticisms of the FOS were of no relevance to the anarchist wing of the labour movement. As we have seen, by 1903 it seemed clear that to call a general strike on every possible occasion did not represent a serious trade union strategy. Moreover, the practice of founding labour confederations in which unions affiliated paid no dues had proved a failure. This was highlighted by the fate of the FRESR. Despite the efforts of the Confederation's second congress there was little contact between the unions nominally affiliated. This is shown by the fact that the FRESR's Regional Offices continued to complain that they

97. ET, 26 January, 12 December 1901, 1 February 1902.
98. ET, 15 August, 29 August 1903; *La Guerra Social*, 12 September 1903.
received very few voluntary contributions to running costs. Thus although Federico Urales
claimed that in October 1901 the FRESR had 73,000 members - over twice as many as the UGT -
this was simply a paper figure, and had very bearing on reality.\(^9\) However, in the Autumn of
1903 the Catalan labour movement went into rapid decline. It was not until later in the decade that
there was any serious discussion of these questions.

\(^9\) EP, 10 January 1903; Federico Urales, op cit, p. 72. El Socialista was very fond of joking about the
difference between the FRESR's supposed membership, and the funds it received. See, for example,
ES, 6 June 1902.
The years between 1899 and 1903 not only marked a revival of trade union organisation. They were also to witness a rapid politicisation of Catalan society. The detonator of this process was Spain's loss of her last colonies - Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines - after a short and militarily disastrous war with the United States. This defeat followed two years of fighting between the Spanish army and Cuban separatists. Until this date, outside working class circles, criticism of the Restoration political system had generally been muted. Some middle class intellectuals had argued that inefficient government was the root cause of Spain's economic backwardness, but in most of the country their views had little echo. The events of 1898 changed all of this. The remnants of Spain's once vast colonial empire had been lost precisely at a time when Europe's major capitalist states had begun to consolidate their own empires. This led to a heightened sense of the disparity in wealth and power between, on the one hand Spain, and on the other the United States, Britain and Germany, and to much anguished debate on the reasons behind the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon powers. It was generally agreed that the undemocratic, corrupt and inefficient official parties of the Restoration system bore the lions share of the responsibility. Accordingly, plans were drawn up for the formation of new political groupings which would carry through a thoroughgoing modernisation of the Spanish state and economy. 1

This movement, which was soon to be known as regenerationism, gained widespread support. Outside the narrow circles of the financial and agrarian oligarchy all social classes had their economic grievances. The colonies provided a vital outlet for Catalan manufactures. The industrial bourgeoisie - and in particular the cotton textile manufacturers - therefore feared that the end of their monopoly in these markets would prove a decisive obstacle in the way of further economic development. Farmers throughout Spain argued that no attention was being paid to irrigation and hydraulic works programmes which could lead to great increases in yield, while retailers and industrialists saw their chances of advancement blocked by the poverty in which most of the population lived. Moreover, the new climate of social unrest and heated political debate provided an opportunity for politicians on the left to mobilise the working class against the men and policies of the Restoration system.

It was in urban Catalonia that this protest movement achieved the greatest consistency. Up until 1898, as we have seen, Catalonia's haute bourgeoisie had supported the Restoration system. Many of its political representatives favoured administrative decentralisation, but this goal was pursued within the dynastic parties and not by a separate political formation. Yet, between 1874 and 1898 an important shift was to take place in the balance of forces within the ruling oligarchy. In the 1870s the weight of industrial interests in the oligarchic block was slight. Indeed, it has been suggested that even in Catalonia agrarian and financial interests were still predominant in bourgeois circles. However, through to the end of the century Catalonia continued to industrialise. In the rest of the peninsula only Asturias and the Basque country followed suit. Accordingly, in 1898 the gap between the increasingly industrial Catalan economy and the rural based economies of most other Spanish regions was wider than ever before. 2

As a result, the Catalan industrial bourgeoisie had grown more powerful, and was more aware of the breaks imposed on the region's economic development by the dominant oligarchy. However, it was only with the loss of Spain's remaining colonies that many Catalan industrialists finally despaired at the ability of the Restoration system's governing classes to create a modern (authoritarian) capitalist state. The result of the "disaster" of 1898 was, therefore, a break between key elements within the Catalan haute bourgeoisie and the dominant classes within the Spanish state. Over the next three years their political representatives made contact with a group of Catalanists who favoured intervention in the political process. They were to be found in the Centre Nacional Catalá under the leadership of Enric Prat de la Riba. Few within the haute bourgeoisie had previously paid much attention to Catalanism. But, it could now provide an ideological rational to the industrialists' realisation that, too weak to take control of central government, it would only be through political decentralisation that they would be able to play a leading role in shaping Catalonia's future development. 3

Nonetheless, the Catalan bourgeoisie moved cautiously. At first it supported the Conservative Silvela-Polavieja ministry which, on taking power in March 1899, pledged itself to "revolution from above" (i. e., to reform from within the system). The new ministry was, however, soon to take two decisions which were to alienate its Catalan supporters. The first cause of disagreement was new taxes on trade and industry introduced by the minister of finance, Raimundo Fernandez Villaverde. These taxes aimed to reduce the massive budget deficit run up during the colonial wars. They were progressive in nature and, indeed, proved important revenue


earners. Yet in Catalonia it was precisely those classes most willing to support the Government who were the most affected. In Barcelona it was not the large-scale industrialists who reacted most virulently but the shopkeepers. The shopkeepers had already been badly hit by wartime taxes and by the depression of 1895 and 1898, and many feared that the new fiscal measures could result in their bankruptcy. Their protest gave a significant popular edge to opposition to the new tax, and will be dealt with in the following section.

The second and perhaps even more important cause for disagreement between the Ministry and Catalan bourgeoisie was the Government's decision not to implement the so-called Concert Econòmic. The Government had previously agreed to the Concert after negotiations with the bourgeoisie's political representatives. Through it the amount paid by Catalonia into the coffers of central government was to be subject to a pact between the Government and the Catalan provincial councils. The Ministry's backtracking on this point was taken as a sign that it was not really interested in undertaking a programme of reforms favourable to Catalan industry.

It was as a reaction to these measures that the most powerful elements within the Catalan bourgeoisie allied with the Centre Nacional Català to form a new party with a programme of political autonomy for Catalonia. This party, known as the Lliga Regionalista, was founded in April 1901. The match had several advantages. As in other parts of Europe the Catalan bourgeoisie was too intelligent to form a party which obviously defended its own class interests, but instead aimed to fashion a political force which could appear to represent those of society as a whole. Catalanism could form the basis for such a force, for it provided an interclass ideology which could appeal to everyone who lived in the country. The Lliga was, as a result, able to use the argument that its mission was to defend Catalonia against hostile central governments as a means of mobilising mass support. This argument was made more credible by the fact that Catalanists had already in the 1880s gained a certain support with sections of the petty and middling bourgeoisie, and amongst more reformist elements within the labour movement. As shall be seen this support was to grow rapidly during 1899. The alliance between Catalanists and industrialists was made possible by the majority of members of the Centre Nacional Català were socially conservative. The Lliga did, in its first years, have a minority liberal wing. However, the dominance of the conservatives can be seen, for example, in the party's support for corporate rather the universal suffrage, and - of more importance for our study - in the continued criticisms to be found in its mouthpiece, La Veu de Catalunya, of the strike movements of these years. Consequently, the Lliga came to be seen as the “party of order” in Catalonia.

Discontent was, however, by no means limited the the region's industrialists. In Barcelona the petty bourgeoisie, with shopkeepers at the forefront, reacted to Villaverde's fiscal reforms by

4. Ibid, pp.167-211.
refusing to pay their taxes. This protest movement, known as the \textit{tancament de caixes}, was to last from June through to November 1899. Within Spain middle class opposition to the régime had already been most notable in Catalonia. The Catalanists had since the early 1880s gained support in petty bourgeoys circles and played a key role in a similar protest movement during 1882. Nevertheless, the campaign represented by far the greatest mobilisation of this class since the days of the First Republic. The protests led to the imprisonment of a number of shopkeepers and to the declaration of martial law in Barcelona province. They were not ultimately to be successful. However, the campaign quickly acquired Catalanist overtones and, as J. Marian Pirretas, a leading figure in the protest pointed out, its most salient long term effect was to create a "decentralising" and "regionalist" mentality amongst "middle and well-to-do classes". Industrialists affiliated to the \textit{Foment} gave their support to the shopkeepers even though they had serious reservations as to the advisability of taking such drastic action. They were also supported by Catalanists in the \textit{Centre Nacional Català}. As a result, these industrialists and Catalanists were able to present themselves as the voice of the shopkeepers and, therefore, convert much of this protest to support for the party they were in the process of founding. Consequently, during the first decade of the century the \textit{Lliga Regionalista} had an important middle and lower middle class base.

The Barcelona working class, however, was largely absent from this campaign. Protest against the new taxes seems only to have generated some support amongst shop assistants and amongst the most reformist sectors of the labour movement. Outside middle class circles a "Permanent Commission" was formed to support the shopkeepers demands. It consisted mainly of shop workers, though it did include the Catalan Socialist, Basilio Martín Rodríguez. However it played virtually no active role in the dispute. 

The only working class institutions to back the protest were the \textit{Ateneus Obrers}. The most important of these, the \textit{Ateneu Obrer de Barcelona}, had already taken part in a campaign organised by the \textit{Foment} in 1898 against the concession of any measure of autonomy for Cuba, and supported all the protest movements involving the bourgeois and middle classes which led up to the foundation of the \textit{Lliga} in 1901. However, these \textit{Ateneus} were by the turn of the century the foremost representatives of the reformist tradition of working class politics which, as has been seen, had its heyday in the early 1880s. That this was the case was made clear by the \textit{Ateneus' internal structure}. They were basically educational establishments. There were two types of members: full members, who attended classes, and honorary members. These were persons of

\begin{itemize}
\item 6. LP, 30 June 1899, ME, 6 July, ME.
\item 7. Borja de Riquer, \textit{Lliga Regionalista}, p. 96.
\end{itemize}
high social standing who gave donations. The *Ateneus* accepted government subsidies, and were quick to invite the civil and military authorities to the prize giving ceremonies they held at the beginning of each academic year. At the same time their publications were class collaborationist. Thus they emphasised the importance of self betterment through saving, and encouraged their working class readership to try and set up as small-scale industrialists. 8

Working class sympathy for the middle class's demands did not, however, extend outside these rather narrow reformist circles. The reason behind the bourgeoisie's inability to mobilise working class support behind its demands at least in part lies in the heightened industrial conflict and growing social divide visible in late nineteenth century Catalan society. The result, was has been noted, was the appearance of a fairly well defined working class culture and anti-capitalist ideology. Consequently, the *Lliga Regionalista* would be unable to gain a significant working class following, even though it disguised bourgeois interests behind the slogan “the defence of Catalonia”. This transformation in the workers' mentality was particularly clear in the case of cotton textiles. This was stressed by Josep Comaposada who, in an intelligent analysis, observed that the protectionist campaigns launched by the cotton textile industrialists between 1884 and 1886 were supported by all sections of the population including the working class. As a result of this pressure, he continued, the manufacturers were able to get their protectionist schemes approved. Under the new conditions the industrialists were to earn great sums of money. However the workers, he observed, did not benefit from the new conjuncture. On the contrary, any move they made to improve their working conditions was bitterly opposed by their employers. It was, he concluded, these same industrialists who were the leading figures within Catalanism, and who again called for the workers' support. The workers, however, had learnt from experience to take no notice. 9

Josep Comaposada, in his analysis, implied there was a link between Catalanism and bourgeois interests. It was the Spanish Socialists, whose opposition to regionalist or nationalist demands was well known, who most vociferously denounced such links. In 1899, for example, they celebrated the lack of working class participation in the *tancament*. According to *El Socialista* the protest movement only benefited the bourgeoisie. It maintained that the workers knew this and

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8. This section is based on a reading of, *Revista del Ateneo Obrero de Barcelona*, 1886-1908; *Boletín del Ateneo Obrero de Gracia*, 1904-1906; *Fomento Martinense* (*Ateneo Obrero*), 1905; *Rayo de Luz, Boletín del Ateneo de San Andres de Palomar*, 1908-1911. The only important work on the Ateneus is, Pere Solà, *Els Ateneus Obrers i la Cultura Popular a Catalunya*, 1900-1939. *El Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular* (Barcelona, 1978). We would, therefore, agree with Josep Termes that there was a pro-Catalanist sentiment within the Ateneus at this time, but not with the implication that this could be extended to the rest of the labour movement. See Josep Termes, "Els Ateneus Populares: un intent de Cultura Obrera", *L'Avenc*, no.104 (March 1987), pp. 9-11.

that they therefore opposed the *tancament* in the name of working class internationalism. Thus it stated: 10

Yesterday the Biscayans (i.e., the Biscayan workers), by refusing to doff their caps to the sounds of the *Guernicaco*; today the Catalans, by not adding their voice to that chorus of hatred, *Els Segadors*; have clearly shown that they recognise their class interests and know that they have stronger ties with the workers of Castile than with the likes of Chavaří, Alzola, Sedó, and Sallarés, the vampires of their respective regions.

The Catalan Socialists fully supported their Spanish colleagues in this respect, and used their influence in the Catalan trade union press to denounce Catalanism. To give but one example, Amparo Martí stated in the pages of *Revista Fabril* in April 1900: 11

The (textile) workers of Catalonia are especially praiseworthy for federating and uniting with the workers of other regions and thereby demonstrating their clear judgement, avoiding the pitfalls put in their way by the followers of regionalism, whose retrograde and archaic ideal does not prosper amongst the workers, because they know perfectly well that their common enemy is capital, and against it they unite to counter, through continuous and well informed action, the abuses and oppressions it daily commits against the wages and dignity of the workers.

However, it was not only the Socialists who adopted an anticatalanist stance. When *El Socialista* criticised the *tancament* in 1899 it received letters of support from the Barcelona coachmen’s union, and from the Barcelona based railway workers’ union, the *Sindicato General de Ferrocarriles*. This last letter was written by the union’s General Secretary, Luis Zurdo Olivares. As was seen in the previous chapter, Zurdo Olivares who a republican who had developed close contacts with the Barcelona anarchists. As in the case of *El Socialista*, Zurdo Olivares argued that it was the bourgeoisie that was behind the antigovernment agitation of 1899, and stated: 12

We who are not Catalans, nor Basques, nor Castilians, nor anything but workers fighting against capital and in favour of universal brotherhood; we who do not allow ourselves to be deluded by the conjuring tricks of the bourgeoisie, who bled us in Melilla, in Cuba and in the Philippines, and who take advantage of any event so that Jesuitism - which in these commotions plays the first card - might show its hand. We protest at the cries of “down (with Castile)” heard in Barcelona, and at the “tole tole”, the rallying cry of the bourgeois press in Madrid and various provinces.

The potent mix of anti-capitalist and anticlerical rhetoric visible in the letter will be commented on shortly. For the present it may be noted that Zurdo Olivares also contrasted bourgeois Catalanism with working class internationalism.

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10. ES, 20 October 1899.
11. RF, 20 April 1900. This was not necessarily a view unanimously held by the leadership of the FTE, but it does seem significant that it should appear on the second page of *Revista Fabril*’s first number.
12. ES, 27 October 1899.
Most anarchists took a similar stance. Anselmo Lorenzo was already well known for his anticatalanist views, and Francesc Ferrer suffered from an “anticatalanist phobia”. More important, those anarchists grouped around Leopoldo Bonafulla’s El Productor were also strongly critical of the dominant current within Catalanism. Thus, for example, in a meeting held in 1901 to protest at the repression of the strike in La Coruña, “Teresa Claramunt attacked Catalanism, and defended human brotherhood and the universal fatherland. She said that the Catalanists wanted a free Catalonia but the Catalans to be slaves”. 14

At the turn of the century, then, Catalanism and bourgeois interests were conflated by a wide spectrum of working class opinion. This identification seems to have originated in the mid-1880s, from which time Catalanism became, socially, increasingly conservative. However, it was greatly reinforced between 1899 and 1901 when key sectors of the bourgeoisie - albeit very cautiously - swung behind the Centre Nacional Català. It has it is true recently been argued that the labour movement’s criticisms were aimed exclusively at the Lliga not at Catalanists per se, and that an alternative popular Catalanism could be seen in working class circles. 15 However, for our period at least, this interpretation raises a number of serious objections. In the first place, the majority of anarchists showed little sympathy for Catalanist ideals. In Barcelona a small number of anarchists grouped around the magazine L’Avenir were favourably inclined towards Catalanist demands, but they had almost no influence within the trade unions. 16 The mainstream anarchists (and of course Socialists) did not offer any left wing alternative to the Catalanism of the Lliga based on an analysis of the relationship between national and class oppression. Instead they stated that they were opposed to all “particularisms”, and proclaimed that the future anarchist society would be a “great region, a single fatherland covering all the earth, which would not legislate on custom or dress and would proclaim the people’s right to live outside (or perhaps beyond) the harsh rule of the exploiters, however they be disguised”. 17 For this reason the anarchists did not defend the use of Catalan but argued that all men should speak a single universal language. They believed this language could be esperanto, and therefore encouraged working class unions and cultural associations to teach it. 18

14. LP, 21 July 1901, NE.
17. EP, 13 July 1901.
18. ET, 12 November 1904, 13 October 1906; Congreso de Constitución de la CNT, pp. 53-56. 89.
Indeed, the fact that bourgeois interests dominated Catalanism seems to have had a profound impact on the Catalan workers' vision of the place of the Catalan language and culture in society. Information on this question is naturally scanty. Nevertheless, an incident at one of the meetings held in 1901 to protest at the repression of the La Coruña strike seems significant. During July and August of that year, *La Veu de Catalunya* had on several occasions criticised the conclusions reached at meetings held by the Barcelona trade unions. In this particular meeting held on 11 August, Segalás, a representative of one of the unions present and an anarchist sympathiser: "Began by stating that he was speaking in Catalan, but that he was ashamed of addressing them in the same language in which *La Veu de Catalunya* was written."19 A large crowd was present but no protests were to be heard. In fact, so widespread was criticism of Catalanism within the trade unions that in a meeting held in 1900 the leading figures in the Barcelona TCV, Ramon Fontanals and Joan Vidal - who were trying to dispel their class collaborationist image - joined in, stating: "That behind the Catalanist whistles hide the industrialists' protests at the freedom of the workers to unionise, and the reactionaries' protest at the pardon conceded to the victims of the Cambios Nuevos trial. For this reason they warned the workers not to be manipulated by the reactionaries."20

It should be emphasised that the relationship between Catalanism and social class was to change over time. Over the following two decades the bourgeoisie would find it difficult to maintain their dominant position in the Catalanist camp. During much of the nineteenth century the Catalan bourgeoisie had undergone a process of "Castilianisation", renouncing the Catalan language in favour of Castilian, which was more acceptable in polite society. The break with the central oligarchy was seen by much of this class primarily in economic terms. A separate political party, it was felt, would be in a stronger position to negotiate concessions from central government. The waving of the Catalan flag might be a useful means of gaining mass support. However, it should not get in the way of such discussions, and too radical a stance might goad the Spanish military to take action against the *Lliga*, and produce social upheaval in Catalonia itself. It was for this reason that the bourgeoisie's political representatives insisted the new party be called "regionalist" rather than "nationalist" or "Catalanist". As a result, sectors of the urban petty bourgeoisie doubted the sincerity of the industrialists conversion, and argued in favour of the formation of a more democratic and radical political force. Indeed, these demands were voiced by a significant current of opinion within the *Lliga* itself during the first three years after its formation.21 These divisions were to result in a split within the *Lliga* in 1904. And, in December 1906, the

19. *LP*, 11 August 1901, NE.

20. *LP*, 8 May 1900, NE.

dissidents were to found a new party called the Centre Nacionalista Republicà. Yet its moderate centre-left stance attracted only limited working class support. It was not until after 1914 that substantial numbers of workers were to take a more comprehensive position with respect to Catalanism.

Before that time Catalanists whatever their political make-up received little working-class backing. However, as has been emphasised, the politicisation of Catalan society between 1899 and 1903 opened the door to those parties which looked for support to the working class. In the 1890s, only a small percentage of electors bothered to vote at election time. However, once it was clear that the Restoration system was in difficulties this situation was to change dramatically. In Catalonia the transformation of the political landscape was most rapid in Barcelona. In the Catalan capital the Restoration parties had, until the turn of the century, been operating the turno with a fair degree of effectiveness. Yet, in the elections of March 1903 almost 48 per cent of the census voted, and the dynastic caciques were banished from Barcelona. In these elections the Lliga clearly established itself as the party of the right. On the left, on the other hand, the Socialists made no headway. In 1890 they had received only 3,782 votes in the whole of Spain, but 47 per cent of these votes were from Catalonia. Yet in the March 1903 elections, though nationwide the Socialist vote had climbed to 14,500, in Catalonia in absolute terms it had actually declined, and only represented 2 per cent of Socialist voting strength. In Barcelona in 1903 they did not even present a candidature, leaving the door open for the republicans to establish themselves as only political force with a large working class following.

It is particularly noticeable that this growth in political support for the republicans coincided with the increase in anarchist influence within the Barcelona trade unions. This fact raises the question of the exact relationship between anarchism and republicanism. As was noted in the introduction some historians have argued that there existed an “anarcho-republican” cultural milieux in urban Catalonia from which the Socialists were supposedly excluded. An analysis of the development of republicanism between 1899 and 1903, and of the contacts between anarchists, Socialists and republicans during this period makes it possible to appraise the validity of such claims.

The expansion of republicanism during these years was based on solid historical foundations, for despite the introduction of anarchism and Marxism into Spain in the 1870s working class support for the republicans by no means evaporated. In late nineteenth century Catalonia the urban working class and petty bourgeoisie was united in its opposition to the

22. For Catalan electoral data see, Albert Balcells et al, Les Eleccions Generals a Catalunya de 1901 a 1923 (Barcelona, 1982).

Bourbon monarchy and Canovas's Restoration. The republicans derived their support from the fact that they had, since they became a serious political force in the 1860s, been the principal vehicle of this opposition towards undemocratic, centralising, Spanish governments. Like the regenerationists the republicans bitterly criticised the political régime set up after the overthrow of the First Republic. However, they stressed not so much the need for the economic modernisation of Spain, as the necessity to democratise political life. Thus the most popular republican grouping, the so-called Federalists, condemned the turno and called for free and fair elections. At the same time they defended the labour unions against state repression, and drew attention to the class nature of many of the Restoration's policies. They were particularly vociferous in their condemnation of indirect taxes on consumer goods, known as the consumos, because they hit the poor hardest. They also led the opposition to military levies known as quintas. These levies were unjust because they allowed the rich to buy their way out of military service through redemption payments, leaving the sons of peasant and working class families to fight the Spanish oligarchy's colonial wars.

In all of these respects the Federal Republicans remained very much in tune with popular, and particularly working class, ideology. As has been seen, since 1874 the labour movement had been engaged in an almost perpetual struggle with the central authorities. Moreover, the consumos and quintas remained major grievances right through to 1914. Indeed the quintas were never more unpopular than during the colonial wars of 1896-1898. Casualties from the fighting - or more commonly from disease - were very high. As many as 200,000 Spaniards were said to have died in Cuba, with the vast majority, of course, coming from poor backgrounds. As news of these events unfolded so anger the workers anger increased. It reached its peak in 1898-99 when the broken remnants of the Spanish army disembarked in Barcelona and other Catalan ports. At the same time, continued opposition to the payment of the consumos was illustrated by the fact that social and political unrest in urban areas was invariably accompanied by attempts to burn down the tax booths at which they were paid.

The republicans also gave expression to another key element in radical middle class and working class ideology: anticlericalism. In urban Catalonia, until the Canovist Restoration, resentment at the church had been a result of its support for absolutism. This support by no means totally disappeared thereafter. The most notorious religious congregation, the Jesuits, in particular retained close links with the ultramontane Carlists, whilst liberalism was still anathematised from

24. Claudi Ametlla, op cit, p. 112.
26. In Barcelona, for example, during the 1901 tramworkers strike tax booths were burnt. LP, 9 May 1901, ME.
the pulpit. The church did not wish to lose the mass rural base its support for Carlism had given it. Nevertheless, between 1874 and 1898 it made an all out effort to reconquer the new regime's ruling classes. In this it was to be very successful. In Catalonia from the turn of the century much of the clerical hierarchy was to transfer its support to the Lliga. Nevertheless, contacts with the regime were still maintained, especially though the figure of Antonio Maura, the leading Conservative politician of the years 1903-1910. By 1900, then, with the sons of both bourgeois and aristocratic families once again educated in Catholic schools, the power and influence of the church was at its highest point since the promulgation of the disentailment laws. This could be seen in a growing clerical presence, particularly in the cities, coupled with a rapid growth in the number of religious orders, many of which moved to Spain to escape the secularising laws of the French Third Republic.

In Catalonia this interdependence between the church and the dominant classes could be seen in such figures as the financiers, Eusebio Güell and the Marques de Comillas. Their interests included large investments in the colonies. Indeed, it was a shipping company owned by the Marqués, La Transatlántica, that transported troops to Cuba and the Philippines at a handsome profit. In the following decade, with the aid of government subsidies, they were also to invest heavily in Morocco. And, when hostilities broke out with the natives La Transatlántica was once again used to ship out troops. Güell and Comillas were, at the same time, prominent in their support for Catholic educational and beneficial institutions, and workers circles. The latter were seen by the trade unions as centres for the recruitment of blacklegs. Moreover, the link with the colonial wars gave a particularly bitter edge to popular opposition to the church. The interconnections between the church and big business also led left wing republicans to talk of a clerical plutocracy which dominated Spain. In Catalonia this mutual support could be seen in the case of the Lliga Regionalista. Thus it was clear, the church supported the interests of the dominant classes, and these were often defended in religious terms. By attacking the church, therefore, it might appear that the pillars of society would be shaken. In addition, attacks on the church were encouraged by the fact that it was the most visible and - perhaps more important - the most vulnerable part of the ruling order.

Although separated from the centralist oligarchy by economic interest, then, the Catalan bourgeois did not break with the ultra conservative Catalan church. This stance, it should be noted, ran against the tendency visible in France for the bourgeoisie to distance itself from the


29. This point was made by Joaquín Romero Maura, op cit, pp. 534-535.
Church and embrace liberal rationalism. During the nineteenth century liberal rationalism had already gained a great following in urban petty bourgeois and working class circles, and was, indeed, the staple of republican ideology. It presupposed that the major battle lines within society were drawn up between the forces of “liberty”, “science” and “progress” on the one side, and “reaction” and “obscurantism” on the other. The continued links between bourgeoisie and church meant that in Catalonia (as in the rest of Spain) the left remained unchallenged as the champion of progress. However, the fact that political battles were so often conducted in these terms did benefit the bourgeoisie in one respect. The church was seen as the foremost embodiment of the forces of theocratic antiliberalism. Accordingly, it was easy to believe that the main obstacle to progress was not so much the economic power of the bourgeoisie itself as the ideological influence of the church. 30

This antagonism towards the church was, at the same time, encouraged by a number of more prosaic considerations. Most important was the fact that inmates in the church’s beneficial institutions were forced to elaborate artisanal manufactures and, in the case of women, sew, wash, and iron. This was seen as representing unfair competition by both working class families and small-scale industrialists. Anticlericalism was most notable in working class circles. However, the ideals of freethought and liberty still retained a notable power of attraction amongst sectors of the petty bourgeoisie and lower middle class. For this reason, in the late nineteenth century, anticlericalism combined with opposition to reactionary state policies could provide the basis for left-wing popular interclass politics. At a grass roots level the populace’s vision of republican society was perhaps best summarised by the Sabadell Republican, Met Cañamares, who, in a speech made shortly after the overthrow of Isabel II in September 1868 stated: “Citizens: do you know what the Republic means? It means white bread; that everyone should have his own share of meat; it means the abolition of the consumos and of the quintas; that no worker should have to beg when old and above all it means out with the clergy!”31

Such views reflected the belief, which was still held by many workers and petty bourgeois radicals at the turn of the century, that life would be better under a lay, democratic, republic. However, republican politics had by no means flourished during the 1880s and 1890s. The Restoration system had, through its alliance with the caciques, effectively marginalised the republicans from political life. The republicans had not been able to offer a serious challenge to the dynastic parties, and at a local level republicanism tended to splinter into a large number of clubs and discussion circles, which often maintained only the most tenuous links between each other.


This dispersion was reflected at a national level, where a number of republican parties were spawned in the years after 1874.

It would be an exhaustive undertaking to catalogue all the republican groupings which operated in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Basically, however, one could talk of a republican right which was dogmatically liberal and therefore supported only limited state intervention, and which favoured electoral opposition to the regime's official parties. These republicans had a strong petty bourgeois base, but only gained the support of reformist sectors of the labour movement. Then there was a republican left, which supported a comprehensive programme of social reform, and which advocated insurrection against the state. Indeed, between 1888 and 1892 a labourist wing of republicanism was consolidated, and adopted a quasi socialist stance. These left-wing republicans had the greatest working-class support.

By the 1890s the republicans had managed to reduce the diversity of parties. Most Catalan republicans belonged to two coalitions. On the right was to be found the Republican Fusion, and on the left the Revolutionary Republican Union. The Republican Fusion continued to work within the political channels opened up by the Restoration system. The left-wing republicans, however, disgusted by successive governments' manipulation of elections, and continued state repression called for electoral abstention (el retraimiento) as a prelude to armed insurrection. El retraimiento, however, was more a reaction to weakness than a carefully thought out strategy. This is indicated by the fact that these same republicans were to change tack and participate in elections in the more favourable climate after 1898. The fact remained that at its base Catalan republicanism still consisted on a large number of autonomous clubs. These clubs, especially at election time, might agree to follow a specific set of policies and/or a charismatic leader, but remained isolated the rest of the year round. The republicans, therefore, still had neither the electoral machine nor the disciplined organisation structure needed to challenge the official parties effectively. 32

However, the problems faced by the republicans were not only organisational. In the first place, the intensification of class conflict was widening the divide between their middle class and working class supporters. The republican right whose support had largely been based on elements with an ideological affinity to the TCV was, as a result, left in a particularly delicate situation. Secondly, from the 1880s Catalanists had been enticing the republicans petty bourgeois base away with some success, as was to become clear during the 1899 tancament de caixes.

This, then, was the situation in which the Catalan republicans found themselves after the "disaster" of 1898. They did not participate in the agitation which surrounded the tancament. Only the republican right gave its passive support. The left, however, felt alienated from a movement which enjoyed the support of the Catalan bourgeoisie, was led by Catalanists, and which they felt had clear right-wing connotations. Instead the republicans played a leading role in two campaigns launched between 1898 and 1899. The first was in protest at clerical influence in state and society. The second aimed to pressure the government into granting a judicial review of the Montjuïc trial. At a political level, these campaigns were to reveal that despite the problems the republicans had faced, when conditions were favourable they could still attract wide-ranging popular support. At the same time, however, they also confirmed the evidence gleaned from trade union sources that the Socialists had established themselves as an important force in Barcelona working class circles. In the social sphere, the campaigns were to show just what a potent mobilising force anticlericalism could be.

Two incidents - supposed religious involvement in the loss of the last colonies, and the rise to power of the "clerical" Silvela Government served to bring the question of clerical influence in Spain to the fore. The first anticlerical meetings were held in Barcelona in April 1899, with the republicans playing a leading role in their organisation. The meetings were well attended. Their tone was set by the left-wing federalist, Lorenzo Ardid, who stated that if "the advance of reaction" were not halted, then the events of 1835 (when a number of convents were burnt to the ground) would be repeated.

More important, however, was the campaign for the judicial review of the Montjuïc trial, which, as we shall see, also had strong anticlerical overtones. It originated at the end of 1897 when, on returning from exile to Madrid, the Catalan anarchist, Federico Urales, made contact with the young and flamboyant left progressive republican, Alejandro Lerroux. Lerroux was the director of the republican weekly, El Progreso. Already known for his personal courage and vehement oratory, he was fiercely anticlerical, and combined support for the republican left's policy of the retraimiento, with the belief that the Spanish monarchy would only be brought down by a civil-military uprising. Because of his position and leftist reputation, Urales asked Lerroux to launch a campaign in favour of the Montjuïc prisoners. Over the previous months, mounting evidence had come to light that the "confessions" of the accused had been obtained through torture. The importance of Montjuïc as a symbol of government repression within the Catalan working class has already been discussed. Lerroux, who was convinced of the need to mobilise working

35. LP, 16 April 1899, NE, 23 April, NE.
class opposition to the regime, realised the potential of the campaign, and quickly took up Urales' offer. Over the next few months, therefore, El Progreso ran a continuous campaign in support of the Montjuïc prisoners. As a result, sales of the paper rose rapidly in Catalonia, and Lerroux gained a reputation as a champion of the working class.36

In Catalonia the republicans had not unanimously opposed the Montjuïc trial. Nevertheless all were carried along by the campaign. The first meeting was held in February 1898. There was then a long pause, primarily due to the Hispano-American war, before the campaign was renewed at the beginning of 1899. The first important meeting of the year was held in March, but it was between July and September that the campaign reached its climax.

During this campaign the authorities were, naturally a principal target of the speaker's wrath. The Spanish military, whose reputation had suffered grievously as a result of the colonial wars, were also the object of fierce criticism, as was the Catalan bourgeoisie. Finally, every opportunity was taken to attack the influence of the clergy with, as shall be seen, serious consequences. The Summer agitation began on 2 July with a number of meetings held simultaneously throughout Catalonia. The Barcelona meeting was probably the most important of the whole campaign, and serves to illustrate the mobilising potential of anticlericalism and its results. The meeting was attended by about 7000 people, and the speakers included Alejandro Lerroux - on his first visit to Catalonia - and Pablo Iglesias. The popularity which had preceded Lerroux could be seen by the fact his speech, in which he called for armed insurrection against the state, was met by a “delirious ovation”. Pablo Iglesias, on the other hand, had to be content with “loud applause”. An anticlerical element was present in many of the speeches. Most radical was Ferando, the representative of the Sant Martí coopers, who stated that, “the persecution of the workers originated in Caspe street (the location of the largest Jesuit convent in Barcelona) and was supported in another Caspe”. Moreover, in conclusion he: “Alluded to the events of 1835 and (said he) thought that they would be repeated if clericalism kept up its evil influence aimed at the destruction of liberty.”37

Ferando's words were almost to become reality even before he had expected. Thus, after the meeting a part of those present marched on the Jesuits' convent in Caspe street. Once on the scene they hurled a barrage of stones at the building to shouts of “death to reaction and clericalism”. They were finally dispersed by mounted civil guard, and even some of the Jesuits themselves. However, the disturbances continued in the afternoon. First, several priests being chased through the streets and forced to hide in a cavalry barracks. Later, between about 2000 and

36. A brief outline of Lerroux's early career is to be found in Joan B. Culla, op cit, pp.13-23. For the genesis of the Montjuïc campaign see, Federico Urales, op cit., pp.16-65.

37. LP, 2 July 1899, NE.
3000 people, "youngsters in the main", moved down to the petty bourgeois VI district of the left of the Ramblas, and began stoning shop windows. Street lamps were also smashed, and an effort was made to stop all the theatre performances in progress. That night the Sarrià steam train was also attacked, and it was rumoured that the Jesuits' convent had been set on fire.

In the following days, these incidents spread throughout Barcelona. Shop windows and trams were stoned, leading the tram companies to suspend the service on the third. The most serious incident, nevertheless, occurred in the Poble Sec, where only the action of neighbours prevented a religious girls school being burnt to the ground. Anticlerical fervour during these years was not limited to these events. The Montjuïc campaign had to be temporarily halted in the Autumn when the Government suspended constitutional guarantees following the tancament de caixes. It finally drew to a close in April 1900, when the sentences of the remaining prisoners were commuted. However, the highly charged nature of anticlericalism was again revealed in another campaign launched between 1900 and 1901 to limit the number of religious orders in Spain. Large meetings were held in Barcelona on 31 March and 21 April 1901. At the first of these meetings the anarchist militant, López Montenegro, stated that a young girl had been kidnapped by the Jesuits. This revelation was greeted by cries of "let's get her out ourselves", and "let's repeat 1835". Again the meeting was followed by a demonstration which converged on the Jesuit convent in Caspe street, where it was dispersed by the Civil Guard. As an epitaph a few days later on 1 May the Maristas convent in Barcelona was broken into and vandalised.

These incidents - on which up until now little stress has been laid - illustrate a number of important points. A number of years later, in July 1909, during a week long general strike in Barcelona, a number of religious institutions were burnt to the ground. The events of these days were subsequently to be given the name of Tragic Week. The anticlerical protest of the years 1899-1901 demonstrate that the impetus which made events possible was already present. Hatred of the clergy was by this time deeply embedded in working class ideology, and came bubbling to the surface when the moment was propitious. Nor was anticlerical feeling limited to Barcelona. Meetings held in urban Catalonia during these years were almost invariably a great success. In Manlleu, for example, at the end of July 1899 a meeting in support of the judicial review of the Montjuïc prisoners attracted between 4000 and 5000. At the meeting the speakers were interrupted by cries of "down with the Jesuits" and "death to the workers' executioners". "Manlleu has never seen anything like it" was the verdict of the correspondent of La Publicidad.
of the working class could not, therefore, fail to note that anticlericalism was a powerful weapon in their hands. They might also have reflected that if anticlerical sentiment were not channelled effectively it could be released in an orgy of destruction.

This does not seem to have worried some of the more radical republican speakers. The Catalan Socialists, on the other hand, took a more responsible stance, and none called for convents to be burnt down. Nevertheless, they did support the general aim of speakers at the 1899 meetings, which was to reduce the power of the clergy and to replace the turno by a system of democratic government. The Socialists played a very active part in the Montjuic campaign. This was reflected in the fact that when the campaign’s executive committee was chosen in May 1899, although the extremist republican Isac Bulla became president, Toribio Reoyo was elected vice-president. Reoyo was to be a key speaker in the campaign meetings held in Barcelona that Summer. Moreover, those groups and individuals which wished to give their support had to write to the Barcelona PSOE’s labour union, the GCO. 41

The position of the Catalan Socialists was fixed in the speeches made by Toribio Reoyo during that Summer. As has been seen, in the 1899 campaign meetings fierce attacks were made upon the church and state. Many of the speakers combined these criticisms with a call for the unity of all the “forces of progress”. The important point to note in this respect is that Toribio Reoyo supported this stance. Thus, in a speech made in Tarragona he argued that the events surrounding the Montjuic trial, “represent a fight between liberty and reaction, which is trying to impose itself”. He then went on to claim that “the Jesuits have seized all the money in Barcelona”, and that the only role for the army was to massacre the Spanish people. In conclusion he called for “the unity of all liberals”. 42 In a meeting held in Palafrugell later in the same month Reoyo was more explicit as to why the workers should join hands with the republicans. La Publicidad reported:43

Mr Reoyo addressed himself especially to the workers, in order to declare to them that they should direct all their efforts towards carrying out the revolution. However, they should not imagine that they would make up its leadership, because at present, unfortunately, the working class is not educated enough to lead it. “(But) with calm and serenity we will acquire all that is needed to lead the revolution, and will be able to say: long live the working class.”

Josep Comaposada, the second most important Socialist speaker in the campaign, was also bitterly critical of the clergy, although his analysis was in Marxist terms more orthodox in the sense that he closely linked the clergy to the bourgeoisie. However, like Reoyo he favoured a broad left-
wing alliance, and argued that: "If concrete form is not soon given, through concrete deeds, to the unity of all the elements on the left, we will have to resign ourselves to vilification and slavery." 44

The Catalan Socialists' calls for the unity of the left conflicted with the stance adopted by the Madrid hierarchy of the PSOE. As has been seen, the majority of Madrid based Socialists still rejected any kind of alliance with the "bourgeois" republican parties. These differences were aired at the party's fifth congress, held in Madrid between 17 and 20 September 1899. At this congress the Barcelona Socialists tried to overturn the decision taken by the 1888 party congress that under no circumstances should the party sign electoral pacts with the republicans. Thus they presented a motion which asked the question: "In the face of the advance of reaction, is it desirable that the PS should change its tactics with regard to some elements of the bourgeoisie (i.e., the republicans)?" It was only withdrawn when the Madrid section presented a counter motion, which represented an important concession. It argued that the 1888 agreement should remain substantially intact. Yet, it opened the door to cooperation with the "advanced parties of the bourgeoisie" in order to counter any reactionary threat to political liberties. 45

However, the position adopted by the Catalan Socialists was significant in another respect. Some historians have claimed that there were close ideological affinities between republicans and anarchists. Unlike the Marxists, it has been argued, the anarchists and republicans did not see class struggle as the motor of history. Instead they saw the struggle between different sets of ideas as the key to historical change. And, unlike the Socialists, both anarchists and republicans fervently believed in liberal rationalism. 46

The evidence presented above throws such an interpretation into doubt. Though the Catalan Socialists probably did not pursue lay education with the vigour of anarchists and left-wing republicans, they were clearly anticlerical and saw themselves as part of a progressive left which was engaged in a life or death struggle against "reaction". In fact, throughout Europe the membership of so-called Marxist parties continued to be drawn to liberal rationalist thought. Indeed, over Europe as a whole E.J. Hobsbawm points out that, "the period of most rapid growth of official atheism coincides with the heyday of the Second International, 1880-1914". And that in German social democratic libraries Darwin and anticlerical works such as Dodel's Moses were

44. LP, 21 Sept 1899, ME.

45. ES, 22 Sept 1899. Another focus of disagreement was a motion presented by the Alicante branch, which stated that: "Those individuals who support Catholicism or any other religion which is not based on the principles of liberty, morality and laicism, will be excluded from the party except in involuntary or justifiable cases." The motion was supported by Reoyo, but was finally dropped after having been criticised by, among others, Pablo Iglesias.

more widely read than Marx or even Kautsky ever were. Moreover, as we have seen, it would be wrong to suggest that those anarchists closely linked to the labour movement did not see class conflict as the key to change within capitalism. Furthermore, the centre and right of republicanism had little sympathy for the anarchists, and supported the Government's repression of them after the 1890s' bomb outrages. These republicans argued that it was preferable for the labour movement to be Socialist dominated, because the Socialists would lead the workers away from insurrectionism, and under their guidance labour would become a serious and disciplined opposition to the Restoration régime. Nevertheless, it would be true to say that the left of Catalan republicanism had developed contacts with the republicans. These links would grow stronger between 1899 and 1901 and, as a result, both at an economic level and at a political level the Socialists became increasingly marginalised from the mainstream of the Catalan labour movement. This is a question to which we shall return presently.

The campaigns of 1899 had a further result. They had confirmed that the republicans retained wide-ranging popular sympathy. The first signs that the Restoration system was entering crisis also opened up new possibilities. Nevertheless it was clear that to mount a serious challenge to the regime the republicans would have to overhaul their organisational structure and bring their ideology up to date. Finally, it was also obvious that in Barcelona at least the working class would to a large extent have to form the basis of any such opposition. This was particularly the case given the success the Catalanists had had in mobilising middle class protest during the year. A mesocratic element was not absent from the campaign for a judicial review of the Montjuïc trial. Nevertheless workers formed a majority of those present at the meetings. This working class predominance was especially clear when the masses past from words to action. The “groups of big lads” (grupos de grandullones) who took to the streets in July 1899 were certainly of working class origin. Furthermore shopkeepers were one of their principal targets. Indeed, in response a number of shopkeepers and industrialists formed a Defence League which aimed to curb attacks on commercial property.

The centre and right of republicanism was ideologically the worst equipped to deal with the new conditions. As we have seen, in the 1880s they had based their support on the petty bourgeoisie and reformist sectors of the labour movement. Between 1898 and 1899 the Republican Fusion tried to rebuild such a reformist coalition. In this attempt it had the backing of the Barcelona rump of the TCV. Thus in the 1898 elections the TCV supported the Fusionists in opposition to a Justícia candidature formed by more radical left wing elements. In May of the following year an Ateneu Socialista was founded with the participation of the TCV, and called for

49. LP, 4 July 1899, ME.
the formation of a “republican working-class block”. The initiative, however, came to nothing. 50

The fact was that the kind of labour politics possible in the early 1880s were no longer viable. For not only were the republicans faced with competition from the Catalanists for their petty bourgeois and reformist working class base. More important the intensification of social conflict and the demise of the TCV between 1885 and 1892 had undermined the foundations on which reformist working class politics rested. This became increasingly clear between 1899 and 1901 for, as we have seen, the TCV played only a minority role within the FTE and, once the cotton textile labour federation had been destroyed, the anarchists came increasingly to dominate the Barcelona labour movement.

There were, in fact, only two serious attempts to adapt republicanism to the new times, and both came from the left. In the first place, the “socialist republican”, Joan Salas Anton, tried to fashion a powerful, republican led, working class co-operative movement. A large number of co-operatives had been formed in Catalonia since the 1880s. In general they were very small, and tended to specialise in the sale of bread and groceries. 51 Their main task was the provision of relatively cheap and wholesome food in an age when the adulteration of foodstuffs was common practice. They were formed by workers, with journeyman playing a particularly important role in their development. 52 This perhaps reflected the fact that artisans were more likely to possess the know how and small savings necessary to set a co-operative up.

By the turn of the century they had proliferated greatly. Thus in Barcelona there were at least 38 co-operatives. Five of these were producer and the rest consumer co-operatives. A similar situation could be seen in other Catalan towns. In Manlleu alone, for example, there were five co-operatives, all of which sold consumer goods. 53 The first reliable membership figures were elaborated by the Anuari d’Estadística Social de Catalunya somewhat later in 1913. It estimated that there were 9,819 co-operativists in Barcelona Province. 54 This represented just over 4 per cent of the total workforce. Production co-operatives were much rarer than those selling consumer goods. Workers often opened such co-operatives during strikes in order to put pressure to bear on their employers. This was, for instance, the tactic followed by the Barcelona bakers, barbers and cabinetmakers between 1900 and 1901. Producer co-operatives which operated on a permanent basis were, however, far less common. Thus, in 1899 there were only three significant

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50 Angel Duarte, “El Republicanisme”, pp.153-156.; LP, 7 May 1899, ME; 21 May, ME; 22 May, ME.


52. AECB, 1912 (Barcelona, 1913), p. 634.


54. AESC, 1913 (Barcelona, 1914), p.168.
producer co-operatives in Barcelona. Two were run by the brickmakers, and the other was operated by the blacksmiths and carriage makers' union. 55

Co-operativism had been strongly supported by the Catalan republicans. For, basing themselves on the Proudhonian ideal of the community of small artisanal producers, many saw co-operatives as the only means by which workers could free themselves from wage labour. But, in our period support for co-operativism extended to more right-wing circles. Thus, in the first decade of the twentieth century leading figures in the Ateneu Obrer de Barcelona, social catholics and members of the FTN all saw co-operatives, run by the employers and their workers, as a means of diminishing social conflict. Moreover, in the long run, it was felt, such co-operatives could serve peacefully and harmoniously to transform society. 56 On the far left, the anarchists also accepted that co-operatives (in this case formed exclusively by workers) could help accustom the working class to run their own affairs. Yet they also warned that the co-operativists could become a privileged "fourth estate" below which there would be a miserable "fifth estate" composed of the remainder of the working class. 57

There was, therefore, an significant degree of support for the ideals of co-operativism. This contrasted with the more sombre analysis of the actual functioning of the Catalan co-operatives undertaken by the various left-wing groupings. The most common criticism of the co-operatives was that they were "individualist" and "isolationist". This critique was provoked by the fact that the consumer co-operatives tended simply to divide the benefits between their members, and in general made little attempt to aid other working-class institutions. Thus, for example, the organ of the Catalan Socialists, La Guerra Social, stated in 1903: "In this city (i.e., Barcelona) there are fifty or more consumer co-operatives. But they are isolated, alone, and possess very little capital, all of which makes it impossible for them to develop and expand." This same criticism was expressed by such ideologically diverse figures as Miguel Renté, a leading light in the Ateneu Obrer de Barcelona, and Ignasi Clarià, the director of La Huelga General. 58

Joan Salas Anton had been actively involved in Catalan co-operativism since the early 1890s, when he developed close contact with the Sabadell republicans, and was consequently able to observe the functioning of a particularly large and well run co-operative, known as La Sabadellense, at close quarters. In the following years Salas Anton developed his own co-

55. LP, 26 August 1899, ME; 1 October, ME.


58. La Guerra Social, 3 Oct 1903; Miguel Renté, la Cooperación como Medio para Ir Solucionando el Problema Social (Barcelona, 1907); La Huelga General, 25 January 1903.
operative vision. Thus he declared that he was a socialist, and argued that the transformation of society would be achieved not through violent revolution but through education. He maintained that co-operativism would play a central role in this transformation. However, he countered the co-operatives' critics by stating that for this to be possible “individualist” co-operatives would have to give way to “collective co-operativism”. Collective co-operatives, he maintained, would be distinguished by the close contacts they would maintain with the rest of the labour movement. Thus the future co-operatives would provide: “Assistance in case of illness and unemployment, strike payments when conflicts with capital make them necessary, propaganda and education, all of which, in one way or another, can favour the working class.” At the same time, he argued, that by educating the workers, “modern co-operativism tends to construct the society of the future with present day society, because it is an example of what future society will be like”. 59

Salas Anton, therefore, tried to reconstruct the co-operative movement from the left. He aimed to distance the co-operatives from possible right-wing connotations, and tie them firmly to organised labour. In 1899 he was a leading figure at a co-operative congress, which was behind the foundation of the Regional Chamber of Co-operatives of Barcelona and the Balearic Islands. At the turn of the century twenty of Barcelona’s thirty eight co-operatives were affiliated, and Salas Anton was its first president. 60 Nevertheless, it was only in 1901 that he tried to put his programme of collective co-operativism into practice. In this year he laid out his plans to set up the so-called Barcelona *Hotel Comunal*. This body, he declared, “should distance itself from the routine functioning of present day co-operatives, which devote all of their income to individual purposes. Instead it should devote the major part to the improvement of the proletariat”. 61 Thus it was planned, in the first place, to found a consumer co-operative only open to trade unionists. Part of the benefits would go to the members and be used to build up reserves. However, the remainder would be handed over to the trade union movement. With the benefits the Communal Hotel would be constructed. This was to be a large building in which all the unions would be able to install their headquarters, in which classes would be given, conferences held and leisure activities programmed. Furthermore, the *Hotel Comunal* itself was seen as part of a vaster scheme by which all the city's industry and commerce would be taken over by the working class. 62

The scheme received wide-ranging trade union support. A total of twenty seven Barcelona unions - a number of which were at that time closely linked to the anarchists - agreed to finance the


61. LP, 10 June 1901, ME.

62. *Hotel Comunal de los Obreros de Barcelona* (Barcelona, 1902).
project. It was given a particularly enthusiastic welcome by the Sabadell labour movement. Thus a meeting was held in the town in support of Salas Anton's co-operative plans in October 1901. It was organised by the Sabadell power-loom weavers union, which had already set up a commission to study the benefits of co-operativism. The speakers included Salas Anton, the veteran Sabadell anarchist, Joan Fainé, and representatives of the Barcelona cabinetmakers, carpenters and bricklayers unions. Fainé gave his total support to the scheme. His remarks indicate that in Sabadell some anarchists were closer to the republicans than the "hard liners" analysed in the last chapter. Indeed, the reaction of the anarchists was not in general hostile. For example, Mir i Miró, the director from the pro-anarchist weekly published in Mahon, *El Porvenir del Obrero*, declared himself to be an "enthusiastic co-operativist", whilst Leopoldo Bonafulla stated that he did not oppose those co-operatives that displayed solidarity towards the labour movement.

The reaction to Salas Anton's project, then, seemed for a moment to open up the possibility that he would be able to form a powerful co-operativist movement under republican auspices. This hope, however, soon proved to be an illusion. There were two reasons behind Salas Anton's failure. In the first place from 1901 politically he was to become increasingly isolated. During this year, as class conflict intensified so the anarchists put into effect their general strike tactics. Salas Anton soon voiced his opposition, and was for this reason strongly criticised by the anarchists. In 1903 Salas Anton also showed himself strongly critical of the dominant current in Barcelona republicanism, represented by that time by the Lerrouxists. This hostility towards Lerroux and the anarchists led Salas Anton to come into increasingly close contact with the Catalan Socialists, with whose peaceful trade union strategy he sympathised. By the second half of the century, indeed, it was the Socialists who were the strongest supporters of collective co-operativism. At the same time Salas Anton's co-operativist project ran into practical problems. It got off the ground in 1901 with the opening of a consumer co-operative, but the repression which followed the February 1902 general strike seems to have put paid to any further developments. Furthermore, it appears that the Catalan co-operatives did not live up to Salas Anton's expectations. Most continued to operate as previously, and played little part in the wider struggles of the labour movement. It was only as a result of the arrival of Alejandro Lerroux in

63. Ibid, pp.10-11.; LP, 9 Jan 1901, NE; 10 June, ME; 18 August, ME.
64. ET, 2 November 1901.
65. EP, 23 Nov 1901; LP, 1 Sept 1901, NE.
66. Joan B. Culla, op cit, pp. 69-70. 77.; La Huelga General, 20 Feb 1903; La Internacional, 6 Nov 1908; Emili Salut, op cit, p. 81.
67. This was not always the case. La Sabadellense, for example, collected large sums of money for strikers in Sabadell.
Barcelona that the republican's were able successfully to build a mass working class following in the city.

It was in March 1901 that, inspired by the popularity he had achieved during the Montjuïc campaign, and realising that Barcelona would be the centre of any anti-monarchist revolution, Lerroux decided to transfer to the Catalan capital, and participate in the general elections to be held that month. The story of the growth in republican support in Catalonia and especially Barcelona after the arrival of Lerroux is well known. The electoral data is by itself eloquent. In the March 1901 elections, when the republicans showed the first signs of revival, they received between 4000 and 4,500 votes in Barcelona. There then followed a rapid growth of electoral support. The republicans greatest triumph was the March 1903 general election, when they received about 35,000 votes in Barcelona. This represented 67 per cent of the voters and 30 per cent of the census. The bulk of these voters were of working class origin. The importance of this working class vote can be estimated if it is considered that there were at that time about 60,000 workers with the right to vote in the city. 68

All authors agree that the organisational key to the republicans' success was a total overhaul of the structure of republicanism in the city. Lerroux's great achievement was to have created, from the atomised and unruly collection of republican clubs that existed at the beginning of the century, a modern mass party. There were two main aspects to this process. On the one hand, the party's supporters had to be continuously mobilised, and firmly tied to the party through a series of common interests. Lerroux was able to do this by holding frequent meetings and social gatherings. At the same time he created a large number of republican clubs known as Fraternities. These clubs were not only concerned with the party's political affairs, but also offered schooling, social welfare facilities, entertainment, and set up consumer cooperatives.

On the other hand, it was necessary to create a centralised and unified party apparatus. In Barcelona this object was achieved through the formation of a staff of professional politicians, and an electoral machine capable of preventing electoral fraud. Yet for the republicans to be effective throughout Spain, a unification of the various political tendencies was necessary. There had been growing rank and file pressure in this direction since the 1890s, and with the new opportunities opened up the crisis of the Restoration and the upsurge in popular protest this pressure naturally became more intense. At the end of 1902, sure of his position in Barcelona, Lerroux responded to these demands by offering the leadership of a new unified party to the moderate ex-president of the First Republic, Nicolás Salmerón. Lerroux had to take this step so as not totally to divide the Spanish republicans. However, it was also to lead to a number of difficulties, for outside

68. For the electoral data see, A. Balcells et al, Les Eleccions, pp. 57-85.; The estimate of the workers with a right to vote in Barcelona is taken from Joaquín Romero Maura, op cit, p.128. note. 48.
Barcelona (and Valencia, under the leadership of Blasco Ibáñez) republicanism still retained a traditional middle class air, and had little in common with the disciplined, proletarianised, party forged by Lerroux. The new party, known as the Republican Union was, nevertheless, founded in March 1903, and included the bulk of Spain's republicans in its ranks. 69

In Barcelona right-wing republicans previously affiliated to the Republican Fusion joined the party. Lerroux, nevertheless, remained very much in control. Ideologically, therefore, Lerroux's success represented the victory of the republican left in Barcelona. There were perhaps four basic components distinguishable within Lerrouxist ideology. These were opposition to the Bourbon state, anticlericalism, anticatalananism, and what may be termed labourism. The first two elements were, of course, already key features of nineteenth century republicanism. Lerroux's anticatalanism was, also, not such a clear departure as has often been suggested. As has been seen, the dominant tendency within political Catalanism had become increasingly conservative in the late nineteenth century. In the early 1890s many left republicans had already reacted by adopting a very critical stance. Between 1899 and 1901 much of the Catalan haute bourgeoisie swung behind these Catalanists. As a result, in working class circles many came to confuse the interests of the bourgeoisie as a social class with Catalanism. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that Lerroux should play the anticatalanist card as a means of combating the Lliga and attracting working class support. Especially as such a policy had the advantage of affording the Lerrouxists the protection of the Liberal party, which saw the Catalanists as the Restoration system's greatest enemies. 70

These elements of Lerrouxist ideology, therefore, added nothing new to the republican tradition, although Lerroux's forceful oratory and populist style no doubt ensured that he was able to put the republican message over far more effectively than ever before. Lerroux's labourism was, however, more innovatory. Social conflict had been the achilles heel of late nineteenth century republicanism. As it intensified and as social differentiation became more marked so the republicans found it increasingly difficult to reconcile the interests of the heterogeneous social groups they referred to as "the people". However, as a result of these developments left wing labourist groups had been founded in the various republican parties, which developed contacts with the anarchists. Lerroux continued in this line, but took it a step further by propitiating the confusion between his ideology and that of the anarchists. As a republican Lerroux never aimed to form a specifically working class party. This was reflected in the make up of the Republican Union in Barcelona. Though predominantly working class, it maintained the support of a fraction of the middle class. Moreover, it was from the middle class that its leadership was primarily


drawn. However, the growth of industrial conflict, and the repression met out by the Monarchist governments in the 1890s had had a radicalising effect on a number of bourgeois intellectuals and politicians. Accordingly, anarchist ideas had become something of a fashion. Lerroux had been closely associated with these developments. At the same time he saw that it was vitally important for the republicans to attract working class support. It was, therefore, relatively easy for him to adopt what may be termed a philo-anarchist stance in order to obtain working class backing.

Thus, for example, Lerroux presented his support for the *retraimiento* in not totally unambiguous terms as antipoliticism. And when in 1901 he decided to participate in elections he justified the shift by arguing that the elections and parliament would simply be used a platforms for revolutionary agitation. 71 Furthermore, he presented the Republic as a stepping stone on the path to the emancipation of the working class. To give one example, at a meeting of the Barcelona power-sawyers union he:

> Explained that although at present he belonged to the republican party, he had never forgotten the ideal of perfect justice and equality; of the beautiful city of the future, in which all humanity would form a single family, free from selfishness. (And concluded) “I'll always fight with you for your complete emancipation.”

Finally, Lerroux reacted to the escalation of class conflict in Barcelona by giving his support to the anarchists' militant trade union strategy. A number of indicators in this direction have already been given. In the previous chapter we saw how Luis Zurdo Olivares, who was in close contact with Lerroux, was a prominent figure in the anarchists' trade union meetings during 1901. In addition it was noted that in December 1900 Lerroux backed the attempted general strike in support of the cotton textile workers despite the opposition of the Socialists. This support for direct action could also be seen in the speeches Lerroux made in a tour of Catalonia between August and September 1901. For example, in the speech he gave to the power-sawyers he advised them, “that if the power-sawyers' employers to not agree to their terms, and they have to go on strike to impose them, the strike must be revolutionary”, given that, “peaceful strikes are lost. It is only revolutionary strikes that end in victory”. 73 Indeed so identified was Lerroux with the anarchists' strike tactics that the Socialists made no distinction between them, and therefore carefully distinguished the union practice advocated by both the anarchists and Lerrouxist

71. The existence of wide-ranging anarchist support for Lerroux was later remarked upon by Federico Urales, *Mi Vida*, op cit., pp.16-17, 41-47. A discussion of this question is also to be found in Joan B. Culla, *op cit*, pp.16-17, 41-47. Joaquin Romero Maura is therefore mistaken in his claim that Lerrouxist and anarchist ideology were always clearly differentiated. Op cit, p.115.

72. LP, 8 Sept 1901, NE.

73. LP, 8 Sept 1901, NE.
republicans from their own peaceful, gradualist strategy. Thus, *El Socialista* stated at the beginning of 1902: 74

Only revolutionary - read violent - strikes are of use to the workers. Peaceful, ordered, strikes are good for nothing except vainly using up funds and providing the employers with easy triumphs. This is, more or less, what the anarchists and libertarians, Lerroux and other revolutionaries who take as their model the Barcelona Deputy, tell the workers.

This aspect of Lerrouxist ideology represented a clear break with the past. Through to the 1890s, even the most left wing republicans had favoured a prudent trade union strategy, and advocated the strike weapon only as a last resort. 75 Lerroux's philo-anarchism, his fierce anticlericalism and insurrectionary rhetoric gained him a great deal of anarchist sympathy. Already in 1898 he had helped Federico Urales to found his *Revista Blanca*, and over the next two years it was common practice for anarchists and left republicans to publish articles in each others journals. These contacts between left republicans and anarchists were facilitated by the strong current in favour of unity visible amongst the working class trade union base. Lerroux's sympathy for the anarchists could again be seen in October 1900 when he attended the FRESR's founding congress, and read out the closing manifesto. Then, during August and September of the following year, he went on a propaganda tour though Catalonia. At a number of the meetings he shared the same platform as anarchists, especially Leopoldo Bonafulla. 76

At the same time *El Productor*, the leading anarchist publication in Catalonia, adopted a tolerant attitude towards Lerroux. It remained antipolitical, but did not put Lerroux in the same category as other "bourgeois" politicians. This tolerance could, for example, be seen in the report of the above mentioned meeting at the headquarters of the Barcelona power-sawyers. Lerroux spoke along with a number of republican politicians. *El Productor* commented: 77

We should not be sincere if we did not state that everything was spoken of except that which was the object of the meeting, namely trade union propaganda. Almost all the speeches consisted of political and even, we should say, electoral propaganda. The exception was Lerroux, who, if the truth be said, showed himself worthy and sincere when he stated that the meeting was of a purely economic character, and that it was his duty to accept this.

74. ES, 31 Jan 1902.
77. EP, 14 Sept 1901.
It then went on to praise the contents of Lerroux's speech. This understanding was, indeed, denounced by *La Guerra Social*, in 1901. The Socialist mouthpiece, in fact, went so far as to accuse the Barcelona anarchists of voting republican in the last election, stating: 78

Let it clearly be understood that the anarchists as such have no organisation. Divided and subdivided into groups and commissions they are to be founded scattered all over the place.

Their field of action are the organisations of the free-thinkers, republicans and masons. In some of these associations they hold posts, though not as anarchists.

In Barcelona it is well known that they have descended on the republican centres, in which they have a certain influence, consequent upon their being the first to comply with the agreements taken on such questions as the vote, inspection of electoral tables and everything else to do with elections. This is what they did at the last election despite their antielectoral claims.

Between 1901 and 1903, then, it is clear that both Lerroux and those anarchists grouped around Leopoldo Bonafulla drew support from the same cultural milieux. Many workers who sympathised with the militant or anarchist trade union leaders voted republican at election time. Both Lerroux and the anarchists were successful because their ideology was in tune the radical strike and protest movements which swept Catalonia after the "disaster" of '98. On a trade union level Lerroux's supporters did not oppose - indeed they appeared actively to encourage - the strikes waves of the years 1900-1903. At the same time, they were at the forefront of the anticlerical agitation of these years, and were able to take advantage of the growing anticatalanism visible in working class circles. Finally, the party inspired by Lerroux was also able to channel opposition to the Restoration system into support for its vision of the future republic. This was to be the antithesis of the present régime: a modern lay state, which would set up social welfare programmes and guarantee individual liberties and freedom of expression. Moreover, according to Lerroux's philo-anarchist vision it was only to represent a staging post on the road to a totally classless society.

Between 1900 and 1902 the Socialists became increasingly isolated from the mainstream of Barcelona labour politics. Their critique of Lerroux and the anarchists stemmed from the fact that they saw themselves as a prudent and responsible opposition to the Monarchy. Consequently, as was seen in the previous chapter, they were fiercely critical of the anarchists' strike tactics. Similarly, although anticlerical, they could not endorse calls made by anarchists and left republicans for convents to be burnt to the ground, or even for Jesuits to be exhibited in cages along the roads. In general, they felt alienated from the insurrectionary fervour of these years and the belief that Lerrouxists and anarchists seemed to hold that every strike and protest movement might, at least, lead to the overthrow of the Monarchy, and perhaps to the overthrow of capitalism.

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78. Cited in ES, 5 July 1901.
The radicalism and philo-anarchism of Lerrouxism during this period also permits a further consideration. If a long term perspective is taken, it becomes clear that a necessary condition for the success of both anarchism and Lerrouxism was the radicalisation of key sectors of the Catalan proletariat from the 1880s. It is impossible to imagine the existence of a republican party similar to that captained by Lerroux existing alongside the class-collaborationist TCV.

The analysis of Lerrouxism from this perspective also allows a number of interesting comparisons to be made between republicanism in and outside Barcelona. A phenomenon which has oft been commented on is that, whilst Lerrouxist-style republicanism became dominant in Barcelona, this was not necessarily the case in other Catalan industrial towns. Of the areas on which the study has centred, the information available on the Ter Valley is not good enough to carry out a comparison of the influence of the various republican tendencies. The information available for Sabadell is fortunately far better. In this town the so-called Federal Republicans remained dominant, and like the Lerrouxists they maintained close links with the labour movement. Unlike the Lerrouxists, however, the Federalists did not justify the anarchists' militant trade union tactics. Nor did they adopt Lerroux's anticatalanist rhetoric. On the contrary they showed a certain sympathy towards Catalanism. In the only serious study of Sabadell republicanism during this period, Esteve Deu has suggested that an important factor in the continuing strength of Federalism was the lower percentage of immigrant workers in the town as compared to Barcelona. Catalan workers, he argues, were less likely to be influenced by Lerroux's anticatalanism, and by his demagogic pseudo-revolutionary campaigns. 79 However, the argument that Lerroux's success in Barcelona was made possible by large scale immigration is unsustainable. As we saw in Chapter Two, during these years immigrants still formed a relatively small percentage of the Barcelona working class, and many of these immigrants came from Catalan speaking areas.

Once it is agreed that the causes behind Lerroux's success can only be understood by studying the internal dynamics of Catalan society, the argument that the continuing strength of Federalist republicanism can be related to the predominance of an autochthonous working class in Sabadell naturally collapses. A more fruitful way of looking at this question could be to compare and social structures and types of union organisation in Sabadell and Barcelona. The woollen textile industry was predominant in Sabadell. Social conflict was not generally as severe in this industry as in some sectors of the Catalan economy. As a result trade union organisation was more stable, and the union strategy pursued by the woollen workers more cautious than that of many of the Barcelona trades. This we would argue probably facilitated the survival of Federalism as a dominant force in Republican politics. The fact that class conflict was not as pronounced could permit the popular interclass base of nineteenth century republicanism to remain more intact than in

Barcelona. As a result, the need for a Lerrouxist style proletarianised, philo-anarchist, republican party was not so strongly felt in Sabadell.

However, there was a further important factor. Unlike their colleagues in cotton textiles the woollen textile manufacturers did not in general abandon the official Monarchist parties and give their support to the *Lliga Regionalista*. This was probably a result of the fact that the woollen textile manufacturers exported a lower percentage of their production to the last colonies. When these colonies were lost, therefore, dissatisfaction with the Restoration parties was not so great. This question is in need of further investigation, but it may well be that one of the consequences of the woollen textile manufacturers continuing support for the régime was that in Sabadell Catalanism was never confused with bourgeois politics to the extent it was in Barcelona. That this was the case is suggested by the functioning on an important Centre Catalá in the town during the first decade of the century which urged the workers to vote republican.

The previous sections may have given the impression that Lerrouxism could be considered the “political wing” of Catalan anarchism. The Socialists, at least, claimed that this was the case. However, it was never in fact so. Indeed, although Lerroux appeared to support anarchist inspired strikes, it was the high level of industrial conflictivity in Barcelona that was to bring the contradictions between his ideology and that of the anarchists to the fore. Despite the convergence of the years 1899-1901 there remained key ideological differences between the two forces. The anarchists, at least theoretically, opposed electoral participation. Moreover, their goal was a social revolution which would usher in the communist or collectivist society of the future. Despite the ambiguities of the Lerrouxist discourse the Spanish Republican Union offered no such alternative.

It was an interclass force whose aim was the installation of a republic and, though Lerroux might claim it would be a bridge to a future classless society, other sectors of the party had very different views on the subject. Indeed, Lerroux’s aims were very much in question. Historians have, in fact, almost unanimously seen Lerroux as a demagogue, in the sense that there was a gap between the claims he made and his real intentions. In particular, his revolutionary rhetoric never seemed to be matched by his actions. This divergence first became clear during the February 1902 general strike. Lerroux had, we have suggested, been a strong supporter of revolutionary strike action. None the less, this did not prevent him from studiously avoiding any implication in the events of that week by staying put in Madrid and making no public comment on the strike. Once it was over, however, he made a strong and widely publicised defence of the strikers in parliament.

With this he aimed - by and large successfully - to channel working class support for the strike in his direction, and to silence criticism of his inactivity while it was in progress.

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82. Joan B. Culla, op cit, pp. 53-57.
However, it was as a result of Lerroux's behaviour during the general strike that a growing number of anarchists came to see Lerrouxism as a movement which led the workers away from their real interests. It was, these anarchists argued, only by joining the trade unions and, through these unions, participating in the class struggle, that the workers could work towards their emancipation. All other political activity was superfluous. Such criticisms had already been voiced in 1901, especially as a result of Lerroux's decision to participate in the elections of that year. This was a decision which had apparently opened the eyes of more than one anarchist. 83 El Productor, despite the contacts maintained between Lerroux and Bonafulla, did not support participation in elections. In its pages there were also occasional attacks on Lerroux, such as the one made by "Claudio Escamilla", who argued that despite the claims made by Lerroux that he would carry through "the revolution in parliament" in his interventions to date he had simply shown himself to be a "Spanish patriot", and was, therefore, as far as the Catalanists from the anarchist dream of the "universal fatherland". 84

The hard-line anarchists who wrote La Protesta took a more radical stance. When Lerroux was elected to parliament in March 1901 it asked leading anarchists to give their opinion on the worth of Lerroux as a parliamentary deputy. The idea was to make clear it was impossible for anarchists to give their support to Lerroux. Not surprisingly, then, all the replies published were highly critical. For example, "Teofilo Lagardia", writing from Barcelona, denounced the anarchist support Lerroux had received, and went on to argue that it was the anarchists' duty to deny the claim made that Lerroux would sit in parliament under the title "republican anarchist". He concluded that Lerroux was deceiving the masses and using them for his own political ends. At the same time, La Huelga General, at least outwardly, took a similarly antipolitical stance, and claimed that a future bourgeois republic would probably be as repressive as the present monarchical régime. 85

Lerroux and the anarchists continued to maintain contacts during 1902 and 1903. 86 Nevertheless, after the February 1902 general strike criticisms in the anarchist press became far more generalised. The most coherent critique of Lerroux was to be found in the pages of El Productor in a series of articles written by the anarchist shoemaker, Joaquin Coca, between September and December 1903. Coca, who a played a significant part in the anarchist revival of

84. EP, 30 November 1901.
85. La Protesta, 22 June 1901; La Huelga General, 3 Jan 1903.
86. For example, in March 1903, Lerroux could still speak alongside the well known anarchists, Castallote and Casanovas, in a meeting in Mataró. EP, 23 March 1903.
1901, maintained that Lerroux had been sent to Barcelona by the government authorities for two main reasons. The first was to "disorientate" the workers, and lead them away from anarchism down the path of electoral politics: a terrain where nothing positive could be expected. This object had been attained, Coca argued, through two separate though interconnected means. First Lerroux had pretended to be an anarchist. Thus he had promised never to be elected, "and had obtained the support of Spain's leading anarchists by mixing the republican filth with the anarchist honey, and giving them to understand his object was to carry out a republican revolution and, once this had been achieved, carry the masses on to a social revolution". This anarchist support he admitted was still significant. For this reason, Coca stated, it was necessary to combat, "a lot of anarchists who speak seriously of radicalism (i.e., Lerrouxism)", and who favoured, "alliances of radical forces in which we are included". At the same time, Coca maintained, Lerroux gained support through his anticlerical rhetoric. This allowed him to take advantage of the anticlericalism of many anarchists to appear on the same platform as them. Yet his real goal was to deflect the workers attention away from their real enemies, the "bourgeois, exploiters and parasites of all classes".

The second reason Lerroux had been sent to Barcelona, Coca continued, was to destroy the labour movement. This his followers did by provoking divisions within the trade unions, and trying to get as many as possible to set up their headquarters in the future republican Casa del Pueblo. Lerroux and his followers were, therefore, Coca concluded, "frauds who have no scruples". The anarchists response should, in consequence, be not to tolerate - as occurred at present - that anyone call himself anarchist and republican at the same time, and to launch an actively antipolitical campaign. 87 Some anarchists, in fact, took Coca's advice. Thus, during the 1903 municipal elections they organised a series of antielectoral meetings, one of which ended in clashes between anarchists and republicans. 88

The interpretation advanced by Coca achieved, with a number of variants, wide currency in both anarchist and Socialist circles. In this way the myth of Lerroux sent to Barcelona to undermine the labour movement became the left's alternative of the Lliga's vision of Lerroux sent to Barcelona to halt the advance of Catalanism. The previous pages should leave no doubt as to the partiality of this interpretation. Yet its obvious inadequacies should not obscure the existence of a kernel of truth. Lerrouxism, more so than nineteenth century republicanism, by adopting a labourist philo or pseudo anarchist rhetoric, would now become an obstacle to the development of exclusively working class political and trade union options. This, as shall be seen, was to become crystal clear between 1907 and 1909, when a newly emerging Socialist and anarchist inspired labour federation came into direct conflict with the Lerrouxists.

Growing anarchist criticism of Lerrouxism during 1903 could, indeed, have led to a weakening of the working class base on which the Republican Union rested in Barcelona. However, as was seen in the previous chapter, the anarchists themselves found themselves in considerable difficulties at that time. In the first place the failure of two general strikes they tried to launch led to discontent. More important, the onset of a severe economic recession in the Autumn of 1903 undermined the belligerent trade union movement on which their strength rested. As a result, during the depression years of 1904-1909 the anarchists were to have a far lower profile than in the previous period. It cannot be sustained that the growth of Lerrouxist style republicanism was based on its taking advantage of the “void” left by the demise of the anarchist national labour federation, the FRESR, at the end of 1903. As we have seen, the growth of republicanism preceded any such collapse. Indeed Lerrouxism was to go into a slow decline from 1904. And until 1909 at least it was the depoliticisation in working class circles which accompanied the onset of recession, together with the realisation that the Restoration system was not about to collapse, which was behind a fall in the number working class votes for the republicans. Nonetheless, it would be true to say that the disorganisation of the Barcelona trade unions did allow Lerroux to maintain an important degree of working class support without having to worry about a strong and troublesome anarchist inspired labour movement.

In conclusion, then, in Barcelona the Lerrouxist republicans were, between 1901 and 1903, able to channel much popular and especially working class support into the party they were in the process of creating. This growth in support for the Lerrouxists was accompanied by an expansion of anarchist influence within the trade unions. At the other end of the scale, the Socialists found themselves increasingly marginalised from working class trade union and political life. It has been argued that the Socialist's loss of support cannot be put down to their exclusion from an “anarcho-republican” cultural milieux. Admittedly this study had concentrated on trade unionism, and the analysis of the cultural institutions of the Catalan working class is still in its infancy. Nevertheless, as has been seen, in 1899 the Catalan Socialists looked towards an alliance with the republicans, and adopted much of their liberal-rationalist rhetoric. Moreover, many centre and right wing republicans sympathised to a far greater extent with the Socialists than with the anarchists. And, during the first decade of the century, the republican co-operativist, Joan Salas Anton, alienated from the violence of the Lerrouxists and anarchists, was drawn ever closer to the Socialists.

However, it would be true to say that many left republican militants had developed close contacts with the anarchists. This may in part have been tactical. The republicans centred their activity in the political arena whilst the anarchists were most active within the unions. They did not, therefore, directly threaten each others' position. Accordingly, they could each ward of the

89. This is the interpretation advanced by Xavier Cuadrat, op cit, pp. 414-415.
Socialist threat in their respective sphere without coming into conflict. Between 1898 and 1903 in Barcelona these contacts were to become more pronounced. This rapprochement was based on the extreme anticlericalism of both anarchists and Lerrouxist republicans, and on the philo or pseudo anarchist stance which Lerroux seemed in many respects to adopt. The Socialists felt alienated from what they regarded was infantile revolutionism, whose only result, they maintained, would be to play into the hands of the Spanish right. Yet, the Socialists' political strategy suffered from the same drawbacks as their trade union practice. They had pushed the goal of social revolution into the distant future, and looked to work from within the régime to democratise and reform it. The dominant oligarchy, however, showed little appetite for social or political reform. The result was to strengthen the hand of those anarchists and left republicans who hoped an insurrectionary putch could bring the régime down. The honeymoon between anarchists and Lerrouxists was, however, soon to come to an end. Thus Lerroux was, after the general strike of 1902, increasingly seen in left wing circles as a demagogue whose revolutionary rhetoric used to gain working class support. The years after 1904 were also to see a radicalisation of Catalan Socialist ideology. Both these factors combined to make it possible for Catalan anarchists and Socialists to draw closer together. It is to this period that the final chapter will now turn.
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE GENESIS OF THE CNT AND THE FAILURE OF CATALAN SOCIALISM,
1904-1914

The years between 1904 and 1906 were, indeed, to see the Catalan labour movement at a low ebb. As a result some anarchist militants became increasingly disconnected from the working class, moved in the déclassé bohemian circles of Nietzsche and Stirner, and possibly became involved in terrorist activities. Indeed, many of the anarchists who maintained contact with the trade unions began to doubt their revolutionary potential. This could be seen in March 1904 when a small anarchist dominated local federation once again began to function in Barcelona. This federation was behind the organisation of a congress of unions from Catalonia and the Balearic Islands which was held in Sabadell between 30 October and 1 November. At the congress “partial strikes” were rejected in favour of the revolutionary general strike. Moreover, there were strong criticisms of trade unionism, and it was finally decided that the unions should be dissolved and be replaced by anarchist affinity groups, who would operate within the working class, and take the initiative when the time for action came.1

However, not all anarchist sympathisers who retained links with the trade unions supported the stance taken by the leadership of the Barcelona federation. In particular, the organ of the Sabadell FOS, El Trabajo, came out in favour of the strengthening of trade unionism. El Trabajo was encouraged by the growth of the French labour confederation, the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), which by 1906 had about 300,000 affiliates. The CGT declared itself to be syndicalist. As has been stressed, the basic component in syndicalist doctrine was anarchism. Indeed, it seems that the trade union practice of the Spanish anarchists was of some importance in the elaboration of syndicalist ideology. Hence, the syndicalists rejected parliamentary socialism, and supported revolutionary action by the trade unions. In reality this policy can best be described as antipolitical in that no useful role was envisaged for a party of the working class. Nevertheless, the CGT declared itself to be apolitical. There were three main reasons for this. First, as we have seen, anarchists (and Socialists) faced the difficulty that when they formed unions under their control they were open to the charge of splitting the labour movement. Yet, if the syndicalists union practice could be presented as somehow neutral and outside the realm of politics they could

counter this charge. Indeed, the need for anarchists to give the impression that they did not directly control unions under their influence was probably the major reason for the elaboration of syndicalist doctrine. Moreover, the apolitical banner served to stop "politicians" (i.e., Socialists or republicans) from taking over the unions. Finally, though the CGT was anarchist dominated there was an important Socialist and reformist opposition within the confederation. The concept of apoliticism allowed all workers affiliated to militate in and vote for the party of their choice as long as they did not try and propagate their views within the CGT.

The CGT, then, was more broadly based than the Spanish anarchist labour organisations - the so-called "free pacts"- formed in the late nineteenth and first years of the twentieth century. Its union practice was also to change over time. At the turn of the century the French syndicalists, like Spanish anarchists who worked within the unions, argued that the revolution would be the result of a series of increasingly bitter industrial disputes. Workers, therefore, were seen as being radicalised by the experience of the class struggle, though some syndicalists also adhered to the view that it was the role of a conscious minority of militants to inspire the masses. The CGT followed this policy during the boom years of 1902-1908 in France. Its success was, however, limited, and the CGT suffered a series of heavy defeats at the hands of the state. The led to severe criticism of the CGT leadership by the non-syndicalist elements within the confederation. Furthermore, the practice of some of the syndicalist militants began imperceptibly to change. Within a non-revolutionary context any labour federation would have to concentrate on the day to day running of the unions. This involved the need to build up union organisation and negotiate industrial disputes. Consequently, many revolutionary syndicalists came to argue that all union victories were "partial expropriations" of capital. The result was that the CGT's revolutionary goals began to fade into the background. This tendency became clear from 1909.2

There could, therefore, be both moderate and revolutionary interpretations of syndicalism. El Trabajo sounded a cautious note. Following the CGT it maintained that unions should aim to improve wages and working conditions in the short run, and work towards the overthrow of capitalism in the future. However, it opposed actions which would endanger the very existence of the trade unions. Thus, in a clear reference to the anarchists' continual attempts to call general strikes at the turn of the century, it criticised, "the impetuosity of certain elements who had thought they could make these bodies (i.e., the unions) carry out acts for which they were neither prepared nor educated". Furthermore, El Trabajo argued that trades unions should be apolitical, and that all workers should join together to seek their emancipation.3

Between 1904 and 1906, then, El Trabajo stressed the need to rebuild the Catalan trade unions. Once again, therefore, the Sabadell FOS was be found on the moderate or “realist” wing of Catalan anarchism. It was on the initiative of El Trabajo that the Catalan unions launched their only significant campaign of these years. The campaign was undertaken in close collaboration with the CGT. In 1905 El Trabajo informed its readership that the CGT’s Bourges congress had decided to press for the introduction of an eight hour day from 1 May 1906. This reform was not to be achieved by legal, reformist, means. Instead, from 1 May all workers would simply abandon their workplace after having laboured for eight hours. The demand was, consequently, to be conquered through their own “direct action”.

El Trabajo maintained throughout 1905 that the campaign should be seconded by the entire working class. The proposal generated considerable enthusiasm. The campaign, led by pro-anarchist and syndicalist elements, began in earnest from January 1906. Articles supporting the stoppage were published in all the working class press, pamphlets were printed, and a large number of fly sheets distributed. Furthermore between 15 and 16 April a meeting was held in Valls to discuss action to be taken on 1 May. In all 50 delegates from 100 unions attended. They represented the core of the Catalan labour movement. The meeting declared itself in favour of direct action but, taking count of the realities of the times, asked only that those unions and localities who were in a strong enough position second the movement.

The object of the campaign was, as might be expected, not to be achieved. In Barcelona and several other towns the workers came out on 1 May. However, they went back to work on the next day and made no effort to stop work after eight hours. The reasons were clear. The economic recession was still very deep, and union organisation far too weak for such a revolutionary demand to have any chance of success. Yet, it did bring a large number of Catalan unions into closer contact. It also confirmed that pro-anarchist workers still played a important role within the labour movement. Finally, for the first time the Catalan unions and French CGT were able to co-ordinate their activities.

The campaign also stimulated discussion on the possibility of regrouping the individual Catalan unions into a new confederation. The FRESR had moved to La Coruña in August 1905 and was now completely inoperative. The idea was encouraged by the fact that in Barcelona there was an increase in union activity from the end of 1906. Moreover, the economic recession eased somewhat in the following year. Anarchist union leaders also felt that it was of the utmost importance to relaunch the labour movement in order to counteract the tendency, as they saw it, for workers to abandon their unions and occupy themselves solely with politics.

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4. ET, 28 January 1905
5. La Cuña, 16 January, 26 April 1906; ET, 21 April 1906; Xavier Cuadrat, op cit, pp. 165-166.
Indeed, between 1905 and 1907 the Catalan political landscape was totally transformed. On 25 November 1905 the *Lliga Regionalista*'s satirical weekly *Cu-Cut!* published a cartoon lampooning the army. That night, in retaliation, army officers vandalised the offices of *Cu-Cut!* and *La Veu de Catalunya*. These events triggered new alignment of political forces in the region. The Liberals in power soon capitulated to the demands of the military and passed a law making criticisms of the army an offence subject to military jurisdiction. The *Lliga Regionalista* reacted by captaining a coalition of forces, known as *Solidaritat Catalana*, which stretched from the Carlists to some republicans. Their slogan was “the defence of Catalonia”. The coalition’s zenith was reached in the April 1907 elections when it gained a massive 53,000 votes in Barcelona, and broke the hold of the dynastic caciques over much of rural Catalonia. *Solidaritat Catalana* was supported by more moderate republicans who had been in the Republican Fusion and opposed Lerroux’s leadership of Barcelona republicanism. It was, however, opposed by Lerroux who stated that he would never enter into a coalition with reactionary Carlists and clericals. As a result the Republican Union broke up, and in 1908 Lerroux formed his own Republican Radical Party.6

This division between Lerrouxists and Catalanists would result in a fierce political struggle. Anselmo Lorenzo maintained that the workers reaction should be to “scorn the bourgeois solidarity and the bourgeois antisolidarity and reconstruct worker solidarity, the precursor of that great human solidarity”.7 The first serious discussion of this question took place at the end of 1906 when the mouthpiece of the pro-anarchist Madrid stonemasons’ union, *La Voz del Cantero*, wrote a series articles urging the creation of a new confederation on the lines of the French CGT. Both *El Trabajo* and *La Cuña*, the mouthpiece of the Catalan based woodworkers’ federation, showed themselves favourably disposed, but maintained that it would first be necessary for the individual unions to recruit more members.8

It was in these circumstances that the Catalan Socialists were able to take the initiative, and play a leading role in the creation of a new union confederation, albeit at the more modest level of Barcelona city. This may at first sight be surprising, given the Socialists had not increased their support in Catalonia since 1903. However, they did have one factor in their favour. In the economically depressed conditions of these years few unions would sympathise with the anarchists’ militant strike policy. In a manner similar to the years 1898-1900, therefore, the Socialists might, through their stress on the need for solid trade union organisation, be able to play an important role in the reorganisation of the labour movement. In this respect, however, they

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6. For political developments during these years see, for example, Joan Culla, op cit, pp. 139-197.
7. ET, 11 May 1907
faced a number of difficulties. By themselves they were not strong enough to lead a union revival. They would, therefore, have to collaborate with union activists close to the anarchist camp. Yet, their reaction to the 1902 general strike had earned them the title of enemies of the working class, and between 1904 and 1906 they remained locked in bitter conflict with the anarchists. It was, therefore, clear that in order once again to play a leading role within the Barcelona labour movement they would have seriously to reconsider their policies.

Such a reappraisal took place between 1904 and 1908. As a result the Catalan Socialists appeared to break with the moderate trade union practice of the past and adopted a syndicalist veneer. This change was a response to conditions in Catalonia, but cannot be understood without reference to events in the rest of Europe. The years after 1900 saw a growth in the influence of syndicalist ideas throughout much of the continent. Furthermore, in Socialist circles a left-wing opposition had grown up to the de-facto reformism of the Second International. These leftists did not, in general, advocate the use of the general strike to overthrow capitalism. Nevertheless, they did call for a move away from the, in their view, excessive concentration on elections, and supported the use of mass strikes for political ends. 9

In Barcelona a number of Socialists linked to shopworkers' trade unionism provided the stimulus for change. The two most important figures in this respect were Antoni Badia Matamala and Antoni Fabra Ribas. Badia Matamala was president of the Barcelona shopworkers' union, La Associació de Depèndencia Mercantil almost without a break between 1902 and 1908, and was the man who, in practical terms, did most to engineer a compromise between the various tendencies within the Barcelona labour movement. Fabra Ribas, on the other hand, was the theoretician behind the new strategy. University educated, he had first entered labour politics in 1898 when he helped to organise the shopworkers in his home town, Reus. He spent most of the time between 1901 and 1908 abroad. Here he made contacts with left-wing Socialists and became influenced by syndicalist ideas. Fabra Ribas seems, in particular, to have been influenced by the French Socialist left. These Socialists rejected the subordination of the unions to the party, and claimed that the unions had a clear role to play in rising workers' consciousness. Indeed, Fabra Ribas was sceptical as to the value of electoral politics. Instead he stressed the need for militant rank and file action by a united working class. Moreover, in typical syndicalist terms he suggested capitalism might be overthrown through a general strike. In France a united socialist party (the SFIO) had recently been founded. It took on board many of the ideological postulates of the left Socialists. Thus, unlike the PSOE, it did not try and set up its own labour confederation, but instead worked

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through the CGT. In view of the weakness of the UGT Fabra Ribas hoped to apply a similar formula, first to Catalonia, and perhaps eventually to the whole of Spain.\textsuperscript{10}

The victory of the tendency captained by Fabra Ribas was assured at the Socialist congress held on 27 and 28 September 1908 to reorganise the by then defunct Catalan Socialist Federation. Fabra Ribas, who had recently returned from abroad, became the Federation's secretary, and he was also elected to the post of editor of its mouthpiece, \textit{La Internacional}.\textsuperscript{11} The Socialists change of outlook significantly coincided with the eclipse of the figure of Toribio Reoyo. Nevertheless, Fabra Ribas would have to face the opposition of a group of Barcelona Socialists who adopted what may be referred to as an orthodox “Pablist” stance. Josep Comaposada, meanwhile, adopted a position of sceptical neutrality.

The initiative to found a new, effective, local federation was taken by the \textit{Associació de Dependència Mercantil} in the Summer of 1907, when it invited all the Barcelona unions to a series of meetings in order to discuss the question. At that time union organisation was very weak, and the small anarchist inspired federation had once again ceased to function. The formation of some kind of co-ordinating body was, therefore, an obvious necessity. It was for this reason that an important number of pro-anarchist, republican and independent unions agreed to the plan. The new federation, known as \textit{Solidaritat Obrera} (SO), was, accordingly, founded on 3 August 1907 with the support of over 50 Barcelona unions. Two months later the first number of its mouthpiece of the same title also appeared.\textsuperscript{12}

At first SO gained wide-ranging support. This included all those anarchists who did not support individualist doctrines. Thus, Francesc Ferrer gave money for the publication of SO, and a down payment to rent new larger headquarters in September 1908; Anselmo Lorenzo encouraged anarchists to join; and the city's leading anarchist publication, \textit{Tierra y Libertad}, gave the federation its blessing. Barcelona Socialists grouped around Fabra Ribas also strongly defended the new body, and even advised unions under their influence to leave the UGT in order to join. Finally, the Lerrouxists, hoped to attract SO into its circle of influence and gave it their protection.\textsuperscript{13}


\textsuperscript{11} \textit{La Internacional}, 30 November 1908.

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{José Negre, Recuerdos de un Viejo Militante} (Barcelona n.d.), pp. 7-8.; Angel Pestaña, “Historia de las ideas... en España, V”, \textit{Orto} (November 1932).

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{José Negre}, op cit, p. 9.; \textit{Boletín}, August 1908; SO, 13 February 1908; Xavier Cuadrat, op cit, pp. 179-209.; Joan Culla, op cit, p. 180.
Dormido, el proletario, sueña entumecido en sombrerete durmiente. Contra de si vio al rey que la clase hombre, y la idea de la hermandad del pueblo para el progreso de su sociedad y de la misma condición de su vida.

Vislumbra un pueblo civilizado, el pueblo de sus sueños, y, cubierto de sombra, se entrena en una de sus frutas crecen, y florecen... Y el tronco frutal y colmena durmiente, despierta amaneciendo...

(Fuera proletario: mientras el sol se va... una obra abstracta de un viejo hombre, la hermandad, con el contorno propio... y con ideas de la dirección... y con el triunfo...)

Fig. 7.1. Cover of the First Edition of Solidaridad Obrera.
During the first month of SO's existence the idea which emerged most forcefully was the need for working class unity in order to build up a strong labour federation, which would be in a position effectively to defend its members' interests against the bourgeoisie. The stress on autonomous working class action could be seen in the caption which appeared in the first number of SO. (see Fig. 7.1.). In it a worker was shown asleep, drugged by bourgeoisie propaganda. This was a reference to the political struggles of the period between the Lerrouxists and Solidaritat Catalana, which had attracted so much attention. The worker's dreams were the autonomy of Catalonia and the republic. Echoing Anselmo Lorenzo, only SO, it was claimed, could awaken the workers, improve their working conditions, and lead them down the path to their emancipation. Indeed, it appears that the name SO was devised in opposition to Solidaritat Catalana.14

The federation tried to balance the different tendencies within its midst.15 The Socialists, it would be true to say, because of their continued weakness in the Barcelona labour movement, relied on moderate independent unions to stop the anarchists from dominating the federation. However, in the depressed economic climate of these years even more militant trade unionists would be discouraged from undertaking any kind of revolutionary adventure. In fact, the need felt to strengthen union organisation led to a reaction against the revolutionary voluntarism of the turn of the century anarchist “free pacts”.16 This spirit was reflected in the organisational structure of SO. As was noted in Chapter Five, unions affiliated to the “free pacts” paid no dues. This made it impossible to run a labour organisation effectively. SO retained the decentralising ideals of previous anarchist bodies, but affiliated unions had to pay a small sum per member to the Federal Commission. The change in stance may in part have been the result of the Socialist presence within SO. However, it was also no doubt a consequence both of bitter experience and of the example of the French CGT. The CGT, as seen, declared itself syndicalist, but member unions had to pay dues.

The unitarian nature of SO allowed it to gain widespread support. At its peak in July 1908 71 unions were affiliated representing between 10 and 15,000 workers.17 This figure, moreover, included most of the city's largest unions. SO, therefore, was not only supported by more militant unions, which had been at the forefront of the strike wave which engulfed the city between 1901 and 1903. Unions representing more moderate groups of workers, who usually maintained an independent existence, and certainly had no sympathy for the anarchists' trade union strategy, also became members. This included a number of shopworkers unions. In the construction industry

15. Thus the first so-called Federal Commission included Antoni Colomer, of no known political persuasion, as General Secretary, with Antoni Badia and Jaume Bisbe, representatives of the federation's Socialist and anarchist wings respectively, as secretaries. The General Secretary was - with the exception of several months in 1908 - a neutral figure through to July 1909.
16. SO, 26 October 1907.
17. SO, 12 July 1908.
the stonemasons, marblers, stonecutters, plasterers and engravers affiliated. In woodworking they
were joined by the proverbially elitist coopers, along with a number of highly skilled craft unions
like the hatters and makers of musical instruments. SO's ability to obtain such universal support
needs to be related to the economic depression of these years. The high level of unemployment
and continued weakness of union organisation kept even the most militant union activists in check.
This made it possible to form a labour federation which, though committed to revolutionary goals,
put the need to strengthen the unions before any other consideration. This in turn encouraged the
more moderate unions mentioned above to give their support.

From the outset SO aspired to be more than just a local federation, and it was soon to
correspond with unions in other parts of Catalonia, and even from the rest of Spain. From
February 1908 it encouraged unions from outside Barcelona to "spontaneously join", and in the
following month it convinced the newly formed Badalona labour federation to turn its inaugural
meeting into an act open to all Catalan unions. It proved a great success, with the result that it was
decided to hold a congress in SO's Barcelona headquarters to form a new regional federation under
the same name.

Meanwhile, a number of so-called "propaganda tours" by SO's leading figures encouraged
the growth of trade union organisation visible throughout much of urban Catalonia during the year.
Thus, when the regional congress was finally held between 6-8 September there was an important
trade union contingent present. This included 55 Barcelona unions, 60 unions from outside the
Catalan capital, along with five local labour federations. The regional congress is not a perfect
guide to SO's organisational strength, because all Catalan unions were invited and many chose not
to join. Nevertheless it does provide an important guide to its areas of influence outside Barcelona.
There were few surprises. Most of the delegates were from the industrial towns clustered around
Barcelona, from the Maresme and from the Ter Valley. There were, finally, also representatives
were Reus and Tarragona in Tarragona Province, where the Socialists had a significant degree of
support. However, the quantitative impact of SO should not be exaggerated. More unions
sympathised than actually joined. Thus, from outside Barcelona there were probably never more
than 20 unions representing at most 5000 workers affiliated.

Nevertheless, the leadership of SO could with some justice claim that up to September
1908 the federation had enjoyed considerable success. However, during the latter part of 1908 and
1909 a series of problems came to the fore, which placed a great strain on the organisation. In the
first place, the federation came into conflict with Lerroux's Radicals. This conflict was in many
ways inevitable. Between 1904 and 1906 the Lerrouxists had adopted a paternalist attitude

18. SO, 30 November 1907
19. SO, 13 February, 14 March, 5 July, 18 September 1908.
towards the anarchists, and aided them when they were persecuted by the authorities. At the same time some anarchists continued to treat Lerroux with benevolence. Nevertheless, as has been seen, from 1902 there was growing criticism of Lerrouxist republicanism in anarchist circles. Similar charges continued to be made between 1904 and 1906. However, with the fortunes of the Barcelona unions at such a low ebb they did not endanger Lerroux's position. The situation was to change in 1907 with the appearance of SO. At first the Lerrouxists tried to extend their paternalist cloak over the federation. However, they were soon to become alarmed by its syndicalist vocabulary, and responded by publishing a number of articles in their daily newspaper, *El Progreso*, dismissing anarchist doctrines.  

Certainly the Lerrouxists had good reason for disquiet. The bulk of their supporters were working class. Nevertheless, they were not a working class party and, primarily concerned with the struggle for political power, they had never seriously attempted to fashion their own labour federation. The growth of a powerful labour organisation dominated by anarchists, syndicalists and Socialists would, therefore, pose a serious threat to their working class base.

The Lerrouxists' apprehensions were soon to be confirmed. Anarchists and Socialists within SO were, of course, not adverse to picking a quarrel with the Lerrouxists, as they believed that they would as a result be able to open republican workers' eyes to the fact that they were being deceived. The conduct of the ex-anarchist Radicals, Ignacio Clarià and Josep Maria Dalmau, provided them with the opportunity. The two men were compositors. They ran a printing house known as La Niotipia. It was meant to be a co-operative. However, not all the workers employed were shareholders. A number of anarchists within the compositors union, *L'Art d’Imprimir*, argued that the shareholders, led by Clarià and Dalmau, treated the other workers very poorly. Moreover, most of the time these shareholders took better paid work in other shops, and only returned to La Niotipia when they had no such work. This occurred when a strike was called in the print room of the left-Catalanist daily, *El Poble Català*, during 1908. As a result a number of workers already employed in La Niotipia were sacked. This, the anarchists in *L'Art d’Imprimir* maintained, showed that La Niotipia was in fact a capitalist enterprise. Clarià and Palau, they concluded, should therefore be expelled from the union.

The question was discussed in two highly charged meetings held by *L’Art d’Imprimir* on 21 and 28 July 1908. The proponents of the expulsions were in the majority. Nonetheless the matter was referred to a delegate meeting of SO, which unanimously approved the expulsions. This was not, however, the end of the matter. Clarià and Palau were also employed in the print room of the Lerrouxist daily, *El Progreso*. The paper had agreed that all its workers should be

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unionised. As Clarià and Palau had been expelled from their union, then, L’Art d’Imprimir asked that they be sacked. The Lerrouxists had now been brought into the front line of the conflict. They had no wish to sack two loyal followers. They, therefore, encouraged Clarià and Palau to from their own union. Then, in a letter addressed to L’Art d’Imprimir on 25 September El Progreso argued that the dispute was an inter-union affair in which they could not intervene. Nevertheless, it agreed to abide by a decision taken by SO.

From this date the dispute was to become increasingly embittered. By their actions the Radicals hoped to by-pass L’Art d’Imprimir, mobilise support within the unions, and get the decision to classify La Niotipia as bourgeois overturned by SO. They were, however, to be disappointed. The Metalworkers’ Union, affiliated to SO but under Lerrouxist influence, formally asked for a delegate meeting to be called to discuss the question. Meetings were, accordingly, held on 1 and 8 October, and in the latter meeting it was agreed to uphold the previous decision to declare La Niotipia bourgeois by 30 votes against 7 with 9 abstentions.

El Progreso now tried to play for time. It still refused to expel Clarià and Palau but now stated it would abide by the decision taken by a commission named by the leadership of SO. When the commission, as was to be expected, found against the ex-anarchists it appeared for a moment as if the Lerrouxists had given way. On 5 December El Progreso stated that it had sacked Clarià and Palau. However, it soon became clear that this was only a tactical ploy. An important by-election was to be held in Barcelona on 13 December and the Radicals did not wish to alienate any working class voters. The results were, in fact, surprisingly favourable, and immediately afterwards El Progreso announced its intention of readmitting the sacked men.21

SO responded by launching an all out attack on El Progreso. L’Art d’Imprimir had already declared a boycott of El Progreso at the end of 1908, and SO followed suit on 2 January 1909. The campaign against the Lerrouxist daily was backed up by the distribution of flysheets and pasting of posters on walls. This on occasion led to physical confrontations with republican militants. Moreover, meetings were held in towns in which the Socialists or anarchists had an important trade union presence. Despite efforts made to disrupt them by the Radicals they invariably gave their support to SO. L’Art d’Imprimir now looked to press home its attack. At its instigation on 7 February SO held a meeting open to all those who wished to attend “to denounce El Progreso”. It was, however, broken up by Lerrouxist activists before any conclusions had been reached.

21. Boletin, August, September, November 1908; April 1909, supplement; SO, 9 January 1909.
In response SO decided to up the ante, and called an assembly of the “organised working class” in order to judge *El Progreso*. The assembly was held in SO’s headquarters on 21 March. It was attended by representatives from 47 Barcelona unions, 6 local federations, 2 craft federations and 45 unions from outside the Catalan Capital. They represented the bulk of the Catalan trade union movement. The meeting was attended by the director of *El Progreso*, Emiliano Iglesias, who tried unsuccessfully to defend the paper’s record. After he had retired Rosendo Vidal, who represented the Sabadell FOS, put forward a motion which called for *El Progreso* to be declared an “enemy of the organised working class” if within 8 days it had not accepted *L’Art d’Imprimir*’s demands. The motion was approved by 78 votes in favour, 4 against and 8 abstentions.\(^{22}\)

The leadership of SO had, therefore, obtained the support of the majority of the Catalan unions. In this way it had been able to assert the federation’s independent class line. It had also attempted to undermine the Radicals working class allegiance. This had not been done directly. Despite the experience of the *Solidaritat Catalana* Lerroux had maintained his working class and popular base.\(^{23}\) Indeed, during 1908 internal dissent led the *Solidaritat Catalana* coalition to break up, leaving the Lerrouxists in a stronger position than at any time since 1905. A direct assault upon Lerrouxism would, therefore, have been a hazardous undertaking, and would have laid SO open to the charge that it had become involved in “politics”. Lerroux himself, who was at this time in Argentina, was, therefore, not mentioned in SO’s criticisms. Instead, SO argued that its quarrel was with the three administrators of *El Progreso*, and had been provoked by the fact that the paper had supported the “bourgeois” owners of *La Niotipia*. Thus SO argued that the conflict, “is simply a dispute between a bourgeois company and a union”. However, the implication was that *El Progreso* and, by extension, the Radicals supported the bourgeoisie and were, therefore, the enemies of the working class. This was most clearly expressed in an article published in March 1909 in which SO warned, “we recommend *El Progreso* does not forget that *Solidaritat Obrera* is a powerful organisation of conscious men and a schooling ground for the proletariat, where the sound advice is given that nothing is to be hoped from the bourgeoisie WHATEVER CLOTHES THEY WEAR, and that the workers will only emancipate themselves through their own efforts”.\(^{24}\)

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\(^{22}\) SO, 26 March, 9 April 1909. The final vote was taken very late. A number of representatives from outside Barcelona had, therefore, already left.

\(^{23}\) Joan Culla, op cit, p. 180.

\(^{24}\) SO, 9 Jan 1909. The claim that all bourgeois were the same whatever their political affiliations was repeated continually during these months. Thus, for example, SO had already stated in September 1908 that: “Our terrain is exclusively that of the class struggle and our common enemy the bourgeois whatever clothes he wears.” SO, 26 Sept 1908. In a similar vein the compositors union stated that: “For the Arte del Impresion there are no red bourgeois and white bourgeois, simply bourgeois exploiters and exploited workers.” *Boletin*, April 1909, Supplement. The implication was, of course, that whatever they might say the Lerrouxist leadership was as bad as the rest of the bourgeoisie. The confederation’s mouthpiece was more explicit as to the reasons for the conflict with the Radicals in March 1909 when it stated that even if there had been no dispute it would have been necessary for SO to differentiate itself from the Radicals.
Yet, despite the support SO gained from the Catalan unions it made little impression on the Radicals' working class base. That this was the case is confirmed by the results of the December 1908 by-election and the May 1909 municipal elections in Barcelona, at which the Radicals obtained 30,000 and 34,000 votes respectively. There are perhaps two main explanations of SO's inability to influence large numbers of republican workers. Firstly, of course, given the federation's syndicalist stance it offered no direct political challenge to the Radicals. They, therefore, remained the only unambiguously left-wing party strongly rooted in the city's history. More important in this context, however, was that union organisation in Barcelona still remained weak. As has been noted, at its high point SO had between about 10 and 15,000 members in Barcelona. Yet, if shopworkers are included (and there were several shopworkers unions in SO) this only represented between 5.6 per cent and 8.4 per cent of the city's working class. The level of strikes, moreover, was at the lowest point of the whole period 1899-1914. Union activity, therefore, remained very much a side show in the great political circus.

The Lerrouxists' continuing strength in working class circles, indeed, allowed them to strike back at SO to some effect. "Many workers formed part of the (Lerrouxist) Casa del Pueblo and Solidaridad at the same time," and the Radicals had considerable influence in a number of Barcelona unions. As the dispute became increasingly bitter from September 1908 the Radicals used two tactics. On the one hand they tried to discredit SO's leading figures. On the other they mobilised opposition within the federation against the decision to classify the Neotipia as bourgeois. The support they received was not inconsiderable. Nevertheless, it proved insufficient to block the measures proposed by L'Art d'Imprimir. The Radicals, however, did not concede defeat. They then tried to undermine SO by persuading those unions under their influence to leave. By 1908 a total of 8 unions done so, and other unions affiliated had lost members because Lerrouxist sympathisers had resigned.

However, ideological differences not only led to a split between SO and the Radicals. Conflict also broke out within the federation itself. When SO was formed great effort was made to construct a solid, united, body. Figures like the anarchist, Jaume Bisbe, and the Socialist, Antoni

for: "El Progreso must inevitably be an enemy of syndicalism, because syndicalism, in its modern form, supports the class struggle. Thus, given its revolutionary character, it could never second the plans of any political party, because no party has in its programme the abolition of capital, and without this our emancipation is impossible. Therefore, those who say that they wish to emancipate us ARE LYING and KNOW THAT THEY ARE LYING." SO, 26 March 1909.

25. This was admitted by L'Art d'Imprimir in April 1909 when it stated: "The republican workers have been influenced by the string of lies they read (in El Progreso), (...) and firmly believe anything that, taking advantage of their good faith, the three enemies of the working class (i.e., El Progreso's three administrators) tell them." Boletin, April 1909, supplement.


27. LP, 19 April 1909, NE.
Badia, played a key role in this respect. Bisbe, who was General Secretary for a few months in 1908, recognised that a compromise between the various tendencies was necessary, "even if for it to be possible we have to sacrifice part of our own beliefs". This compromise had, according to Antonio Badia, made it possible for anarchists and Socialists, who had in the past bitterly attacked each other to, "work in unison for our common emancipation". 28

The problem was that there were still very real ideological differences between the two groupings which could not simply be swept under the carpet. All seemed to agree that syndicalism was the guiding principle behind SO, but there were disagreements as to what exactly this meant. The first cause for disagreement centred on the question of "politics". The Socialists appeared to take as their model the CGT's 1906 Chartre d'Amiens. This charter stated that the CGT was to be apolitical, and that workers affiliated could form part of any political party they wished as long as they did not try and spread their views in the union. Yet many anarchists and syndicalists within the federation continued to maintain that elections were a farce and that class parties served no useful function. This "antipolitical" current was particularly strong in SO's mouthpiece, which was run by two anarchists, Jaume Bisbe and Tomás Herreros. During the latter part of 1908 it ran a particularly provocative series of articles by the Catalan anarchist, Josep Prat, one of which bitterly criticised the PSOE's concentration on elections. 29

However, conflict between anarchists and Socialists not only centred on the role of the political party. The related questions of union strategy and labour's response to social legislation also continued to cause controversy. Anarchists within SO supported direct action. On the other hand, despite the Socialists supposed sympathy towards syndicalism they did not abandon el sindicalismo a base múltiple. This could be seen in SO's September 1908 regional congress. At this congress the Socialists had an important degree of support. Only a small minority of Barcelona delegates were pro-Socialist. Outside Barcelona, however, they were far stronger, and they received the backing of delegates representing unions from Mataró, Manresa, Roda, Tarragona and Reus. This allowed them to gain the upper hand. This became clear over the question of union tactics. A commission, the majority of whose members were Socialist, presented a motion which stated that before taking strike action a union should take into account the state of the industry, possible repercussions of the strike in other branches of the trade, the percentage of workers unionised, and whether there were sufficient funds to finance the strike's first stages. Most important it stated that if a union wanted financial support for a strike it would have to consult with the Federal Commission. If the Commission agreed to the strike then the union would be entitled to strike funds, but if not it could only expect voluntary and moral support. The commission's proposals bore great similarity to the strike tactics advocated by the UGT, and

28. SO, 9 November 1907, 5 June 1908.
29. SO, 7 August 1908.
were therefore, not surprisingly, strongly combated by the anarchists. After much debate a
compromise was finally reached. The original motion was passed along with the addition: “Our
main weapon will be direct action. However, other tactics can be used when the circumstances so
require.”

Two points should be noted. First, the Socialist motion showed, despite the views
expressed by Fabra Ribas, how little syndicalist ideological baggage they had in reality taken
onboard. For the whole point of revolutionary syndicalism was that the revolutionary general
strike should be the result of a massive build up of industrial conflict, and it was difficult to see
how this could take place if all sorts of obstacles were put in the way of strike action. Second, the
final resolution was totally contradictory, for direct action and la base múltiple were two mutually
exclusive union strategies, which could in no way be combined. This reflected the extent to which
SO was a fragile compromise with a very uncertain future.

Controversy over this issue was, furthermore, compounded by a dispute over the role SO
should play in the Barcelona junta local de reformas sociales. As seen, these juntas were set up at
the beginning of the century to oversee the implementation of state social legislation. The opposing
views anarchists and Socialists held on the question of social legislation have already been
discussed. From the outset SO adopted an ambiguous position on this question. Antoni Badia, as
usual tried to reconcile the different points of view, maintaining that as the unions affiliated were
autonomous they could hold the most diverse opinions on the subject. However, divisions came
out into the open at the end of 1908. The September regional congress accepted the need to fight
for the implementation of laws relating to the Sunday rest day and the employment of minors.
However, there was also a vote of protest against the Barcelona junta local, “because of its
concomitances with the bourgeoisie”. Another anarchist inspired motion which stated that the
workers should never have anything to do with bodies of this type was discussed but not finally
approved. Nevertheless, the anarchists were in the future to argue that the decision had been taken
to have nothing to do with the Barcelona junta local. The situation became more tense in
November when a number of Barcelona unions affiliated to SO participated in elections held to
renew the junta local. Other unions, however, refused to participate, and accused those that had
done so of breaking a resolution passed at the last congress.

Divisions of this kind naturally served to weaken the federation. The Socialists claimed
during 1908 that the anarchists were using the supposedly non-political nature of SO to try and
impose their own domination. They were particularly critical of SO’s mouthpiece, and maintained

30. SO, 18 September 1908.
31. SO, 14 March 1908.
32. SO, 18 September, 18, 25 December 1908; La Internacional, 11 Dec 1908.
that the pro-anarchist stance of some of SO's members was stopping some unions from joining and making others think of leaving. Indeed, internal strife combined with the dispute with the Radicals had led to a weakening of the federation from mid-1908. Thus, the September 1908 congress was attended by only 55 Barcelona unions even through 72 had been affiliated a few months previously. This decline in membership was to continue through 1909, and by July of this year perhaps only 43 unions remained affiliated.

Moreover, divisions within SO were not wholly limited to anarchists and Socialists. The moderate course which SO in practice pursued led some anarchists, who favoured working within the unions, to take an increasingly critical view of the confederation. The first anarchists to take such a stance were Leopoldo Bonafulla and Teresa Claramunt, who published El Rebelde between 1907 and 1908. These two veteran anarchists had played a leading role in labour protest at the beginning of the century. They now took more of a back seat role, but their views were still influential in anarchist circles. Although they at first supported SO they soon changed their minds, stating that while they were revolutionaries SO was not. In particular they opposed any collaboration with republicans and Socialists, and urged anarchists not to abandon their affinity groups. In the latter part of 1908 and during 1909 some of these criticisms began to be echoed in Tierra y Libertad. Anarchists like Anselmo Lorenzo showed their disquiet at the fact that SO had not adopted a clearly revolutionary stance. They were also suspicious of collaboration with the Socialists, and argued that if the federation was not to become a reformist body it would have to be firmly led by a minority of committed militants. These tensions resulted from different readings of syndicalism. In Catalonia, on the one hand, there were those whose stressed the need to build a united labour movement. On the other, were the extremists who emphasised the necessity of constructing a revolutionary organisation led by anarchists. These two tendencies have usually been referred to by historians as revolutionary syndicalist and anarcho-syndicalist. Over the next twenty they were to be locked in combat for control of the anarchist wing of the Spanish labour movement.

By 1909, therefore, SO had a very uncertain future. Despite Fabra Ribas's radical rhetoric it did not seem that the Socialists and anarchists had enough ideological affinities to sustain SO. In fact, over the following year, in a context of heightened industrial conflictivity and confrontation with the state, the coalition of forces represented by SO was to break up. The first taste of increasing industrial unrest came in the cotton textile industry. As was seen in Chapter Three,

33. SO, 14 March 1908; La Internacional, 11 December 1908.
34. Xavier Cuadrat, op cit, p. 350.
between 1908 and 1909 as a result of the growth of trade union organisation in cotton textiles masters and men soon came into conflict.

The most serious dispute was in the Ruisnol company worktown just outside Manlleu. Until that date the Socialists had done well on the Ter. At the end of 1908 a congress was held to form a district labour federation in the area. SO attached great importance to this event, and saw it as a continuation of the September regional congress. The congress stated that the new federation would be free from "political or religious dogmas", that the unions affiliated would have no contacts with the bourgeoisie, and that they would centre their attention on the class struggle. However, the congress was dominated by the Socialists. This became clear when a resolution was passed which stated that, like the powerful labour organisation in Britain, Germany, Belgium and the United States, they would adopt el sindicalismo a base múltiple.37

This dominance was, nevertheless, threatened by the attacks by the bourgeoisie on union organisation in the industry. In June 1909 SO responded to the "efforts made by the bourgeoisie of Manlleu, San Feliu de Codinas, Barcelona, Olot and other towns to destroy the workers' organisation" by calling a delegate meeting to be followed by an assembly open to all union members. These meetings were held in Granollers on 10 and 11 July. The assembly's conclusions were significant because for the first time since the foundation of SO the possibility of calling the region's working class out on strike was discussed. Thus it was agreed that if the disputes in progress were not speedily resolved the region's textile workers should come out on strike, "resorting to all known methods in order to achieve victory". In order to ensure success SO and the Barcelona cotton textile union, the Ram de L'Aigua i Art Fabril, would, moreover, co-ordinate their activities, and when they felt the time was right extend the general strike to the rest of the labour movement.38 It is doubtful, given the weakness of union organisation in much of Catalan industry, whether this agreement would have been workable. Yet, once again employer hostility to union organisation was forcing Catalan labour down the path of violent protest.

However, before the assembly's resolutions could be put to the test a far more dramatic conflict between Catalan workers and the Spanish state came to the fore. Between 1904 and 1909 the police and courts continued to interfere in the running of the trade unions and, on occasion, arrested labour leaders. The authorities responded to criticism by claiming that they were simply combating terrorism. Indeed, the spectre of terrorism coloured this whole period, very much as it had in the 1890s. The circumstances were, however, very different. In the 1890s anarchist attacks had been directed at leading political and military figures, and the anarchists involved had been more than willing to accept responsibility. Yet when the terrorist outrages were resumed in

37. SO, 25 December 1908, 8 January 1909; La Internacional, 1 January 1909.
1904, they were limited to the planting of bombs in the lower class quarters on the city. Moreover, the anarchists themselves denied any responsibility. The question of who exactly was behind the bombings of these years is, in fact, still a very open one, and any attempt to find an answer would take the investigator on a difficult journey through the Barcelona underworld of déclassé sub-proletarians, police informers, bribery and corruption.39

Whoever was responsible, what is clear is that many workers with libertarian sympathies who worked within the unions had no part in the bombings. This did not, however, guarantee that they would be spared police harassment. The state had never distinguished very clearly between union militants and terrorists, and it was, therefore, to be expected that the working class press should claim that anarchists were being falsely arrested and accused of being terrorists so as to prepare a repetition of Montjuïc. As occurred during the agitation in favour of a judicial review of the Montjuïc trial, the clergy (on occasions even accused of planting the bombs) were felt to occupy a prominent position amongst those reactionary forces to blame for the violations of civil liberties.40

Tension mounted at the beginning of 1907 when the “Vaticanist” Conservative, Antonio Maura, became Prime Minister. It was the opinion of his government that the Barcelona bombings were part of a plot by anarchists and Lerrouxists to overthrow the Monarchy. In January 1908, therefore, after a bomb had gone off in Barcelona killing two people, constitutional guarantees were suspended in Barcelona province, and a so-called “anti-terrorist bill” introduced into parliament. If passed the bill would have given the authorities greater powers to close down anarchist publications and centres, and to detain suspected anarchists. There followed an outcry against the bill, which was seen as an attack on trade union rights and the freedom of expression. This reaction was not solely confined to the labour movement. Outside Catalonia a “left-wing block” made up of Liberals and republicans was formed to combat the bill.

In Catalonia, on the other hand, organised labour took the lead. In May SO decided to launch a campaign of union meetings in order to bring pressure to bear on the Government. The most salient result of Maura's action was to radicalise the vocabulary employed by the federation. In a statement which gives a good indication of the workers views on the composition of the Spanish ruling élite, SO claimed that Maura was a Jesuit. He was subservient to the Vatican and at the same time under the control of the Catalan bourgeoisie. The bill, SO continued, was a weapon

39. Joaquin Romero Maura has no doubt that the anarchists were behind the bombings, but other authors are far more circumspect in their conclusions. See especially, Joaquin Romero Maura, “Terrorism in Barcelona and its Impact on Spanish Politics, 1904-1909”, Past and Present, No.41 (December 1968).; Joan C. Ullman, op cit, pp. 177-188.; Xavier Cuadrat, op cit, pp. 209-221.; Rafael Núñez Florencio, op cit, pp. 70-82.
40. ET, 11 June 1905, 10 November 1906.
aimed primarily at the working class, and SO stated that if necessary force would be used against it. At the end of May and beginning of June a series of well attended meetings were held marked by fiery speeches from the platform. They were followed by a manifesto signed by 69 unions from throughout Catalonia. The manifesto threatened that with the passage of the bill any possibility of the peaceful evolution of society would be lost, and the proletariat would have no choice but to carry out a revolution.41

Under intense pressure Antonio Maura finally dropped the bill at the end of June. The respite would, however, prove only a temporary one. In July 1909 anti-government protest in urban Catalonia would reach new heights, and culminate in an armed insurrection known as Tragic Week. The cause of the protest was Spain's growing involvement in Morocco. From the turn of the century Spain had sought to colonise the north of the country. All sections of the country's elite had their reason for intervening. For the Monarchist parties the expansion was an affirmation that Spain was still an important European power. For the military it offered an opportunity for active service and advancement, while Catalan business hoped to sell the Moroccans their surplus production. Furthermore, two large mining concerns were formed to exploit the iron and lead deposits found in the territory. The Catalan financiers and businessmen, the Marques de Comillas and Eusebio Güell, had shares in one of the companies, as did leading Monarchist figures.42 As in the case of Cuba and the Philippines, however, it was the workers and peasants who would actually have to do most of the fighting.

From June 1909 the Spanish government had been building up the army's presence in the region. In response, Moroccan tribesmen began to attack Spanish positions. The first skirmish occurred on 9 July when a railway line belonging to the two mining companies was attacked, and two workers killed. The Spanish Prime Minister reacted by calling up army reservists. These were men who had been selected for military service but had not yet been called up. Many now had wives and children and their call up would, therefore, leave their families in poverty. This measure could not fail to be unpopular. The experience of the late nineteenth century colonial wars was still fresh in the workers' minds, and a repeat performance was feared.43

The first troops began to leave for Morocco from the port of Barcelona on 12 July. As a result the port immediately became the focus for noisy demonstrations against the war. The culmination of this phase of protest came on Sunday 18 July. The soldiers who had to embark were accompanied through the centre of town by a great multitude. When the finally embarked in

41. ET, 6 June 1908.; SO, 12 July 1908.
42. Joan C. Ullman, op cit, pp. 259-284. Between 1905 and 1909 a large number of articles were published in the mouthpiece of the FTN, El Trabajo Nacional, discussing the possibility of opening up new markets in Morocco.
the midst of a tumultuous throng they were accompanied by cries of down with the war, down with Maura and Comillas, let the rich and let the friars go, and you're going to defend a company not Spain. On 19 July news came through of a bloody battle between the Spanish army and Moroccan militia. In response people took to the streets, with the result that in the following days there were clashes between demonstrators and police in the Ramblas. Of the Catalan political parties only the Radicals launched a vigorous protest campaign in Barcelona. They were followed by SO, which hoped to hold a series of meetings throughout Catalonia.44

The ideology espoused by both Radical and trade unionist speakers was very similar and, as the cries of the protesters suggest, expressed popular feeling. It was argued that the Government's adventure in Morocco did not benefit the majority of the population. On the contrary, the workers were being sent to Morocco to defend the interests of Comillas, Güell and the mining companies. In this respect it was not lost on the workers that troops were being sent to Morocco in ships belonging to the Marqués de Comillas. Comillas and Güell, it has been noted, were leading social catholics, and Antonio Maura was seen as having close ties with the Vatican. This led to the belief that the Spanish church was closely involved in the colonial war.

The most dramatic anti-war meeting was organised by SO, and took place in Terrassa on Wednesday 21 July. It was attended by about 6000 people. There were fiery speeches from the anarchist, Mariano Castellote, and Fabra Ribas. The public responded with continuous ovations, women cried out and there were calls for the war to end. Josep Comaposada was later to state that he had never seen anything like it. The final motion, which was unanimously approved, threatened a general strike. In addition it added an anti-clerical note by stating that if anyone should go and fight in Morocco than it should be the clergy, for they did not produce anything, had no family, and were the only ones interested in the triumph of christianity.45 Popular outrage had now reached a critical point, and the Government had to take some action. It chose repression. On Thursday morning, the Minister of the Interior, Juan de la Cierva, suspended all antiwar meetings, and ordered the arrest of anyone heard shouting antiwar slogans. The following day the Barcelona civil governor, Angel Osorio y Gallardo, prohibited all telegraphic and telephonic communications with Madrid. Barcelona was now isolated and, as Joan C. Ullman has stated, consequent upon the Government's action, "the antiwar protest had either to die or take a revolutionary turn".46

Already on 18 June in what was probably the most radical speech of his career, Pablo Iglesias had threatened a general strike, and if this was insufficient to stop the war, revolutionary action. The Catalan Socialists, under the leadership of Fabra Ribas, urged the Madrid PSOE

45. Antonio Fabra Ribas, op cit, pp. 31-32.; Joan C. Ullman, op cit, pp. 312-313.
46. Ibid, p. 315.
leadership to take action as soon as possible. Yet, in private Pablo Iglesias remained cautious. He knew that if a general strike were called the Government would take reprisals, and that this would put in jeopardy the organisation the Socialists had over the years built up. The scale of the protest movement finally made action unavoidable, so it was decided to call peaceful general strike from 2 August. By then, however, the initiative had passed to SO.47

The federation had planned to hold a meeting open to all the city's unions on 23 July, to decide what action to take. The meeting was, however, banned. As a result, anarchist and syndicalist militants argued that a general strike should be called. Fabra Ribas was informed of their deliberations by the leading anarchist, Tomás Herreros. The Socialists' reaction was unfavourable. Fabra Ribas pointed out that the PSOE already planned to call a general strike on 2 August, and argued that the entire Spanish labour movement should act in unison on that date. Yet the Catalan Socialists really had no choice but to accede. Memories of the 1902 general strike were still fresh in their minds, and they feared that if they opposed the strike they would once again be branded enemies of the working class. The Federació Socialista Catalana, therefore, agreed to the plan, and in a secret meeting held in the headquarters of SO on Saturday 24 July a strike committee was elected, with Fabra Ribas representing the Socialists.48

The strike committee informed union leaders from outside the capital of their plans on the following day. On Monday morning pickets came out in force. Many shopkeepers and businessmen sympathised with the workers' aims and so offered no resistance. Accordingly, by midmorning the city was at a total standstill. Moreover, the strike call was seconded throughout urban Catalonia. The aim of the strike committee was ostensibly to organise a peaceful protest which, according to some reports, would only last one day. The intensity of popular feeling, nevertheless, ensured their would be no return to work on the Tuesday. Instead, the strike quickly developed into an insurrection. The first signs of violence occurred on the Monday, when workers attacked the trains to stop them operating, and a demonstration held in the Ramblas was fired on by the police. It was, however, on Tuesday afternoon that the revolt really began. Barricades were put up in working class areas, and crowds began to attack and burn down the city's religious institutions. Outside Barcelona telephone and telegraph links were also cut and, inevitably, consumos tax booths were set alight.

The unpopularity of the Church in working class circles has already been stressed. The hated Maura government was felt to be steeped in clerical influence, and the clergy involved in the Moroccan adventure. The opportunity was, thus, taken to destroy the Church's infrastructure

47. Xavier Cuadrat, op cit, pp. 367-372.
whilst it was unable to protect itself. The main aim of the workers on the barricades was the overthrow of the Conservative administration. As we have seen, in 1908 there had already been threats to resort to armed revolt. The call up of the reservists was the match which lit the fuse. Many of the workers on the barricades no doubt looked to the installation of a republic. In Sabadell, indeed, the republic was proclaimed on Wednesday. Barcelona, nevertheless, remained the key to future developments. For there to be a revolutionary alternative to the present Government, political leadership was necessary. Anarchists had from the start hoped to turn the strike into a revolution. Yet they recognised that by themselves they were not strong enough to take the lead. Miguel Moreno, the SO representative on the strike committee, therefore, asked the Radical leadership to take charge. With Lerroux not yet in Spain, however, Emiliano Iglesias had no wish to become involved in a movement which he felt had no chance of success. He, therefore, declined the offer, and suggested the strike should be called off as soon as possible. In desperation Fabra Ribas and the Socialists called on the nationalist republicans of the Centre Nacionalista Republicà to lead the movement. However, they received the same response. Consequently, the revolt had no clear leadership or sense of direction. When, therefore, troop reinforcements arrived in Catalonia on Thursday, and it became clear that the strike had had no repercussions outside Catalonia, the insurrection soon petered out.49

The events of these weeks once again showed how difficult it was for reformist politics to operate in the context of the Spanish state. Despite the experience of the colonial wars of 1895-1898 the Monarchist parties had maintained the unjust system of redemption payments, and despite the suffering the decision would cause, the Maura government showed no qualms at sending reservists to the Moroccan front. Furthermore, peaceful protest was made impossible de facto suspension of constitutional guarantees.

The Government's stance made life particularly difficult for the Spanish Socialists. They did not wish to step outside the bounds of legality. Nevertheless, in order to maintain their credibility they had to take some action. The Catalan Socialists, under the radical leadership of Fabra Ribas, were quick to demand the calling of a general strike. However, they were still linked to the Spanish organisation, and by the time action was agreed they had been upstaged by the anarchists and syndicalists.

49. Joan C. Ullman has carried out a highly detailed study of Tragic Week, op cit, pp. 343-505. However Ullman is, it seems, mistaken in her claim that the church burning was a Radical plot to divert workers away from revolutionary action. For the spontaneous nature of the church burning see, Joaquin Romero Maura, La Rosa, pp. 519-520.; Joan Culla, op cit, p. 212. Contemporaries stressed that the protest was leaderless. See, for example, Leopoldo Bonafulla, op cit, p. 68.; Claudi Ametllà, op cit, p. 268. ES, 20 August 1909.

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However, the strike committee quickly lost control on events. By Tuesday the strike had developed into a popular - largely working class - revolt against the central authority. This fact determined the course the movement would take. Conflict between the working class and Catalan bourgeoisie played practically no part in the revolt. As we have seen, trade unionism was at this time still weak, and (with the exception of cotton textiles outside Barcelona) industrial conflict was at a very low ebb. This explains why workers burnt churches and did not take over factories. SO was still a small organisation and could not hope to lead such a movement, particularly as many workers involved hoped that their efforts would result in the proclamation of a republic.

For this reason, despite their class line, the leaders of SO hoped the republicans would step in. The conjuncture, then, opened up new possibilities for the republican parties. Yet it was also fraught with danger. As we have seen all the Catalan republican groupings refused to intervene. In reality only the Radicals could have done so to some effect. However, they were afraid that if they led a movement which was doomed to failure they would, once it was defeated, suffer heavy repression. In this respect they were probably not mistaken. Though the Restoration system had since 1898 showed signs of breaking up it still had the support of the army, and there is no reason to suppose that it would not have been able to crush a republican rebellion. Yet, at the same time, the Radicals would have to justify such inhibition to their working class supporters, many of whom played an active part in the insurrection.

In this respect they were, in fact, to be quite successful. Tragic Week was followed by brutal government repression. Hundreds of workers were imprisoned and five men - including Francesc Ferrer - were finally shot. While the repression continued the leadership of the Radical party tried to distance itself from the events of Tragic Week. However, the Maura Government fell on 21 October 1909, and constitutional guarantees were restored soon after. From this date the Radicals totally changed their tune. They strongly defended the workers involved and, on occasion, even claimed to have been behind the revolt. SO was still banned, and no other political grouping wished to dispute the political capital to be gained from this claim. The Lerrouxists were, therefore, once again able to rally working class support behind them. This was made apparent by the Radicals excellent showing in the May 1910 general election in the city.

1910, nevertheless, was to be the year in which the party began its slow decline in Barcelona. The immediate cause was the decision taken by Alejandro Lerroux to move to Madrid and convert the Radicals into a national party, which would offer a left of centre opposition to the Liberals and Conservatives. Accordingly, the party shifted to the right. Its old extremist rhetoric, aimed preferentially at the working class, was therefore replaced by a more measured vocabulary.

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51. Ferrer was falsely accused of having used SO to orchestrate the revolt.
targeted to a far greater extent at a middle class audience. In Barcelona this change in stance coincided with a number of financial scandals involving Radical local counsellors. As a result, the party lost credibility amongst its working class base. Thus, in the city’s December 1909 municipal elections the Lerrouxists received about 32,000 votes. Yet in November 1913 they received only 17,000.\textsuperscript{52}

However, between 1910 and 1914 the balance of political forces in Catalonia was upset by another factor. The economic upturn of these years led to a rapid growth of trade union organisation. Much of the growth took place outside the principal labour federations. Nevertheless, both the UGT and SO benefited from the new conjuncture. The UGT, in particular increased rapidly in size. Thus from about 41,000 affiliates in mid 1910 it reached the figure of 147,128 in January 1913, though it subsequently fell back to 119,000 members by August 1914.

As was seen in Chapter Four, in Barcelona during 1910 industrial conflict escalated rapidly. A climax was reached between September 1910 and January 1911 when large strikes affected the metallurgical industry, the Barcelona docks, transport and the Sabadell woollen textile industry. As during the years 1901-1903, therefore, organised labour thrust itself onto the political stage. Similarly, as social strife became more acute so the anarchists’ and syndicalists’ were able to force themselves to the forefront of labour protest. Thus they were able to take control of the Federal Commission of SO, and leave the Socialists without representation. They also gained increasing support amongst a number of important Barcelona unions. They took over the leadership of the rapidly expanding Metallurgical Union. They also enjoyed the sympathy of the local Waterfront and Transport Workers’ Federation, and in particular that of the carters’ union. At the same time, bricklayers, painters, carpenters, compositors, bookbinders, shoemakers, tanners and textile finishing trades’ unions gave strong backing to the syndicalists. Once again, these unions tended to represent workers in the city’s most conflictive trades and industries.

The growth of union organisation in much of urban Spain also encouraged SO’s leadership to push ahead with a scheme to form a national confederation. In syndicalist circles the idea of forming such a confederation had been widely discussed before 1910. When SO was founded in 1907 the federation’s mouthpiece immediately supported the idea. Then, in the latter half of 1908 when a campaign was launched in favour of a number of imprisoned workers from Alcalá del Valle, closer links were established with a number of unions from outside Catalonia. Finally in delegate meetings held in April and June 1909 it was decided that SO’s next congress would be national, and that in the meantime all non-Catalan unions could join but would not have to pay dues. The 1910 Federal Commission was, therefore, only putting into practice a decision already

\textsuperscript{52} Joan Culla, op cit, pp. 214-273.
reached. The national congress was quickly organised, and held in SO’s Barcelona headquarters between 31 October and 1 November 1910. It agreed to call the new national organisation the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT). Its headquarters was set up in Barcelona. The leadership of the CNT was, therefore, put in the hands of SO’s Barcelona leadership, and SO renamed the Confederació'n Nacional del Trabajo (CNT).53

From the Summer of 1910 SO extolled the virtues of direct action. The divisions within the anarchist and syndicalist camp, which first became apparent between 1908 and 1909 were, however, still present. The clearest exponent of a moderate reading of syndicalism was Joaquin Bueso. Bueso, a compositor by trade, had been a Lerrouxist. However, he had broken with the Radicals after having joined SO in 1907. Bueso was put in charge of the make up of the CNT’s mouthpiece (which retained the name Solidaridad Obrera) in December 1910. In the Summer of that year he argued that Socialists and anarchists should continue to work together within the unions, and that these should remain politically neutral so as to group together the greatest number of workers possible. Bueso also felt that those workers who defended la base múltiple should be admitted into the SO. This might, he argued, at first reduce revolutionary enthusiasm. However, it had the advantage that they would retain the support of workers who might otherwise, “fall into the net treacherously cast out by the bourgeoisie”, and in any case, he maintained, the workers would be radicalised by daily experience of the class struggle. Bueso, then, wished to maintain the broad trade union front represented by SO. Implicitly, his stance also implied the CNT should continue to place emphasis on the need to strengthen the unions, and not be carried away by revolutionary adventures.54

Bueso was opposed by the anarchist revolutionaries. In the pages of SO the case against Bueso was taken up by Félix Montenegro, who maintained that as syndicalism was a revolutionary doctrine. Accordingly:55

When the anarchist-socialist works within the unions he should not sacrifice his doctrines. On the contrary, he should lead the workers onwards to direct, revolutionary, action. For (as J. Bueso recognises) without the revolution he will never be free, and without forming conscious individuals within the unions it will be impossible to build the new society out of the ruins of the old.

The dispute between Bueso and Montenegro reflected different interpretations of revolutionary syndicalism. Both Bueso and Montenegro maintained that they had the same goals. Yet the type of organisation they proposed was in fact very different. Bueso stressed the need for

54. ET, 24 July 1910.
55. SO, 29 July 1910.
the CNT to be a broad coalition of forces, and, though did not intend it, it would be easy for such an organisation increasingly to lose sight of its revolutionary goals. Félix Montenegro, on the other hand, whether he realised it or not, was arguing that the CNT should be a revolutionary body subject to anarchist control.

Over the following months discussion of the question continued in the Ateneu Sindicalista, formed by SO in 1909. At first it was unclear which camp the leadership would support. In the first months of 1910 the composition of SO's Federal Commission was very unsettled. It was only with the election of another compositor, Josep Negre, as General Secretary in July, that a degree of stability was achieved. On a formal level the Federal Commission, under Negre, seemed to be closer to the position outlined by Joaquín Bueso than that of Félix Montenegro. Thus, like the anarchists behind the FRESR at the turn of the century, it tried to maintain the myth that the CNT was ideologically neutral, and stated it was made up of workers of various political viewpoints. Similarly, it argued that workers who supported la base múltiple could affiliate, though it hoped they would be convinced by the superiority of direct action tactics.  

Nevertheless, the new Federal Commission took a very different stance from its predecessors. The new leadership unambiguously supported the tactics of direct action and the revolutionary general strike. Moreover, the Commission argued that it was the task of "conscious workers" (i.e., anarchist militants) to guide the workers. This became clear in a reply to an article published by the anarchist weekly, Solidaridad Obrera, of Vigo. The article opposed the formation of the CNT because of what it saw as the inevitably reformist nature of trade unionism. Here the Federal Commission disagreed. It argued that only through trade union action could the proletariat be emancipated. Nevertheless, it continued that it was only the presence of "conscious working class elements" in the unions' midst which would stop them from going down the reformist path. The change in direction between the pre-Tragic Week SO and the CNT could be seen in the latter's founding congress. Here it was agreed that syndicalism was a means towards the emancipation of the proletariat. This would come about as the result of the revolutionary general strike, which would inevitably be a violent confrontation between the workers and the forces of the bourgeois state.

The radicalisation of SO's ideology during 1910 led relations with the Catalan Socialists to become increasingly tense. Furthermore, the decision to create a new confederation, which would inevitably compete with the UGT for working class support on a national level, also led the Socialists seriously to reconsider their position within the Catalan syndicalist organisation. Like all other working class organisations, the Socialists suffered from the repression which followed

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57. SO, 13 May 1910; Congreso de Constitución, op cit, p. 56., pp. 75-78.
Tragic Week. The Socialist weekly, La Internacional, had to close down, and Fabra Ribas was forced into exile. However, they were not to be without a publication for long. Reus was to become an increasingly important branch within the regional party. In November 1909 the Reus Socialists brought out their own publication entitled La Justicia Social (LJS). The significance of Reus was confirmed in December of the following year when a congress held to reform the Catalan Socialist Federation decided that Reus should be its headquarters and LJS its mouthpiece.

The reaction of the followers of Fabra Ribas to the syndicalists' plans to set up a national organisation is not altogether clear. They probably hoped to use their influence within both SO and the UGT to get the two unions to hold a joint congress at which they would unite. This is indicated by an article published in LJS in April 1910. It argued that SO displayed more energy than, and did not suffer from the excessive centralism of, the UGT. On the other hand, it was more sectarian and lacked the UGT's practical organisational spirit. It therefore concluded that a fusion would bring out the best in both bodies.58

However, such a possibility was remote. The Madrid-based Socialist leadership had no interest in such a deal. On the contrary, its only interest was to strengthen the UGT. The Catalan syndicalists apparently adopted a more conciliatory approach. They maintained that the CNT would not be formed in opposition to the UGT. It simply aimed to group together all those unions which, because they favoured direct action, did not wish to join the Socialist union. Moreover, SO's Federal Commission stated that it did not wish pro-Socialist unions to leave, and the CNT's founding congress held out the possibility of a fusion with the UGT in the near future.59

Yet, such talk fitted ill with the Barcelona syndicalist leadership's total support for direct action. In reality, those Socialists who remained affiliated faced the uncomfortable prospect of forming the minority wing of an increasingly radicalised pro-anarchist confederation. Moreover, if they did remain affiliated, the reaction of the PSOE-UGT leadership would have probably left them no choice but to break with their Spanish comrades. Fabra Ribas was in exile in France during 1910. Together with the leader of the French Socialist party, Jean Jaure's, he called on the Catalan Socialists to remain affiliated.60 The opposite decision was, however, taken. Instead of mobilising support within the CRT against its anarcho-syndicalist leadership, at the Catalan Socialists' 1910 regional congress the decision was taken to leave the newly formed CNT.61 The decision was obviously of key importance in the future development of Catalan Socialism. The Socialists would be saved a bruising battle with the anarchists for control of the CRT. Yet they

58. LJS, 2 April 1910.
59. SO, 24 June, 29 June, 2 December 1910; Congreso de Constitución, p. 56.
60. Manuel Tuñón de Lara, El Movimiento Obrero, p. 490.
61. LJS, 31 December 1910.
would also be isolated from Catalonia's largest labour organisation. And, whatever their views might be on the policy of the PSOE-UGT leadership, their future was now inextricably linked with that of the Spanish Socialists.

The Catalan Socialists were not only worried by the radicalisation of SO's ideology during 1910. The biggest difference between the years 1907-1909 and 1910-1911 was that in the new social climate anarchists and syndicalists could try and put their ideas into practice. Thus, with the build up of social conflict in Barcelona SO encouraged the workers to pursue aggressive strike tactics. It also tried to organise a number of solidarity strikes. The first such attempt was made on 27 July 1910 when the federation called for a general strike in solidarity with striking Biscayan mineworkers. Its impact was very limited. Undaunted, however, SO called for another solidarity strike with the workers of Bilbao on 5 September. The atmosphere was more favourable. Nevertheless, only about 5000 workers downed tools in the Catalan capital, and the strike had no impact in the provinces. There were a number of reasons behind these setbacks. First, the strength of Barcelona trade unionism should not be exaggerated. Despite the growth of union organisation during these months there were still probably only about 25,000 unions workers unionised in Barcelona. Second, following the move to the right signalled by Alejandro Lerroux, the Radicals actively opposed the strikes. Third, not only did the syndicalists have to contend with the opposition of non affiliated unions. As shall be seen, several unions within the confederation also opposed the strikes. Yet, undeterred by these failures the Barcelona CNT continued down its chosen path. In October it offered to declare a general strike in support of the Barcelona metalworkers. The striking metalworkers finally declined the offer. Then, in January 1911, it followed up this rebuff with another call for a general strike, this time in support of workers on the Barcelona waterfront. Yet again, however, it had little impact.62

It was not until September 1911 that the CNT was involved in a serious attempt to halt production in the Catalan factories. The background to this effort was a flare up in the fighting in Morocco. Military activity had been on the increase since the Spring, and there were a number of bloody clashes between Moroccan tribesmen and the army in the late Summer. In part as a result, two parallel protest movements were launched. The first, organised by Socialists and republicans, was called specifically to oppose Spanish intervention in Morocco. The second was part of a campaign launched by the French CGT which aimed to mobilise international working class opinion against a possible European war. The struggle of the great powers for influence in Morocco was seen by the CGT as the main focus of tension at that time. In Spain the CNT gave strong support. The campaign began with a congress held in Paris on 8 July, which was attended by the CNT's General Secretary, Josep Negre. There then followed a series of meetings in Paris, Berlin, Madrid and Barcelona at the end of July and beginning of August. The Barcelona meeting

was an enormous success, turning out to be the largest indoor gathering seen in the city for a number of years. Once again, therefore, the depth of popular opposition to the colonisation of Morocco became apparent. The meeting closed with the threat of decisive action if war broke out as a result of inter-imperialist rivalry over Morocco. The representative of the French CGT, Demoulin, stating that the workers should oppose such a war with a revolutionary general strike.

It was in this atmosphere, in which opposition to the war was becoming increasingly vociferous, that a strike wave broke out in several parts of the country. The conjuncture, therefore, appeared increasingly revolutionary. There were clear parallels in this respect with the run up to Tragic Week. However, the Spanish labour movement was in 1911 considerably stronger, and the CNT and UGT in a position to take advantage of the situation. Their reaction to these events was, however, to be very different. The CNT held its first congress between 8 and 11 September 1911 in Barcelona. A secret session was held after the congress had officially ended in which it was agreed to declare a general strike to protest at the war. A strike or revolutionary committee was then elected, and in subsequent meetings it was decided the stoppage should begin on 18 September. However, one of the committee members, Miguel Sánchez Moreno, turned out to be a police spy. By using his information the authorities were able to act decisively and arrest the strike committee along with other leading anarchist figures a week before the strike was to begin. When it was finally declared in Barcelona the strike was followed by most of the iron foundry workers and by workers involved in the textile finishing trades. Yet, it was overall a failure. Once again, moreover, it was not seconded outside the Catalan capital.

Nonetheless, the crisis was still not at an end. In fact, the strike had a considerable impact in a number of Spanish regions. The Saragossa local labour federation declared a general strike on the same day. On the following Monday general strikes were also declared in Seville, La Coruña and Valencia. They were followed by El Ferrol on the following day, and Gijón on the Wednesday. These were all areas in which there was a significant anarchist presence. The most serious events occurred in a number of Valencian towns where the strikes, led by anarchists and left-republicans, took on an insurrectionary character. The Spanish Prime Minister responded by declaring martial law throughout Spain, and only regained total control of the situation at the end of the week.

The CNT, then, did everything in its power to radicalise the crisis. The PSOE leadership, however, took exactly the opposite line. As in July 1909 it did not wish to call a general strike. It

63. LP, 9 August 1911, ME; SO, 11 August; Xavier Cuadrat, op cit, pp. 525-542.
64. LP, 19 September 1911, ME; Manuel Buenacasa, op cit, pp. 40-42.; Xavier Cuadrat, op cit, pp. 567-571.
was finally pressured into declaring a national protest strike on 18 September. It was not, however, to begin until the 21st and was to last for only 48 hours. The Government, forewarned, had no difficulty in taking preventative action. In fact, it was in reality a gesture which it was hoped would serve to save face. Once, again, therefore the Socialists had put the need to safeguard their own organisation before possible revolutionary adventures. They were no doubt correct in their assessment that there was still no opportunity of overthrowing the Monarchy. Despite the growth in union activity of the past two years labour agitation was still limited to only a few provinces. In particular the agrarian South remained quiescent during these years. And the state was still well placed to crush any attempted revolution. Yet, the Socialists' stance did not go down well amongst many union activists. Not only were the syndicalists able to repeat their charge that the Socialists were traitors and adormideras (sleepers). There was also considerable discontent within the PSOE itself. In particular, the younger generation of militants, and hard-line trade unionists, like the Basque miners leader Facundo Perezagua, were unhappy at the line the party had taken. This discontent was, as shall be seen, particularly notable in Catalonia. 65

In this region Government repression was vigorous. 162 workers were detained, including most the CNT's leading figures. Furthermore, the CNT was declared illegal and its headquarters closed down. In the following month the authorities also began to close the headquarters of all those Barcelona unions which were affiliated. It was a blow from which the CNT was not to recover until 1915. Government repression also affected the PSOE-UGT. Several leading Socialists were arrested, and the Madrid Casa del Pueblo was closed down. Nonetheless, both the party and union were soon able to function normally once again. Clearly the Government regarded the Socialists as more moderate and "responsible" opposition than the anarchists, and acted accordingly. 66

Between 1910 and 1911, then, anarchists and syndicalists were once again to be found at the forefront of labour protest in the Catalan capital. As in 1901-1903 this did not, of course, mean that all workers affiliated to SO and later the CNT were committed syndicalists. Indeed, within the confederation there was considerable discontent at the revolutionary tactics employed by the Federal Commission under the leadership of Josep Negre. This was expressed in internal opposition the general strike calls made during these years. This opposition was not only limited to the Socialists. Thus, for example, according to the moderate republican publication, La Publicidad, the July 1910 general strike was launched by anarchists, and opposed by, "the healthy elements within Solidaridad Obrera". It was maintained that the September 1910 general strike failed because the confederation's largest unions, "opposed an idea which could not succeed because the

66. LP, 14 October 1911, ME., 1 December 1911.
atmosphere was inappropriate". Moreover, the striking metalworkers rejected the proposal that a general strike be declared on their behalf, and the carters did not support the general strike declared by the Barcelona CNT in support of the dockers.

These disagreements were, it appears, the outward expression of an internal struggle for power within the confederation between those who wished to maintain the relatively moderate line pursued by SO between 1907 and 1909, and the supporters of the radicalisation initiated by Negre. That such a struggle existed was confirmed by *La Publicidad* in October 1910. It noted that some of the workers affiliated were unhappy at the decision taken to replace the caretaker of the CNT's Barcelona headquarters, and stated that as a result, "a meeting will be held to deal with the matter, brought about, so we have heard, by the mutual distrust between the anarchists and the trade union elements, who are in dispute over control of the centre".

The supporters of Josep Negre were able to maintain their predominance. However, discontent at the policies pursued led a number of unions to leave the union. The size of the opposition can be estimated if it is considered that in September and October 1910 between 45 and 49 Barcelona unions were affiliated, whilst only 42 attended the CNT's founding congress. This represented less than half the unions that operated in Barcelona at this time. Indeed, after the defeat of the metalworkers, dockers and carters strikes at the end of the year the Barcelona CNT was much weakened. Thus, in September 1911 it had just 7,776 affiliates, less than SO during 1909.

The unions which left SO during this period were varied in nature. Nonetheless, a number of similarities could be discerned. Firstly, with one small exception, all the shopworkers unions previously affiliated left. The last to do so was the *Associació de Depèndencia Mercantil* (the union which had done most to set up SO) in 1911. That this was the case is not surprising given the moderate trade union practice and lack of class consciousness of these workers. Secondly, unions which broke with SO—the CNT were often quite strong, and the workers they represented were in a relatively comfortable position. Such, for example, was the case of the stonemasons, stonecutters, plasterers and Sants bricklayers (who had already left in 1908) in construction, and the coopers in woodworking. These unions, as was noted in Chapter Five, were amongst the least likely to support the anarchists militant trade union practice.

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67. LJS, 17 Sept 1910. The republican "Grupo de Obreros", who distributed a flysheet against the strike also claimed that SO’s largest unions, had opposed it. See Miguel Sastre, *Las Huelgas...1910-1914*, pp. 80-81. According to *El Diluvio*, on the other hand, two of the largest unions, the carters and coal unloaders, abstained and stated that they would join in if the strike had become generalised by breakfast time. ED, 6 September 1910, ME.
68. LP, 8 October 1910, ME.
69. SO, 8 September 1911. Disillusioned by the tactics followed by the CNT Joaquin Bueso also left to form part of the Catalan PSOE at the end of 1911.
By 1911, in fact, the CNT represented considerably less than half the city's unionised labour force. An important focal point of opposition was formed by the shopworkers. Especially important in this respect was the highly moderate CADCI, which by 1910 had about 1,600 affiliates. Not far removed from the shop assistants in ideological terms were a number of waiters' unions, which had no contact with the CNT, and which in 1910 had about 1000 affiliates between them. Other large independent unions in 1910 were the railway workers, with over 1000 members, and several cooperatives with about 800. To which should be added a whole host of smaller unions which preferred to maintain an independent existence rather than form part of the CNT.70

Moreover, the situation in the rest of Catalonia was worse. In September 1911 the CNT had only 4159 Catalan affiliates from outside Barcelona. In particular it had lost the backing of workers from Manresa, Vic and the Ter, Mataró and the Maresme, Reus and Sitges, where the Socialists had considerable influence. Support for the Catalan regional federation of the CNT was, accordingly, limited to workers from several industrial towns in Barcelona Province. Most notably Terrassa and Sabadell (though the CRT temporarily lost its union base in Sabadell after the strike defeat of 1910), followed by mostly artisanal unions from the towns of Badalona, Igualada, Vilanova and Vilafranca.71

The illegalisation of the CNT in September 1911 was, of course another serious blow. Reorganisation proved a slow and difficult process. Nevertheless, it was favoured by the fact that the economic climate remained buoyant. A syndicalist local federation once again operated in January 1913, and the syndicalist mouthpiece, Solidaridad Obrera, reappeared on the following 1 May. A new regional committee was then elected in July. The reorganisation was, however, to be short lived. After an attempted general strike in August in support of the striking cotton textile workers the CRT was yet again illegalised, and its leading figures arrested. It was not now to function until the following August.72

The situation was, however, somewhat more favourable than the previous paragraph might suggest. Solidaridad Obrera never stopped publication. Indeed, from late 1913 a vigorous campaign was launched to convert the weekly publication into a daily. Furthermore, as was seen in Chapters three and Four, trade union organisation strengthened considerably during these years. At the same time moves were afoot amongst the workers in a number of trades afflicted by severe social conflict to transform craft into industrial unions. The syndicalists were very much involved in this process.

70. Manuel Lladonosa i Joaquim Ferrer, op cit, pp. 292-293. Membership figures for a large number of Barcelona unions are to be found in LP, 16 Nov 1910, ME.
72. LP, 7 January 1913.; SO, 17 May, 3 July 1913., 26 March, 6 August, 20 November 1914.
In textiles the Barcelona syndicalists were behind the organisation of the female cotton textile weavers union, La Constància. As has been seen, the weavers showed themselves to be a highly radical and volatile group of workers. Just the sort who favoured the syndicalists militant union tactics. Moreover, the syndicalists were able to extend their support to several other cotton textile unions - most notably those of Igualada and Vilanova i la Geltrú - which had an important female contingent. In addition, they retained the sympathy of the Sabadell and Terrassa woollen textile union, and were strongly supported by the Barcelona cotton dyers. Nevertheless, though they were in a strong position within the National Textile Federation founded in December 1913, they had to share the leadership with the Socialists, who were in command of the textile unions of Mataró and the Maresme, Reus, and to a certain extent the Ter Valley.

This balance of political forces was reflected the discussions and resolutions approved at the Textile Federation’s first congress. Socialist influence could be seen in the decision to set dues at a relatively high level, and in the call on unions to exercise caution before coming out on strike. However, the anarchists were it seems instrumental in the congress’s decision not to appoint paid officials, in the agreement to recommend unions affiliated not to accept the intervention of outside bodies during industrial disputes, and in the accord strongly to criticise the Instituto de Reformas Sociales. Furthermore, the agreement that if the Government did not enforce the decree it had recently proclaimed, limiting working hours in the industry to 10 a day, then the federation’s committee would, after having consulted with the membership, declare a general strike in the industry and call for a 9 hour day, also had an anarchist ring to it. Finally, the anarchists also benefited from the congress’s decision to leave it to the Barcelona textile unions to elect the federation’s central committee. This allowed Joan Martí, president of La Constància, to become General Secretary. As a result of these decisions, as was noted in Chapter Three, the Nacional Textile Federation adopted a more leftist and combative stance than any of its predecessors. This was reflected in it decision to exclude the TCV, and declare it “yellow and bourgeois”.73

In metallurgy the syndicalists’ dominance was more clear cut. In Barcelona when a new metalworkers’ federation was founded at the beginning of 1913 it was in syndicalist hands. Moreover, the syndicalists maintained their leading position in the Catalan Metalworkers’ Federation set up in January 1914. This became clear at the federation’s first congress held the following April, when a motion presented by the central committee rejecting state intervention in industrial disputes, and supporting direct action, was approved by a majority of ten to four. The Catalan Metalworkers’ Federation together with the Alicante metalworkers union were then

73. LP, 27, 28 December 1913.; SO, 1 January 1914.; LJS, 3 January, 7 February 1914. Manlleu had replaced Roda as the centre of Socialist support in the Ter. Thus in June 1911 the Manlleu textile union, L’Art Fabril, joined the UGT. LJS, 17 June 1911.; See also Chapter Three, p. 107.
responsible for the organisation of the Confederation of Spanish Metalworkers. The aim was to create a rival to the UGT metalworkers’ federation which had functioned since the turn of the century. Its founding congress was held in Alicante in July 1914, and it was set up despite the fact that the UGT dispatched two delegates to the congress to try and reach a settlement.\(^74\)

The syndicalists were also to enjoy an increasingly dominant position in construction. In 1910 a regional bricklayers’ federation had been founded. Its headquarters were to be found in Reus. Under the captaincy of the Reus union it became increasingly pro-Socialist, and established close contacts with the UGT’s national bricklayers’ federation. In response, in June 1913 a number of Barcelona unions broke with this federation, and formed their own Confederation of Catalan Bricklayers and Bricklayers’ Labourers. There was no doubt as to the new organisation’s political leanings. Its first communique was very explicit in this respect stating that: “As the methods which the state reformists try and make believe are of value have failed, to emancipate ourselves we must put into practice the tactics of direct action.” The new confederation proved more successful than its rival. It gained the support of most the towns around Barcelona, and soon had over 2000 members. As a result the Bricklayers’ Federation was left with only a minority of Barcelona bricklayers affiliated, and its support was largely limited to a number of bricklayers’ unions centred on the Maresme and the province of Tarragona. Not satisfied, however, in 1914 the syndicalist Confederation began to work towards the foundation of a national bricklayers’ federation to rival the UGT’s organisation. It hoped finally to set up a national confederation of Spanish construction workers. Their dream was not yet to be realised. Nonetheless, in Barcelona when a local construction workers’ federation was set up at the end of 1913 the syndicalists were again in control.\(^75\)

By 1914, then, syndicalism was the most influential current within Catalan trade unionism. This is not of course to suggest that the majority of unionised workers joined syndicalist organisations. As has been seen, there was a significant anti-syndicalist current in a number of unions. Moreover, despite the sympathy of many militants, craft and industrial federations did not tend officially to join the CNT or CRT because of the political divisions such a decision would entail.\(^76\) The CRT also found it very difficult to operate effectively in the political climate of these

\(74\). *Federación Regional Catalana de Obreros Metalúrgicos*, op cit, p. 26.; SO, 4 June, 11 June, 9 July 1914. In April 1914 the regional metalworkers’ federation had 1,500 members.

\(75\). El Progreso, 4 August 1909.; SO, 18 November 1910; 10 July, 17 July, 16 October, 6 December 1913., 19 July 1914.; LJS, 6 December 1913, 23 May 1914.; LP, 8 July 1910, ME., 31 December 1913.

\(76\). A good example of the latter is the Catalan Based woodworkers’ federation, the *Federació del Ram d’Elaborar Fuster*. In June 1911 it had 1,465 members. The larger Barcelona carpenters unions and about 40 per cent of the total membership was affiliated to the CNT. However, in order to maintain its unity the federation remained independent. This could be seen in a delegate congress held in November 1911. In previous months negotiations had been held to fuse with Spain’s other woodworkers’ federation, which belonged to the UGT. These negotiations, however, failed. The reasons were explained at the congress, where delegates agreed that they could not accept statutes which did not respect their “traditional
years. The only official membership figures for this period refer to October 1913 when the confederation was officially suspended. At that time 30 Barcelona unions were affiliated representing 5,155 members. Also affiliated to the CRT were the local labour federations of Vilanova, Vilafraanca, Iguadala and Sabadell with roughly 2000 members. Yet these figures by themselves do not reflect the importance of the syndicalist presence in Catalonia. The syndicalists played a leading role in many of the region's craft and industrial federations. Furthermore, during industrial disputes they were able to mobilise far more workers than were actually affiliated to their unions. Particularly important was the fact the syndicalists stronghold was Barcelona, for it was only from the Catalan capital that most craft and industrial federations could be articulated successfully.

1913 also saw a significant reorientation of syndicalist tactics. With the escalation of industrial conflict in 1910-1911 anarchist militants had pushed for the declaration of solidarity strikes on all possible occasions. In this respect the tactics employed could hardly be differentiated from the strategy pursued by the Barcelona anarchists between 1901 and 1903. In fact the only real difference between the FRESR and CNT at this point appeared to be that affiliates to the latter had to pay dues. As in the case of SO this would in the future give the CNT that minimum of consistency necessary for a labour confederation to function effectively. However, as the events of 1911 proved the obsession with general strikes left the CNT wide open to government repression. Within the Confederation there were many who favoured a calmer approach. They were not at first heeded. Nonetheless, the situation was to change after the attempt to call a general strike in favour of the striking cotton textile workers in August 1913 once again led to the CRT being illegalised. Thus, in November a new committee elected to reorganise the CRT stressed the need to avoid, "epileptic reactions which tire the members and result in disorganisation". The new line was reiterated in the following year in a number of articles published by Solidaridad Obrera, which stressed that general strikes should only be declared when it was certain a majority of workers would second them.

11 May, 1 June, 1 December 1911, Congreso de Constitucion de la CNT, pp. 99-104.
77. SO, 5 March, 26 March, 6 August, 20 November 1914.
78. Syndicalist moral was also bolstered by the fact that the years 1910-1914 saw a great escalation of social conflict over much of continental Europe, accompanied by further growth in support for syndicalism. Solidaridad Obrera carried regular features on these developments. Moreover, between 27 September and 2 October 1913 an International Syndicalist Congress was held in London. Josep Negre, who was living in France at the time, represented the CRT. SO hoped the congress would lead to the foundation of a new syndicalist international to rival the Socialist II International. In this respect, however, they were to be disappointed.
79. In March 1914 the editors of SO actually criticised the Barcelona railway workers' union for voting in favour of a general strike in support of the striking tramworkers. They stated that: "If this weapon should be discredited because it has often been used without success then the fault will lie with the workers, who resort to it at all times without taking into account the general atmosphere. The people, and only the people, can carry out a general strike." SO, 19 March 1914. Never before, at least since the turn of the century, had the syndicalists criticised rather than applauded an attempt to call a general strike. In October

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As in the case of the French CGT, therefore, the Catalan syndicalists was seemingly coming to realise that if they wished to build up their organisation and defend their members material interests successfully they could not simply declare general and solidarity strikes at every turn. Nevertheless, between 1913 and 1914 the CRT leadership continued to pursue an aggressive union strategy, and in no way diluted the ideological foundations on which the organisation had been built. On the contrary, it became increasingly insistent that unions affiliated put into practice the tenets of direct action. At the same time it launched a campaign against reformist trade union leaders who favoured negotiations with the authorities. The CRT also maintained its hostility towards political parties. It was, in particular, bitterly critical of the Radicals who, as we have seen, from 1910 opposed the syndicalists’ militant union tactics. Finally, the CRT kept its distance from Catalanism, which it continued to see as an ideology at the service of the bourgeoisie.

Though, therefore, the syndicalists had only a skeletal union presence, they appeared to be in the strongest position to advantage of any further growth of union organisation. This would be confirmed during the years 1916-1919. There were a number of factors behind the syndicalist’s relative success. First, they were best placed to capitalise on the high level of social strife visible in key branches of Catalan industry. As has been seen, they had most success in attracting workers who reacted to growing industrial conflict by looking outside the narrow confines of their craft for support amongst workers in other branches of their industry. In fact, it was the anarchists and syndicalists to a far greater extent than the Socialists who stressed the need to break down craft barriers and form industrial unions. The need to combat craft divisions was already noted in the anarchist press at the beginning of the century. It was, nevertheless, from 1910 that syndicalists laid emphasis on the fact that only industrial federations (sindicatos de ramo) could compete effectively with the bourgeoisie.

the paper admitted that: “The energy used up, the blood generously spilt, has made us cautious and prudent.” SO, 29 October 1914. See also SO, 27 November 1913, 26 March 1914.
80. SO, 1 March, 12 June, 31 July, 2 Oct 1913, 2 April, 17 April, 25 June, 17 July 1914. Solidaridad Obrera only dealt with the question of Catalanism on a couple of occasions between 1913 and 1914. The most important article was published at the end of 1913 and dealt with the question of the Mancomunitat. This was to be a Catalan wide administrative body formed by the fusion of the region’s four provincial councils. The Lliga Regionalista had pushed strongly for its creation, and it was clear that the Lliga would be in control of the new body. SO, however, came out against the foundation of the Mancomunitat. It argued that it would benefit the few to the cost of the majority, and concluded: “It is not the autonomy that the bourgeoisie asks for that the workers desire and perennially struggle for. The economic independence to which the worker aspires is wider, more just and equitable. It is an autonomy that begins at the level of the individual, then expands within the community to take in the whole of humanity. That which does not conform to this model of democracy is not and cannot be democracy because its point of departure - capital - is mistaken, and falls apart when subjected to even the most cursory analysis.” SO, 30 October 1913.
82. SO, 16 December 1910, 8 October 1914.
There were, however, other factors behind the syndicalist success (and Socialist failure). The role of the state was of particular importance in this respect. Xavier Cuadrat has argued that the state's manipulation of elections, by effectively blocking the parliamentary road to power, lent feasibility to the anarchist doctrine of antipoliticism. Furthermore, he maintains that the state's failure to implement its own social legislation and play an effective role in regulating industrial relations generated support for the anarchist doctrine of direct action.83

Yet the workers' reaction to the policies of the Restoration state were not as simple as Cuadrat's analysis would lead one to suppose. As we have seen, workers did participate in elections and, in Catalonia, most gave their support to the republicans. Nevertheless, the working class press was often sceptical as to the value of these elections, and the politician was often presented as a figure only in politics for his own benefit. The career of Alejandro Lerroux did little to dispel this belief. This was not sufficient to convince many workers that they should not vote, for the result would be to leave all state organs in the hands of the Right. However, it did create a climate from which anarchists and syndicalists could benefit.

The impact on working class attitudes of the state's lack of interest in the observance of social legislation is also difficult to gauge. The first point to note is that such legislation was not totally disregarded in Catalonia. It is true that although Spain's first social laws reached the statute book in 1900 a factory inspectorate was not created until 1907. Moreover, it was underfunded and lacked effective powers to impose fines. However, as we have seen, provision was also made for the creation of juntas locales de reformas sociales. These juntas, made up of a number of worker and employer representatives under the presidency of the mayor, were empowered to visit factories and (subject to ratification in case of appeal by a junta provincial chaired by the civil governor) they could impose fines. Where they were set up many trade unionists worked within them to ensure social legislation was complied with. Their effectiveness should not be exaggerated. Nevertheless, in towns where the unions were relatively strong and workers able to exercise a certain influence over local government they did at least go some way towards ensuring the legislation was respected. In most areas, however, the unions were weak and employers had a decisive influence over local government. In such areas the government made no effort to intervene and, consequently, the juntas locales were either not set up or were under the influence of employers, in which case social legislation was ignored.84

When the Cortes approved Spain's first social laws Socialists and left republicans made plain that they considered the measures insufficient. Nevertheless, during the first years of the

83. Xavier Cuadrat, op cit, p. 56.
century most workers' organisations tried to ensure the legislation passed by parliament was implemented. This, as was seen in Chapter Five, was the case of the FTE, which strongly campaigned in favour of a bill limiting female and child labour. In general workers saw the juntas locales as a useful weapon in their fight against employer abuses. Thus, when the juntas were formed it was on the workers' initiative. Where they could employers, often backed up by the local authorities, would try and sabotage them. Indeed, pro-anarchist unions were often involved in elections to the juntas locales. This was even the case in Barcelona, where during the first decade of the century a number of reformist and social catholic representatives had connived with the authorities to take over the junta local. Thus, in November 1910 44 Barcelona unions formed a coalition aimed at ousting the social Catholics. 15 of these unions had attended the CNT's founding congress. These included such important CNT unions as the carters, tanners, and Barcelona bricklayers.

Catalan workers, therefore, by no means fully accepted anarchist claims that no good could ever come from state sponsored social legislation. They in fact made considerable effort to ensure the legislation was enforced, but were usually disappointed by the results. As a result many workers showed themselves to be increasingly doubtful as to the possibility of social legislation working to their benefit. Hence, trade union leaders often disparaged the efforts of the government in this respect. For example, shortly after the outbreak of the 1913 cotton textile strike in Barcelona, the president of La Constància, Mauricio Puig, rejected the government's offer of legislation limiting working hours in the industry because, "the workers have learnt their lesson, for they have a good memory and know that the governments are not to be trusted".

The best single piece of evidence in favour of the anarchists case was in fact provided by this strike. As was seen in Chapter Three the strikers finally agreed to return to work after the Government had published a Royal Decree limiting working hours in the industry to 60 per week. However, once work had resumed the authorities made little effort to enforce the decree and many employers ignored it. As a result the attitude of the textile workers towards state intervention hardened. This could be seen at the founding congress of the National Textile Federation in December 1913. As we have seen, it was a broad coalition between syndicalists, Socialists and independent trade unionists. Nevertheless, it declared the Instituto de Reformas Sociales set up at the beginning of the century to oversee the implementation of social legislation, a "ridiculous body..."

85. Memoria General...1911(Madrid 1913), p. 60.
86. LP, 16 November 1910, ME., 19 November, ME.
87. In 1913 Catalan factory inspectors admitted that: "In many cases the workers show sympathy for the inspectorate. However, they observe the indolence of the authorities and the delays in enforcing any affect the well being of the workers, both because the punishments are not sufficiently exemplary and because the culprits have sufficient influence to avoid them. Consequently amongst many workers the suspicion that their hopes will not be fulfilled is beginning to manifest itself, and amongst others the feeling is becoming more pronounced." Memoria General...1913, p. 68.
88. LP,23 July 1913.
without force". It was this lack of effective state action that was used by anarchists and syndicalists to justify their opposition to any form of state intervention either in the form of social legislation or arbitration tribunals. This opposition gained increasing currency within trade union circles. A good example of this attitude is provided by the key resolution at the first congress of the Regional Metalworkers' Federation held in April 1914, which stated:

Let's not fall into the trap of believing that on returning to work the government will regulate wages, hours and working conditions. We remember that when the railway workers, Rio Tinto miners, textile workers and other less important trades came out on strike they were tricked out of their just demands(...). This committee recommends, though does not impose -for it is neither absolutist nor imperialist - that direct action be adopted as the most effective means of achieving social justice.

Similar attitudes were, it appears, widely held in working class circles by this time.

Although the picture outlined is a complex one, then, one clear factor does emerge. Within the context of the Restoration state it was extremely difficult to put reformist policies into practice. This fact favoured the syndicalists. The Socialists were, on the contrary, the main losers. As has been stressed the goal of the UGT had from the outset been to form stable trade unions which would peacefully negotiate over working conditions with their employers. From the late 1890s the PSOE had shown itself reluctant to step outside the bounds of legality, paid increasing attention to elections, supported the implementation of social legislation, and enthusiastically worked through the channels opened up by the state. The returns on this policy were, however, slight. Consequently, the anarchists could coherently present their anti-statist and, it appeared, unambiguously revolutionary alternative.

Indeed, it seems significant in this respect that in Catalonia Socialists often seem to have been more successful in towns in which their was some continuity in trade union organisation, and where the workers had a significant influence in local politics. These were usually towns in which the juntas locales functioned. The reason appears to be that, unlike the anarchists, Socialists were willing to use the levers of state power to the workers advantage and in these towns that could do so to some effect. In the textile industries the situation is perhaps best illustrated by the example of two areas in which the Socialists had considerable support: Mataró and the Ter Valley. In Mataró the Socialists had an important presence in local government, and the towns hosiery workers were able to ensure that social legislation was to an important extent complied with. In the larger Ter Valley towns, as we have seen, the male cotton spinners were able to form relatively durable unions. There were a number of workers representatives elected as councillors. Moreover, juntas

89. LJS, 3,10 January 1910.
locales functioned during most of the period under consideration, with union leaders playing an important part in the proceedings.91

Furthermore, the Socialists' problems were compounded by the state's periodic recourse to repression, which made it difficult to form stable trade unions. This problem was particularly acute in Catalonia where industrial relations were often so poor. Indeed, it seems that a snowball effect was in evidence by which intense social conflict generated support for syndicalism, and this in turn made government repression more likely.92 Finally, the inability to defeat the Monarchist parties at election time also encouraged popular support for the overthrow of the state. This could be seen both in July 1909 and September 1911. In consequence, as we have seen, the cautious PSOE leadership was put on the defensive, and anarchists and syndicalist militants able to take centre stage.

It was to a large extent for these reasons that from about 1906 the Catalan Socialists had begun to distance themselves from the Madrid based PSOE-UGT leadership. Despite the break up of SO in 1910 the Catalan Socialist weekly ILJS was very critical of the Spanish Socialist hierarchy. Between 1910 and 1914 the Madrid Socialists maintained the de-facto reformism of previous years. Indeed, in the aftermath of Tragic Week the Socialists broke with their isolationist past and signed a so-called conjunció with the various republican groupings. Its principal aims were, so it was claimed, in the short run to prevent Antonio Maura from ever returning to power, and in the long run to establish a republic. However, it was to all intents and purposes an electoral pact.93

91. In Mataró, since the 1890s, the Socialists were consistently able to get their representatives elected in local government elections and, according to Maria Dolores Capdevila and Roser Masgrau, they "carried out political work within the municipality successfully". Op cit, p. 4. In the Ter Valley a number of town counsellors were elected over the years. Thus, in the local elections held in July 1909 seven Catalan counsellors were elected, three from Roda, two from Manlleu, one from the Ter Valley town of Montesquiu and one from Sitges. El Poble Català, 20 July 1909. In the larger Ter Valley towns juntas locales functioned throughout much of the period. The influence that could be exercised through a junta local is illustrated by the case of Reus. The Reus labour movement had been dominated by anarchists in the late nineteenth century. However, from the turn of the century the Socialists gained increasing support. It was a town in which the junta local functioned quite effectively. Reus's most influential Socialist, Josep Recasens i Mercadé, stated in his memoirs that when it was set up in 1904, "Colleagues of ours formed the majority of the committee members. It was this along with the campaigns carried out by the Barcelona weekly previously stated (the Socialist La Lucha Social) which allowed us to combat the old anarchists and make our presence felt". Josep Recasens i Mercadé, Vida Inquieta (Barcelona,1985), p. 62.

92. The state does, indeed, seem to have been more prepared to use repression when a strike was led by the anarchists than when it was Socialist led. For example the Liberal government of José Canalejas took a very conciliatory stance with respect to a rather violent strike of Biscayan miners organised by the Socialist union leader, Facundo Perezagua, in August-September 1910. Juan Pablo Fusi, op cit, pp. 298-312. The contrast with the Government's reaction to the Barcelona metalworkers and Sabadell woollen workers strikes in September 1911 is clear.

The pact was in many ways inevitable. Leading Spanish Socialists had developed the argument that Spain was still a backward country with strong aristocratic features. In consequence before socialism could be established a bourgeois revolution would first be needed to modernise the country. This revolution should be carried out by the republicans who represented the most advanced sectors of the bourgeoisie. In such circumstances a pact with the republicans was the obvious course of action. This was particularly so because the republicans still enjoyed widespread petty bourgeois and working class support, and the Socialists would therefore reap considerable electoral advantage from such an agreement.

This analysis was, however, never accepted by the majority of Catalan Socialists. Fabra Ribas’s friend, Josep Recasens i Mercadé, stated that monarchist and republican governments were the same - mere tools of the bourgeoisie - and that talk of the need to pass through a republican stage before reaching socialism was therefore absurd. Though not clearly articulated the implication was that Spain had already passed through its bourgeois phase and was ripe for revolution. Fabra Ribas remained sceptical of the benefits of electoral politics, and argued that though elections provided a useful opportunity for the Socialists to get across their views, capitalism would only ultimately be brought down through the revolutionary overthrow of the state. For the workers to be in a position to carry out the revolution, he maintained, the conjunció should be broken and an anarchist-Socialist proletarian front take its place.94

At the same time in LJS a concerted attack was mounted on the PSOE’s organisational structure. The paper criticised the PSOE’s centralism, the National Committee’s attempts to stifle open discussion within the party, and the fact that the party leadership was drawn from a very narrow base and had no knowledge of working conditions outside Madrid. The Catalan Socialists advocated as an alternative the decentralisation of the party, which they maintained should take on a federal character. The National Committee, they stated, should be elected by the whole party congress and not by the branch in which it resided (always Madrid), the PSOE’s regional federations should be strengthened, and representatives from these federations form part of the National Committee.95

These were, in fact, years of some optimism in the Catalan Socialist camp. They remained very weak in Barcelona. Nevertheless, the number of Catalan affiliates to the UGT grew from a low of 469 in 1908 to 5,652 in February 1916. They had several important points of influence amongst textile workers. Moreover, they retained the support of local unions in Sitges, Tarragona and Tortosa, and through the Reus local labour federation they extended their influence to a number of Tarragona land labourers’ unions. LJS had also become the main vehicle for internal

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94. LJS, 19 November 1910, 16 August, 18 Oct 1913.
95. LJS, 19 September 1914, 3 February 1915.
opposition to party policy. Significantly, it sold well in Asturias and especially the Basque country; areas which had also seen calls for a shift away from electoral politics, and for a more radical union strategy.96

It was, however, to be a false dawn. From 1915 the Catalan Socialist Federation was to become increasingly weak, and LJS disappeared at the end of 1916. It was not they but the anarchists who were to take advantage of the great escalation of social conflict in Catalonia between 1916 and 1919. The Catalan Socialists lack of strength at home was reflected in their disappearance from the stage of Spanish Socialist politics. They had seemed well place to offer a radical alternative to the PSOE-UGT leadership. Yet between 1918 and 1920 they were absent from the leftist tercerista wing of the PSOE.

There were perhaps two main causes of this ultimate failure. In the first place LJS’s radical rhetoric was often not matched by the Socialists’ actions, and Fabra Ribas’s leftist alternative was never really put into practice. During 1913 LJS tried hard to improve relations with the anarchists and began publishing a section called El Desarme de los Odios. However, the Catalan CRT maintained its distance. It was pleased by the divisions which had opened up in the Socialist camp, but hoped this would result in the break up of the UGT and lead the “healthy elements” in the Socialist confederation to join the syndicalists.97 As during the years 1907-1909 the problem was that their remained profound ideological divisions between the Catalan anarchists and Socialists. Thus, Socialists still supported social legislation, and tried to work through the channels opened up by the state. Moreover, even Fabra Ribas’s call for a more combative union practice was by no means followed by all Catalan Socialists. In reality a cautious approach to strikes continued to prevail. For example, in 1914 in Barcelona two general strikes called by the cotton textile and tram workers ended in defeat. Recasens i Mercade, who in many other respects supported Fabra Ribas, did not go along with him on the question of industrial militancy. Thus he was strongly critical of these strikes and commented: “It is imperative, in our opinion, that the Catalan and especially the Barcelona workers radically change their methods, if they do not want our region to be a constant hindrance to the development of the Spanish labour movement.”98 It was not, therefore, according to Recasens, the Socialists who should alter their tactics but the Catalan working class.

The Socialists’ prudent trade union practice still cause them difficulties, and the combination of the volatility of the rank and file, employer intransigence and state repression

97. SO, 30 October, 6, 13, 27 November, 4 Dec 1913; 9 April, 2 July, 6 August 1914.
98. LJS, 14 April 1914.
continued to hinder Socialist penetration. Two examples may serve to illustrate this point. The first concerns the Barcelona compositors. As was seen in Chapter Five, after the 1902 general strike the Socialist, Toribio Reoyo, was expelled from the ranks of L'Art d'Imprimir. Thereafter, until 1911, the union remained strongly syndicalist. However, after having seconded the CNT sponsored general strike in 1911 it was banned. In March 1912 it was reformed under a new name, the Unió Obrera de L'Art d'Imprimir. The opportunity was taken to unite all the Barcelona compositors. Therefore, the new union was more broadly based than its predecessor, and included both anarchists and Socialists in its ranks. In order to maintain unity it declared itself ideologically neutral, and refused to join either the CRT or the UGT's Typographical Federation.

The union grew rapidly in size, thereby stimulating the compositors to present their employers with a series of demands. Socialists such as Toribio Reoyo and the newly converted Joaquin Bueso attained positions of influence within the union. They were the moderates mentioned in Chapter Four. They tried to convince the workers not to come out on strike immediately, and not to present all their demands. Yet their exhortations were in vain. Carried along by the enthusiasm of the moment, the workers struck on 7 May 1913 and refused to compromise on any of their demands. The employers, however, stood firm, and the compositors had to return to work empty handed in the following month. As a result the possibility of building up a strong compositors union in which the Socialists played a significant role was lost.99

The second example is more important. It concerns a strike which broke out in the Reus cotton textile industry during 1915. It was provoked by the textile manufacturers, and its significance lies in the fact that, as a result, the Socialists' position within the National Textile Federation and the Reus labour movement was put under threat. By the beginning of 1915, in fact, the Socialists had strengthened their position within the Textile Federation. The Barcelona cotton textile union, La Consòncia, never recovered from the traumatic end to the 1913 textile strike. Accordingly, in 1914, the Textile Federation's committee was moved from Barcelona to Mataró, and the well known Socialist militant, Constantino Perlasio, became General Secretary.100 At the same time, the Socialists maintained a strong position within the Reus trade unions. There were a number of cotton textile factories in Reus, operated largely by female labour. During the first decade of the century these workers were non unionised. The pillars of organised labour in the town were, therefore, artisanal. In 1910 the local labour federation was finally able to set up a cotton textile workers' union, which by the Summer had about 1000 members. Yet, supposedly in order to avoid retribution from the manufacturers, the leadership of the union did not

99. See Chapter Four, pp. 138-139.
100. Juan de Catalunya, "La Federación Fabril y Textil", La Justicia, 22 March 1930.; Albert Balcells, "La Mujer Obrera", op cit, pp. 64-68.
consist of cotton textile workers. It was made up of delegates from each of the unions affiliated to the local federation, with the Socialist, Miguel Mestre, as president.101

Over the next five years the union leadership had to deal with a number of strikes in the industry. The intransigence of the local industrialists made it very difficult to reach negotiated settlements. Matters came to a head in 1915 after a dispute had erupted in the town's largest cotton textile factory, La Fabril Cotonera. It began in March when the owner shut down the weaving section of his factory after the workers had asked for a series of improvements in working conditions. The conflict then spread, first to the rest of the factory and finally to the entire Reus working class. Once declared by the union the strike centred on the workers' demands that all the weavers be readmitted and that the union be officially recognised. It proved very difficult to resolve, first because the industrialist affected was pressurised by the most hard line sectors of the Reus bourgeoisie, and by the Catalan cotton textile employers' federation, not to make any concessions. Second, because the female cotton textile workers, like their Barcelona colleagues in 1913, became highly radicalised and refused to accept any transaction.

This fact allowed a small group of Reus syndicalists to increase their influence amongst the strikers. The Reus Socialists' reaction to these events was contradictory. A more moderate section within the party, captained by Recasens i Mercadé, rejected any escalation of the dispute, and criticised the strikers for not reaching a compromise. Yet, a more radical wing of the party, led by Miguel Mestre, though in favour of negotiation, supported the decision taken by the workers first to ask the other Reus unions to come out in support and then, when they were becoming increasingly desperate, for the Nacional Textile Federation to call a general strike. The Federation's Mataró leadership, however, was unenthusiastic. Furthermore, the La Constància stated that it would only respond if the Reus workers adopted the aggressive union tactics associated with direct action. The result was that the general strike failed to materialise and the Reus textile workers had to return to work defeated.102

The outcome of the dispute once again showed how difficult it was to operate the Socialists' trade union strategy in Catalan cotton textiles. If employers could not be forced to negotiate with the workers' representatives then stable union organisation became an impossibility. On this occasion Miguel Mestre, following the advice of Fabra Ribas, had been willing to pursue a more combative stance. But the result had been to divide the party, and the loss of the strike was a serious blow to the prestige of the Reus Socialists. Moreover, in the following year leadership of the Nacional Textile Federation passed out of Socialist hands for similar reasons. During 1916

101. La Internacional, 6 November 1908; LJS, 21 May, 17 September 1910.
the Barcelona cotton textile workers once again flooded into La Constância. They immediately called for a wage increase and came out on strike in July. The federation's committee officially supported the strike, but considered the demand ill timed. As a result, once the strike had been defeated, it faced a barrage of criticism and had to resign. Leadership of the federation then passed into the hands of the pro-syndicalist Barcelona sizers and calenders union.103

Moreover, the UGT's union practice, and the fact that the Madrid Socialists were in charge of party policy created additional difficulties. Unions were often put off joining the UGT because dues were relatively high, and yet stringent conditions were placed on the use of UGT funds to support strikes. They could, therefore, legitimately ask what was the point of joining. This probably helps to explain why the Catalan Socialists had considerable influence in sectors of Catalan labour, but managed to persuade very few unions to join the UGT.104 Some Catalan Socialists also admitted that unions did not join the UGT because they saw it as “political” and subordinated to the PSOE.105 This problem was heightened as a result of the decision to move the UGT's headquarters from Barcelona to Madrid in 1899. It was later claimed that the move had been made, “because Catalonia, and particularly Barcelona, was no longer at the centre of the party's forces”.106 Nevertheless, there is good reason to believe that at least part of the reason for the move was the desire on the part of the Madrid Socialists to bring the UGT under closer control. That this was the case is indicated by the fact that from this date the UGT became increasingly identified with party policy. This became especially clear after 1908, and the process was to culminate in the UGT's overt support for the republican-socialist conjunción.107

From this date the Catalan Socialists were handicapped by the fact that political power within the party was concentrated in Madrid. The party leadership maintained a firm grip on the provinces. In part this was due to the moral authority of Pablo Iglesias. Yet the leadership also exercised a great deal of control over the party congresses, which were invariably held in Madrid.

104. The stringent requirements imposed before a strike could be given monetary support meant that very few strikes involving UGT unions had official backing. This produced considerable disquiet. For example, in 1914 the railway workers' union, Reus Nord, formed part of the UGT's national federation of railway workers. Nonetheless, the union's president stated that dues were too high. He pointed out the workers affiliated to the union paid 50 cents a month. Half this money was sent to the central committee of the railway workers' federation to be found in Madrid. At the same time, in order to receive strike aid over 50 per cent of the railway workers in the locality had to be unionised, and the local union had to be able to support them on its own for at least two weeks. These requirements, he continued, were almost impossible to comply with and the union was, therefore, paying its dues to the federation's committee for nothing. This, he maintained, was why the federation had lost over 30,000 affiliates in the previous year. La Unión Ferroviaria, Reus Norte, May, August 1914. This example, again illustrates the fact that the UGT was best suited to the needs of workers in a strong bargaining position, for whom strike action was a last resort. 105. LJS, 11 May 1911, 17 January 1914.
This was in part possible because of the existence of so-called *cunero* delegates: party members who theoretically represented unions from other parts of Spain, but who in fact came from Madrid.\(^{108}\)

There was, in consequence, a tendency to view the PSOE as an alien body without roots in Catalonia. A belief which was probably strengthened by the notable cultural and linguistic differences between Catalonia and Castile. The UGT was also increasingly seen in this light after the decision was taken to move its headquarters to Madrid in 1899. This decision was of the greatest importance for the future development of Spanish Socialism. The centralisation of the UGT in Madrid could not fail to make it unpopular amongst many workers. Madrid, it should be remembered, was better known for its court and state functionaries than for its industry. Why then, many Catalan workers could ask themselves, should they who laboured in the country's greatest industrial cities be subject to decisions taken in Madrid? Union organisation amongst railway workers between 1909 and 1911 provides a good example of this hostility. In 1909 the Spanish Socialists formed the Railway Workers' Union. In 1910 they collaborated with Barcelona trade unionists in the setting up of the so-called Autonomous Catalan Section. However, in 1911 there developed a split over Socialist plans to form a national federation. The Catalan Section stated that the organisers of the founding congress were trying to make all those who wished to federate adopt the same statutes as the UGT Madrid railway workers' union. It also asked why it was necessary to centralise the federation's executive at one point, and in a clear reference to the UGT stated that it refused to contribute to, "the cost of other bodies which are not totally working class, and with whom the majority of railway workers do not feel identified".\(^{109}\)

It was for this reason that Catalan Socialists became increasingly critical of the party and unions' organisational structure. Their attempts to restructure the PSOE, however, proved unsuccessful. At the party's key Tenth Congress in October 1915 Recasens i Mercadé did manage to end the practice by which the National Committee was elected by the Madrid branch alone, and it was agreed that in certain circumstances representatives of the party's regional federations could attend and vote at national committee meetings. Yet they were never actually to do so. In reality power within the party remained firmly in the hands of the Madrid executive.\(^{110}\)

Under the impact of their failure to provide a clear radical alternative to the UGT-PSOE leadership or restructure the party the Catalan Socialists' position collapsed. Between 1917 and 1919 they continued on the one hand to try and build bridges with the CNT, and on the other to decentralise the PSOE. They were, however, ultimately unsuccessful. Frustration was the result.

\(^{109}\) SO, 1 May 1911.
\(^{110}\) Carlos Forcadell, op cit, pp,121-122.
Left-wing militants like Andreu Nin, therefore, left the Socialists and resolved to work within the CNT. This helps to explain why the only communist party to be formed in Catalonia during the 1920s - the *Bloc Obrer i Can Werol* - was the work of CNT dissidents. More moderate Socialists for their part also gave up trying to reform the PSOE from within and formed their own independent Socialist party in 1923: the social-democratic and Catalanist *Unió Socialista de Catalunya*. During the Second Republic both these parties were to exercise greater influence in Catalonia than the remnants of the PSOE's Catalan Federation.111

Yet more important than this was the fact that no party of the worlding class was to play a leading role in Catalan left-wing politics before the Spanish Civil War. In part this could be put down to the fact that syndicalists and anarchists retained a strong position within the labour unions. No working class party could hope to succeed electorally without first gaining an important trade union following. This possibility was, however, to a large extent blocked by the anarchists. The anarchists represented primarily a trade union movement. At election time they offered no alternative to left-wing republicanism. Despite the decline of the Radicals from 1910, therefore, the republicans continued as major force in working class politics. Thus, despite the anarchists avowed contempt for the "bourgeois" republicans, in many respects they remained unwilling bedfellows through to the outbreak of war in 1936.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century most of Catalan industry belonged to one of two sectors: textiles and the artisanal trades. Nevertheless, a number of similar characteristics could be discerned. All Catalan industry was faced with the problem that the level of internal demand was both limited in scope and varied greatly according to the harvest. This fact put a number of obstacles in the path of the region’s economic development. Catalan firms tended to be small in size, and often did not have the capital resources necessary to carry through large scale mechanisation and the total reorganisation of work structures in their plants. Moreover, in many branches of the economy the size of the internal market did not justify a switch to serial production.

The situation, of course, varied greatly from industry to industry. In cotton textiles a factory based industry had developed in the first half of the nineteenth century, for even in Spain demand for cheap cotton garments was great enough to justify the expenditure on plant and machinery. Between 1860 and 1900 the technological transformation of the industry continued apace, aided by the relatively low cost of the new equipment. In weaving the power-loom replaced the hand-loom in most establishments, and its introduction was associated with the replacement of male by cheaper female labour. In spinning from the 1880s, moreover, attempts were made to replace male by female workers on a new machine known as the ring-frame. Nevertheless, in 1914 in European terms the industry’s structure was still in many respects archaic. This could not only be seen in the small-scale of the Catalan enterprises. It was apparent in the practice through which in order to reduce capital outlays larger enterprises hired out much of their work to small, marginal establishments, many of which still employed hand-looms.

In the artisanal sector of the economy the picture was even gloomier. Manufacturers found it difficult to specialise in a particular line of work and, in any case, few had the resources necessary to carry through major structural reorganisations of their plants, even when this was technologically feasible. The clearest example of this problem is provided by the Catalan metallurgical industry which, as has been seen, remained small-scale and technologically backward through to 1914. As a result of these problems, skilled and artisanal workers remained a fundamental component of Catalan industry, and the new class of factory based semi-skilled workers, whose numbers increased so rapidly in the European core states between 1880 and 1914, remained of little importance in Catalonia. However, this is not to imply that much of Catalan industry was untouched by the advance of capitalist relations of production. As has been stressed, in the artisanal trades, through such means as the transformation of apprenticeship into cheap labour, the use of piece rates and the piecemeal introduction of cheap labour, employers hoped to reduce costs and increase productivity.
The manufacturers’ attempts to cut costs, however, ran up against determined worker opposition. Craft workers, as has been seen, retained a strong position on the shop floor. These workers put up a tenacious resistance to deskilling. Their position was strengthened because competition between the manufacturers often hampered the elaboration of a coordinated response to the workers’ demands. On the other hand employer opposition and, more importantly, state repression, made very difficult the formation of craft associations which could negotiate wages and working conditions. The result was a long drawn out, often subterranean, battle over the “frontier of control”. In the artisanal sector of the economy industrial strife was at its sharpest in metallurgy. In this industry manufacturers were faced with heavy foreign competition. This made them particularly unwilling to enter into negotiations with their workforce. In order to compete with foreign suppliers the metallurgical manufacturers were determined to maintain a 10 hour day in the industry, and tried to reduce costs by putting pressure on wage rates, and undermining apprenticeship restrictions. The larger Barceloneta firms were to a large extent able to impose social control. Smaller enterprises had less success. In order to strengthen their position in 1900 the Barcelona manufactures founded a city wide employers’ federation. It was for this reason that the 1901 metalworkers’ strike quickly spread throughout the city. The intransigence of the metallurgical bourgeoisie led strikes in this industry to take on a particularly violent character. In other artisanal trades strikes rarely reached such a violent pitch. Yet as the century progressed they also tended to become more wide ranging, and in Barcelona by 1914 both the construction workers and wood workers had founded their own local federations.

In cotton textiles employers were able to replace male by female power-loom weavers without difficulty. This probably reflected the fact that power-loom weavers were in a relatively weak position on the shop floor. Thus, the level of skill required in order to operate a power-loom was low, and entry restrictions non existent. In rural areas and in the Alt Llobregat company towns industrialists were also able to impose social control without difficulties, and those enterprises engaged in spinning replaced men by women on the new ring-frames. In the Ter Valley towns, on the other hand, the industrialists came up against similar difficulties to employers engaged in artisanal manufacture. They faced a group of workers who operated a form of entry restriction into trade, and who, moreover, enjoyed the support of the rest of the community. Attempts to replace male workers by female spinners, therefore, led to bitter conflict. Indeed, in the principal Ter Valley towns the factory owners efforts to replace the men were not to be successful. Thus in Manlleu, Roda and Sant Hipòlit, male spinners still operated the ring-frames in 1914. In woollen textiles the situation was somewhat different. The under capitalised Sabadell woollen textile manufacturers did not even try and force through new divisions of labour. Nevertheless, the presence of two highly productive French firms in Sabadell proved a destabilising element. As a result, the relative social calm in the town was punctuated by crises in 1899 and 1911, when the Sabadell woollen workers tried to impose generally accepted work practices on the French manufacturers.
Skilled workers under threat at the point of production tended to look outside their own trades for support. This explains the moves towards the formation of inter-craft and industrial labour federations between 1899 and 1914. In order to improve their position vis-à-vis their employers these workers also felt it necessary to aid the less skilled to form their own unions, and hence strengthen the entire labour movement. Such an attitude was at the root of the development of a specifically working class consciousness in urban Catalonia. As has been stressed, it would be mistaken to think of most workers as committed anarchists, Socialists or republicans. Many unions wished to remain independent of any political faction, and even when in a labour federation of a particular political persuasion the workers by no means accepted all aspects of that federation’s ideology.

Nevertheless, in Barcelona and its surrounds, in those trades and industries in which conflict was severe, anarchists and syndicalists gained an important degree of support. Skilled workers were in the vanguard of the Barcelona labour movement, and it was amongst a number of skilled trades that they gained particularly strong support. This could be seen between 1901 and 1903, when the metalworkers, bricklayers, carpenters, compositors, tanners, and workers involved in the textile finishing trades became strongly identified with the anarchists. This raises the question of why these workers should have given their support. Students of the British and French labour movements often still argue that syndicalism was a movement best suited to the needs of artisanal workers. Thus, it has recently been stated that it expressed the struggle of workers not yet trained in capitalist factory discipline against the imposition of managerial authority. In a similar vein, claims have been made that the decentralised syndicalist unions reflected the craft workers strength on the shop floor. Amongst factory workers, on the other hand, lack of bargaining power at a local level had to be compensated for by the centralisation of union organisation. Therefore rank and file opposition to the imposition of unpopular work practices was an important component of syndicalism, but there is reason to doubt whether it was a specifically craft based movement. In Catalonia it is true that the Socialists had considerable influence amongst workers in a number of textile towns. Yet the Ter Valley spinners, who gave the Socialists considerable support, were hardly archetypal factory proletarians. Instead, they were skilled workers under threat from technological innovation. Moreover, the anarchists were not only supported by skilled workers. In Barcelona syndicalists were behind the unionisation of the female cotton textile workers, and they also received the backing of the waterfront unions, and particularly the carters. The Sabadell power-loom weavers also gave the anarchists guarded support.

Perhaps a more fruitful way of looking at syndicalism is to see it as an ideology which could potentially gain the support of workers who were not integrated into a country's political structure. The syndicalists, as has been emphasised, rejected the formation of a political party of the working class and participation in elections. They also opposed state social legislation and state arbitration of industrial disputes. Such an ideology could only flourish in a country in which workers had no possibility of influencing government policy through parliament, and in which the state made little attempt to address workers grievances and intervene in order to stabilise labour relations. Similarly the concept of the revolutionary general strike aimed at overthrowing the state and capitalism gained adepts in a context in which the "parliamentary road to socialism" did not seem viable. The syndicalist concept of direct action had a similar pedigree. It reflected the difficulties faced by Catalan labour to enter into collective bargaining with industrialists. The case of the 1902 general strike in Barcelona illustrates this point. When the metalworkers strike broke out in November 1901 there were significant elements within the union who wished to reach a compromise with capital. Yet the intransigence of the metallurgical bourgeoisie made their position untenable. They could not turn to the government for help. They were, therefore, finally driven to call on the entire Barcelona working class to come out on strike in solidarity.

An international comparison might serve further to illustrate this point. In Britain and Germany by 1914 large national craft, industrial and general labour unions had been formed. In Britain, collective bargaining procedures had been established over wide sections of industry. In Germany labour relations were harsher, especially in heavy industry, where employers refused to accept the presence of trade unions. Nevertheless, in the skilled sector of the economy centrally managed labour federations had been established. In both countries the process was accompanied by the burgeoning of a trade union bureaucracy, which negotiated wages and working conditions on behalf of the membership. Syndicalism was never the dominant labour ideology in these countries. Instead it took the form of an opposition. In part it reflected the concerns of skilled workers under threat from capitalist development, who felt union officials were not conducting a sufficiently vigorous campaign on their behalf. The shop stewards movement in the British engineering industry is a good example of this brand of syndicalism. Syndicalism could also gain the support of workers who had previously been unable to unionise because of employer opposition, and who had therefore missed out on the benefits of collective bargaining. The growing influence of syndicalism amongst Ruhr metalworkers during the turbulent years of 1918-1919 is a case in point. Such workers were anxious to make up for lost time, and angered by industrialists refusal to countenance union activity in their industry in the past were quick to strike for improvements in working conditions. As has been emphasised such an attitude was apparent within many Barcelona unions between 1899 and 1914. In some trades in the wood working and

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between 1901 and 1903 workers were encouraged to pursue aggressive strike tactics by victories they achieved against their unprepared employers. In metallurgy the major Barcelona strikes ended in defeat. Yet, as has been seen, the workers had little choice but to adopt the strike weapon.

The dominant tendency within Spanish Socialism, however, attempted to create labour federations on the British or German model. In order to build such organisations they believed it necessary to curtail unpremeditated actions which might put the unions' future at risk. Thus they stressed the need for strikes to be called only in the last resort, and left it to the UGT's central committee to decide whether a general strike should be declared official and be given monetary support. This policy was at the root of many of the difficulties the Socialists faced in Catalonia. The example of the Catalan cotton textile industry illustrates this point. A strong regional textile federation had operated with paid officials in the 1880s. The Socialists hoped it would provide a strong platform on which they could build. Yet between 1891 and 1914 the cotton textile bourgeoisie's attack on union organisation prevented the successful operation of a regional textile federation for any length of time.

In these circumstances the "Pabl. Jst" Socialist, it seems, gained the greatest support in trades and industries in which social conflict was not severe, and in which the potential existed for the organisation of stable, bureaucratically run, labour federations. This was the case in Madrid and Asturias, two of the principal areas of Socialist support in Spain. In Madrid social relations between masters and men were relatively close. In Asturias the main industry was mining. Class conflict in this industry was to intensify from 1917. However, in 1910 when the Asturian miners' federation, the SMA, was founded, it was hoped to resolve disputes through negotiations with union officials. Thus the SMA, "was centrally organised with a single treasury, and unions could only make demands and call strikes through the executive".3 Nevertheless in Biscay, the third main area of Socialist influence in Spain, the situation was rather different. Between 1890 and 1916 much of the Socialist support in the region came from the miners of the open cast iron ore mining fields outside Bilbao. The number of skilled workers required in these mines was very small, and replacements could easily be found for the unskilled majority. The miners could not, therefore, bargain effectively with their employers, nor could they form stable unions. Consequently, in order to bring pressure to bear they tended to generalise strike action. The ease with which blacklegs could be recruited also led these miners' strikes to be very violent affairs. This, it becomes readily apparent, was not the strike practice favoured by the Madrid based Socialist hierarchy, and yet the Socialists dominated the coalfields. The answer to this apparent paradox is twofold. In the first place the Socialists held an advantage in that they were the first to unionise the mine workers. Secondly, the Socialist mine workers' leader, Facundo Perezagua,

and his lieutenants, consistently flouted official union policy in order to retain the support of the miners. Indeed, at the height of strikes in 1892-1893 and 1911 they were forced to radicalise their stance in order to stop the anarchists from gaining support in the mining towns. 4

In the late nineteenth century, however, the Catalan Socialists were unwilling to take such a path. Indeed, between 1899 and 1903 they retained links with the reformist TCV. As has been stressed, in Barcelona the Socialists had considerable success in organising workers in periods of economic crisis and when union organisation was very weak. However, as the number of strikes grew they tended to lose ground to the anarchists. In this respect the period 1900-1903 has been analysed in some detail. In the Alta Muntanya a not altogether situation unfolded. The Socialists were able to gain some support amongst the cotton textile workers of Manresa and the Ter Valley. However, their position was shaken because bourgeois opposition to union organisation forced the workers to call a number of general strikes in the industry. Nevertheless, in the Ter the Socialists were able to maintain their position better than in Barcelona. They were on the one hand able to point to the disastrous consequences of those general strikes actually attempted. It has also been suggested that in cotton textiles there was already a tradition of socialist style trade unionism, with the employment of paid officials, strike and friendly benefits. Moreover, in this area Socialist and independent worker councillors had had an impact in local government. These circumstances probably strengthened the Socialists' hand. Yet the Socialists faced further problems in Catalonia. In 1899 the UGT moved from Barcelona to Madrid and thereafter became increasingly identified with party policy. Workers often resented the subordination of their unions to a specific political cause. Furthermore, there was disquiet at the centralisation of authority within the PSOE-UGT, and opposition to fact that Madrid was the power base of Spanish Socialism.

It was to try and overcome these problems that the Reus Socialist, Antoni Fabra Ribas, adopted an alternative Socialist strategy. This strategy was based on ideas developed by left-wing French Socialists. It accorded greater importance in the battle for Socialism to the economic struggles of the working class. Moreover, Fabra Ribas rejected the belief that the Socialists should run their own labour confederation. Instead he believed that like the French unified Socialist party, the SFIO, they should work within independent unions. At an organisational level many Catalan Socialists also tried to end the monopoly of power exercised by the Madrid branch of the party, and argued in favour of a decentralisation of party structures. The policy defended by Fabra Ribas was, however, ultimately to fail. The successful pursuit of a left-wing alternative to "Pablíst" Socialism would always be difficult in Catalonia, where the radical ticket was seemingly well covered by the anarchists. But Fabra Ribas's alternative was, in fact, never wholeheartedly supported. Many Catalan Socialists continued to back a cautious strike policy, and retained their faith in electoral politics. There was also uncertainty as to whether to work within the UGT or the

officially pro-syndicalist Catalan unions. This was brought to the fore in 1910 when the CNT was founded, and when despite the opposition of Fabra Ribas, it was decided to break with the new confederation. Finally the Catalan Socialists were also unable substantially to reform the organisational structure of the PSOE. Power remained firmly in the hands of the Madrid party leadership.

Without a strong union base in Catalonia, and especially in Barcelona, the Socialists could never hope to mount an effective challenge to the republicans at election time. As has been seen, the republicans still enjoyed considerable worker support, for in a country ruled by authoritarian governments the promise of a democratic lay state could still attract many workers. Yet despite the fact that in Barcelona and its surrounds the Socialists had by 1910-1914 relatively little influence, the Catalan syndicalists also had to rethink their trade union practice. They had gained an important degree of support at the height of the 1901-1903 strike wave. However, their attempts to call general and solidarity strikes on every possible occasion, and their policy of forming labour federations whose members paid no dues, made it impossible for them to operate union organisations effectively. This could be seen in the case of the anarchist rival to the UGT, the FRESR, which failed to take off.

From 1904 a reaction against these policies set in amongst some syndicalists. Though these syndicalists claimed to support direct action they also stated that rash actions which could only lead to the destruction of the unions should be avoided. In reality - although they would have denied it - these syndicalists were putting union organisation before revolutionary goals. A similar tendency could be seen within the French CGT, and was to become increasingly dominant from 1909. This was perhaps an inevitable development in a non-revolutionary context, for in order best to defend the material interests of a union’s membership, it was necessary to maintain that union intact. Yet within the context of Catalan trade unionism this tendency found it difficult to gain the upper hand. Both SO and the CNT agreed that their affiliates should pay dues. This gave these organisations the minimum consistency required for them to be able to operate effectively. However, in Barcelona, as the number of strikes grew between 1910 and 1911, the CNT’s Barcelona leadership once again began to call for general strikes whenever the opportunity presented itself. Moreover, anarchist revolutionaries began openly to argue that in order to prevent it from becoming a reformist body the CNT should be led by a militant élite. It was not until 1913 that the more moderate strand of Catalan syndicalism gained the upper hand. This followed an unsuccessful attempt to call a general strike in support of the textile workers, as a result of which the Catalan CRT was once again declared illegal.

The new CRT leadership argued that in order to avoid a repetition they had to be more cautious. Before 1914 this new policy did not result in any watering down of syndicalist postulates. With the rapid growth of the CRT between 1916 and 1918, however, such a tendency
did become visible. Thus, in order to attract the maximum number of workers possible, the CRT's 1918 Sants congress agreed simply to recommend unions affiliated adopt direct action. If the CRT had continued down this road it could completely have lost sight of its revolutionary objectives. For this to have occurred, however, it would have been necessary for the state to have accepted labour's place within the political nation. This was what happened in France during these years, where after the outbreak of war in 1914 the General Secretary of the CGT, León Jouhaux, joined a coalition government. As a result, increasingly integrated into the capitalist state, the majority wing of the CGT to all intents and purposes abandoned revolutionary syndicalism. In Catalonia between 1918 and 1923 developments were to follow a very different course. With the end of a war time boom social conflict became increasingly violent. The state vacillated between conciliation of labour and repression. However, at a local level the police and military became closely identified with the employers. This period was only brought to a close by the Primo de Rivera Dictatorship of 1923. The result was not only that revolutionary syndicalism remained the most influential doctrine in working class circles, but that the revolutionary anarchists or anarcho-syndicalists took control of the CRT.

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