The Rival Durrutis

The Posthumous Cult of Personality of Buenaventura Durruti, November, 1936 – June, 1937

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Introduction

On 22 November 1936 the anarchist working class of Barcelona took to the streets. No barricades were erected, as on this day the city was not united by revolution, but in grief. The widespread mourning was for the funeral of Buenaventura Durruti, killed in the heroic defence of Madrid. Durruti was, according to press reports, tragically struck down by a snipers bullet as he inspected his troops at the front.[1] By the evening of 21 November the city's streets were impassable as the proletariat gathered to pay their respects to the one they called 'our Durruti'.[2] The funeral began at ten the following morning as the body left the headquarters of the anarchist union, the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (National Confederation of Labour, CNT), and proceeded down the Via Layetana, renamed Via Durruti, in honour of the legendary anarchist.[3] The procession was followed by hundreds of thousands of mourners, many carrying banners and flags celebrating the 'hero of the people' and 'the fallen hero of liberty'.[4] Those without totems raised their fists in the air and sang the anarchist hymn Hijos del pueblo, (sons of the people).[5] As the cortège reached Las Ramblas the crowds swelled further, as people climbed trees to catch a glimpse of the body, the exact number of mourners was never recorded, but estimates put the total at half a million.[6] At the Columbus monument at the foot of Las Ramblas, speeches were made by various dignitaries from Spain and abroad, with eulogies from Durruti's CNT comrade Juan García Oliver and Catalan President Lluís Companys. The body was then taken to the cemetery at Montjuïc, where, due to adverse weather, he was kept until his burial the following day.[7] The funeral of Durruti was the first act of a posthumous personality cult that would continue until the end of the Spanish Civil War.

The paper, in its examination of the cult of personality of Buenaventura Durruti will use the theory of Weberian charismatic and legitimate authority, from Economy and Society, to better understand the 'routinisation' of the cult and Durruti's continued importance to the anarchist movement following his death.[8] The paper will focus on the role the cult played as a means of mobilisation of the different factions of the CNT, namely those that formed the basis of the famous 'War versus Revolution' from Durruti's death to the repressive aftermath of the May Days in June 1937, where dissent in Republican Spain was effectively silenced. The suitability of

[1] *Abel Paz*, Durruti in the Spanish Revolution (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2007), p. 601; *Solidaridad Obrera*, 21 November 1936.

[2] *Solidaridad Obrera*, 22 November 1936.

[3] The announcement of the renaming of Via Layetana was made in Solidaridad Obrera, 22 November 1936.

[4] *Solidaridad Obrera*, 25 November 1936.

[5] Paz, *Durruti in the Spanish Revolution…*, p. 601

[6] Karill, 'The people bury their dead hero', in Buenaventura Durruti (Barcelona: Official Propaganda Service of CNT-FAI, 1937), p. 20; Robert W. Kern, *Red Years/Black Years – A Political History of Spanish Anarchism 1911–1917* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978), p. 206; Robert W. Kern, *Red Years/Black Years – A Political History of Spanish Anarchism 1911–1917* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978), p. 206.

[7] 'Karill', 'The people bury…', p.20.

[8] This extract assumes that the reader understands that Buenaventura Durruti had been a prominent and populat figure within the Spanish anarchist movement since the 1920s.

Weberian theory in the study's central hypothesis is best articulated by Anne Ruth Willner in her work on charismatic authority, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership*:

> At a time of transition and crisis, some aspects of a given cultural configuration may lose their significance or be in danger of dissolution. Concomitantly, and even perhaps because of the climate of uncertainty, other beliefs and symbols not only will retain their meaning, but will probably gain renewed or added power to move the minds and emotions of people.[9]

The application of this theory to the anarchist movement therefore casts the CNT's ideological schism over governmental participation and the gradual failure of the revolution of July 1936 as the 'time of crisis' and the cult of personality as the 'other belief and symbol'. This assertion by Willner offers a Weberian basis for the study, as the theory can be applied to understand the perpetuation of the cult of personality and its relative importance to the oficialista and revolutionary factions of the CNT. Furthermore, Weberian theory on charismatic authority initially offers a methodological approach to the focus of the study, emphasising the social element required in a study that focuses on an individual's relationship with a movement and how an individual can accrue a cult of personality. Weber's theory on the legitimisation of charismatic authority meanwhile offers a theoretical framework for the study, illustrating how external agents can 'routinise' charismatic authority in order to accrue its political benefits.

It is important to maintain that Buenaventura the man is not the central focus of this study, rather his representation and perception by the different cenetista factions and the movement's rank-and-file. There exists a historiographical precedent for works that attempt to synthesise the study of an individual and a social movement. Ian Kershaw's *Hitler 1889–1936 Hubris* is an example that typifies this approach as the study places Hitler the individual as subsidiary to grander narrative of 'Hitlerian Germany'. That is to say, Hitler is not the central focus of his own biography, more the movement that was to grow around him.[10] The differences between German National Socialism and Spanish anarcho-syndicalism fundamental, however the central themes of the work are universally applicable to the study of cults of personality. Kershaw describes his work as 'in the first instance [looking] to downplay the part played by the individual… in complex historical process'.[11] That is to say that the personality cult of Hitler is regarded as a product of the social conditions of the time, not the action of the individual himself.[12] Kershaw's methodological framework is based on Max Weber's model of charismatic authority, which states that the reasons for the rise of a cult of personality lie in the existence of suitable social conditions for its adoption, not the mere 'force of will' of the object of adulation.[13] Weber's model highlights that individuals only garner charismatic authority through the fulfilment of a 'need' for the social-political group with which they have affiliation and that the charismatic claim breaks

[9] Anne Ruth Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). p. 63.

[10] A further example of a social biography is Luzzatto, *The Body of Il Duce…, passim*, The work studies Benito Mussolini's continued influence upon and presence in Italian public life following his death. However, whilst relevant to the study of posthumous cults of personality, Luzzatto fails to offer a methodological framework to accompany his social biography.

[11] Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889–1936* Hubris, (London: Penguin, 1998), p. xi.

[12] *Ibid*, pp. 131–2.

[13] *Ibid*, p. xiii.

down if his mission is not recognised'.[14] Therefore, the perceived action and achievement of the individual must continue to resonate with the movement and their actions must fulfil a requirement of their social-political group if they are to continue to be seen as a 'saviour' in the eyes of the group.[15] These requirements are determined by the conditions that the group is subjected to, meaning that a change in political circumstance can result in the alteration of requirements and the loss of appeal. The strength of the charismatic model is that it allows for the understanding of a cult of personality not in the actions of an individual but in their perception within a movement. This shift in focus to wider social milieu of the anarcho-syndicalist movement results in the object of analysis being not the subject of the cult but the social group's perception of the cult. Consequently, this approach places a profound emphasis on the representation of each individual and in turn, the agents with influence over these representations, in this case, the CNT. Charismatic theory therefore serves as a theoretical basis for the study of the perpetuation of the cult of personality.

Formal to the idea of Weberian charismatic authority is the repeated fulfilment of the needs of the group in order to maintain the charismatic claim. However, in the context of this study this is impossible as, due to the posthumous nature of the cult of personality, this claim cannot be continually made. Furthermore, considering the transitory nature of charismatic authority, it cannot be used as a means of mobilisation without institutionalisation, as it will eventually dissipate. Weber states that:

> In its pure form, charismatic authority may be said to exist solely in *statu nascendi* [and] it cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalised to rationalised, or a combination of both.[16]

Weber's theory therefore extends to the 'routinisation' of charismatic authority through its subject's identification with more legitimate forms of authority. Willner describes this as a process of metaphor, where 'some aspects of a leader or his actions serve as stimuli to evoke whole complexes of meaning and emotion'.[17] The individual is likened to existing symbols of identity that already have an emotional attachment to the movement in order to stabilise the authority. The motivation for this action is defined by Weber as being linked to 'the material interests of the members of the administrative staff, the disciples, the party workers or others in continuing the relationship'.[18] This paper will examine how Durruti was likened to different symbols of identity by each faction in order to institutionalise his cult of personality to suit a particular ideological outlook. Anarchist journalist Jacinto Barras in an article from 1938 entitled Durruti – Prototype of the Iberian Proletariat made the perceptive observation about Durruti's cult of personality:

> In everything written to date, each author has delineated the spiritual profile of Durruti; not taking into account what it was but as each one wanted it to be. Catholics say that God made man in his image, when we all know that God is a product of

[14] Max Weber, 'The Sociology of Charismatic Authority', in *On Charisma and Institution Building* ed. S.N.Eisenstadt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 20.

[15] *Ibid*, p. 20.

[16] Max Weber, *Economy and Society – An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Vol. 1. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), p. 246.

[17] Willner, *The Spellbinders…*, p. 64.

[18] Weber, *Economy and Society…*, p. 246.

> the human imagination. Many commentators have done something like this with Durruti.[19]

The paper will therefore prove the veracity of Barras' observation and highlight that the public perception of Durruti, following his death, was subject to manipulation in order exploit the charismatic authority Durruti maintained over the anarchist movement.

Durruti's revolutionary career would act as the basis for the posthumous cult as he had an ability to seemingly always act in the interests of the people.[20] The result of this was that his posthumous testament would be imbued with a verisimilitude that proved to be a powerful means of social mobilisation. The fulfilment of his legacy was perceived to be the most appropriate expedient for the movement. This was because the basis of his living cult was his repeated ability to embody the best course of action for the anarchist rank-and-file. The reputation of repeated action on behalf of the movement that Durruti garnered during his life therefore imbued his legacy with his charismatic authority. Durruti's funeral highlighted the mobilising potential of his cult. The political value it represented meant that he posthumously played an integral role in anarchist discourse as concerted efforts were made by the CNT leadership and their revolution supporting counterparts to 'routinise' Durruti's representation in a manner that supported their political stance. The attempts to affiliate Durruti's legacy to a particular political outlook would characterise the posthumous cult. Identification with Durruti would equate a policy to being in the best interests for all *cenetistas*, profoundly strengthening it. The power that his memory held inevitably led to its manipulation by both the war and revolution factions of the CNT as each attempted to align him with their side of the schism.

Durruti's presentation as a simple 'heroic' example for the anarchist movement throughout the whole period cannot be misrepresented, nor can the honest wish to commemorate the hero of the movement be underestimated. However, alongside these sincere motives the use of the cult as a source of political capital was seen. Alongside calls to 'imitate the great son of the people' there were differing proposals as how best to do it.[21] The use of Durruti in propaganda was based in the political purpose it served for those concerned, whether that was the attempts to gain support for a political stance or mobilise the movement in the war effort. The most prominent of these differing views is the 'we renounce everything except victory' representation. Helen Graham presents this as the sole version of Durruti's posthumous personality cult, stating that:

> 'the protection of the legendary anarchist's reputation was also a means of protecting what Republican authorities chose to present as Durruti's endorsement of state, as well as military reconstruction…'we renounce everything except victory'.[22]

As we shall see, this was a leading representation of the posthumous personality cult of Buenaventura Durruti. However, it was also represented differently by separate ideologies. The rev-

[19] *Solidaridad Obrera*, November 20, 1938.

[20] Durruti's demagogic relationship with the people was articulated in Juan García Oliver's memoirs, where he reportedly said to Durruti: 'Whenever its announced that you are going to speak, people's eyes light up because they feel sure you'll say what they know you have to say, and that they are speaking through you.' Juan García Oliver, *Wrong Steps – Errors in the Spanish Revolution*, (London: Kate Sharpley Library, 2000), p.15.

[21] An example of this phrase can be seen in Figure 1. p. 31.

[22] Helen Graham, *The Spanish Republic at War, 1936–1939*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.178–9.

olution supporting *cenetistas*, did not present a Durruti that denounced revolution, nor was the official cult limited solely to one form of presentation.

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In the months that followed Durruti's death the 'counterrevolution' gained hegemony within Republican Spain. Revolutionary measures taken in July 1936 were rolled back as the Republican zone's political composition began to increasingly resemble a liberal bourgeois democracy. The collectivised factories and land were subject to 'bureaucratic harassment' as expropriated land was returned to its previous owners, provided they were not Francoists.[1] The CNT's power in the streets was weakened, but not yet crushed, as the both Assault and Civil Guards were reintroduced to replace the irregular militia groups of the anarchists, balancing the monopoly of violence once again in favour of the state.[2] The revolution was damaged further through the legal decrees that provided for the dissolution of the revolutionary committees to be replaced with regular local and regional councils. These councils were constituted of all the parties of the Popular Front, not just revolutionary groups.[3] The attacks on the revolution caused indignation within the more radical section of the anarchist movement in the later months of 1936 and the beginning of 1937 and saw the 'war versus revolution' schism in the CNT intensify. The most prominent advocates of the 'war faction' were obviously the government ministers, but also high ranking cenetistas.[4] Conversely, the revolutionary caste drew its advocates from the mid-level activist section of the CNT, shop stewards and militants of the industrial working class, who argued that the CNT had to impose its 'majority in the streets' upon the Republic as a whole.[5] These two schools of thought would vie for support for their ideals from the anarchist rank and file through propaganda in their attempts to gain control of the largest proletarian organisation in Spain. What must be maintained is that the anarchist rank-and-file, numbering around a million and a half members, was not a homogenous bloc that was docile to the dictates of the leadership.[6] Nor was it a revolutionary mass betrayed by its leadership, as romantically presented by some historians.[7] The rank-and-file were as independently minded as the leadership and activists and the political stance of each member of the anarchist movement depended upon each individual's

[1] Paul Preston, *A Concise History of the Spanish Civil War*, (London: Fontana, 1996), p. 180.

[2] Chris Ealham, ' 'From the Summit to the Abyss': The Contradictions of Individualism and Collectivism in Spanish Anarchism' in *The Republic Besieged – Civil War in Spain 1936–39*, ed. Paul Preston and Anne L. Mackenzie (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), Graham, *The Spanish Republic…*, p. 234; Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Revolution – The Left and the Struggle for Power during the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), p. 201.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 200.

[4] An example of this group would be Joan Manent, CNT major of Badalona, whose opinion on the 'war versus revolution' debate was simple: 'the first aim had to be to win the war; the revolution could come later'. Ronald Fraser, *The Blood of Spain – An Oral History of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Pantheon, 1979), p.336.

[5] Graham, *The Spanish Republic…*, p. 267; Julián Casanova, *Anarchism, the Republic and Civil War in Spain: 1931–1939* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 145.

[6] Figures from Anthony Beevor, *The Spanish Civil War*, (London: Cassell, 2000), p. 187.

[7] Stuart Christie, *We, the Anarchists! – A Study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) 1927–1937* (East Sussex: The Meltzer Press, 2000), pp. 113–4. Christie vilifies the leadership of the movement whilst portraying the rank-and-file simply as a revolutionary mass.

interpretation of the circumstances. The war had to be won otherwise there could be no revolution, but if there was no revolutionary reward, then why fight? The contradictory situation was summed up by Aragonese libertarian Macario Royo:

> We knew – it was so obvious, we all said it – that if the war were lost everything would be lost… On the other hand, if we of the CNT came out and said that making the revolution was not our concern, the enthusiasm of libertarians in fighting the war would have been entirely dissipated… Every one of us held these two images simultaneously in his mind.[8]

This fissure would dominate anarchist discourse until 15 June 1937, when, following the violence of the Barcelona 'May Days', outwardly revolutionary groups were made illegal.[9]

It was against this background of ideological fracture that the personality cult of Buenaventura Durruti would be used as a means of political influence over the movement. His personality cult would be utilised to fit with the political stance of each group. The *oficialistas* presented a Durruti that 'renounced everything except victory'[10] whilst the radicals would cultivate a Durruti who was opposed to governmental participation and a staunch revolutionary. The period preceding the May Days therefore saw a rivalry between two interpretations of the memory of Durruti for prominence within the anarchist movement. This ideological struggle would begin almost immediately as the various tributes that honoured Durruti's death would betray a calculated attempt to gain political capital from the mobilising potential of Durruti's legacy. Both cults, in their attempts to manipulate Durruti's testament, would endeavour to reconstruct the recent past in favour of their view. The first examples of this would be seen in the polemics that accompanied the funeral of Durruti on 22 November. These are best typified by the words of Juan García Oliver. The CNT leader evoked in his eulogy a Durruti committed to collaboration:

> To win the antifascist war was his deepest hope. Now that he has gone we must leave no stone unturned to realise this hope. If our comrades at the front are fighting incessantly at the fronts… those in the rear can do no less. We can honour him in no other way than our labours and sacrifice until fascism is exterminated.
>
> Comrades! Discipline, sacrifices and the glory will be for those who know to sacrifice. Let us unite, proletarians, without exception! Let us fight and die together at the front… to break this unity would be a crime!
>
> ¡Viva Durruti![11]

The speech, with its repeated mentions of sacrifice and its linking of unity and non-partisan antifascism to the veneration of the memory of Durruti would, as García Oliver was no doubt aware, reach a great number of people. Made to a crowd of an estimated five hundred thousand,

[8] Fraser, *The Blood of Spain*, p. 337.

[9] Kern, *Red Years/Black Years…*, p. 230.

[10] This phrase is referred to in historiography as Durruti's primary posthumous axiom. Graham, *The Spanish Republic…*, p.179. Although this phrase was utilised by the *oficialistas*, there was a plethora of other maxims attributed to Durruti used to endorse the

actions of the CNT leadership. Examples include; 'responsibility in the rearguard!' *Solidaridad Obrera*, 5 November 1937; and 'Tell the comrade to continue' *Solidaridad Obrera*, 13 December 1936.

[11] *Solidaridad Obrera*, 24 November 1936.

the speech was also broadcast on Radio Barcelona and transcribed in *Solidaridad Obrera*, to be read by countless *cenetistas*. The funeral itself was also a show of unity, with eulogies from the Soviet Consul in Barcelona, Antonov Ovseenko and Catalan President Lluís Companys.[12] The aim was obvious: to present Durruti as committed to the policy of the CNT leadership whilst capitalising on the need to 'avenge him'. García Oliver's eulogy would provide the genus of the *oficialista* policy of veneration in the months that preceded June 1937, the promotion of cross-party cooperation and the sacrifice of revolutionary goals through the evocation of Durruti's supposed 'social-political testament'.[13]

The CNT leadership's control of the organisation of the funeral would all but mute the 'revolutionary' interpretation of the personality cult in the official shows of remembrance. Therefore the public manifestation of this belief would be the responsibility of actors external to the movement, free from CNT influence. Most prominent of these would be Andrés Nin, the ill-fated leader of the Trotskyite *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxist*a (Workers Party of Marxist Unification, POUM):

> The best tribute that can be paid to his [Durruti's] memory is not putting down our weapons until we have finally crushed the fascist murderers and the proletarian revolution has come to its ultimate conclusion.[14]

The message of condolence, despite its revolutionary content, was printed by *Solidaridad Obrera* two days after Durruti's death alongside similar dispatches from Ovseenko, and secretary general of the PCE, José Díaz, as a show of cross party unity. It is worth noting that Solidaridad Obrera, although heavily influenced by the CNT leadership, was not in November 1936, a fully fledged mouthpiece for the *oficialistas*. The ousting of bohemian editor Liberto Callejas only occurred at the beginning of that month and the complete control of content would not pass to new oficialista editor Jacinto Toryho until March 1937.[15] Therefore the newspaper's output would still include sporadic articles that contained genuinely revolutionary rhetoric; most fatefully on 6 December 1936, with future 'Friend of Durruti' Jaime Balius' incendiary commentary on Durruti's Radio Barcelona address a month before.[16] Nin's words were not wholly altruistic as he did not solely wish to authentically honour Durruti's memory. However, despite their attempts to gain favour for his small party amongst the powerful anarchist proletariat, his still comments reflected the standpoint of the revolutionary section of the movement. Action taken by the non-official anarchists in honouring Durruti's 'revolutionary' legacy proved that, despite its absence from the official show of veneration, there was a radical interpretation of his memory. A prime example of this was the banners created by proletarian attendants of the funeral. As reported by Solidaridad Obrera, there were various banners with an openly revolutionary agenda. One, in reference to the claims of Lluís Companys that the anarchists were a source of indiscipline at the front and in the rearguard,[17] stated bluntly: 'Companys – Imitate that [Durruti]'. Another, in reference to the contemporary theory that Durruti was killed by a Communist agent provocateur, simply asked 'Who killed Durruti?'. Whilst a further banner claimed Durruti died for a world 'we are creating'

[12] *Solidaridad Obrera*, 24 November 1936.
[13] *Solidaridad Obrera*, 24 November 1936.
[14] *Solidaridad Obrera*, 22 November 1936
[15] Casanova, *Anarchism…*, pp. 122–3.
[16] *Solidaridad Obrera*, 6 December 1936.
[17] Kern, *Red Years/Black Years…*, p.177.

referring to the ongoing revolution, not merely for the defence of the current world.[18] Alongside these politicised banners there were countless others that illustrated the mere popular grief at the death of such a popular figure, examples of which include: 'To the fallen hero of liberty' and 'Durruti born a man, fought with valour, died a hero!'.[19] Nevertheless, the conclusion to be drawn is that for a noticeable proportion of the anarchist movement Durruti's legacy was not the same as that laid out by the CNT leadership.

The symbolic importance of Durruti was not lost on the *oficialistas*, who in the months following his death engaged in a concerted program of the evocation of Durruti. He was, through his constant reference, forged into a central symbol of anarchism. The aim of this was to identify Durruti publicly with the official CNT and emphasising the constant need to 'fulfil his legacy', a legacy dicated by the *oficialistas*.[20] Through the action of the Propaganda Service of the CNT-FAI, Durruti was omnipresent as roads were renamed after him, his words reprinted in newspapers and posters of him adorned walls across Republican Spain.[21] The most prominent example of the concerted effort to perpetuate the *oficialista* interpretation of Durruti's cult of personality was the campaign made by the anarchist press to market the biography by A.G. Gilabert, *Durruti, Anarchist of Integrity*, a hagiographical account of Durruti's life that did not shy away from his gallant anti-statist past in the 'heroic years', but instead portrayed him as fighting specifically against the proto-fascist dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera, not the state.[22] Therefore recognition of Durruti's revolutionary career and the root of Durruti's popular authority were veiled as an implied antifascism, not apoliticism. Amidst the myriad references to Durruti's status as a 'hero and a symbol',[23] the book also failed to clarify his position on anarchist governmental participation, and included the pro-collaboration eulogy to Durruti made by the head of the International Brigades, André Marty.[24] Tierra y Libertad promised a free copy of the book to every subscriber to the periodical, whilst Solidaridad Obrera offered a twenty-five percent discount on all orders of over ten copies, obviously encouraging the mass purchase and dissemination of the book, whilst certain CNT offices gave the book away for free.[25] Durruti's cult's roots were therefore to be referenced yet its details were ignored in favour of the projection of the political struggle the oficialistas wished to convey, an antifascist one. The Durruti portrayed referenced the heroic action of his early career, yet did not articulate its ideological significance, emptying

[18] *Solidaridad Obrera*, 25 November 1936.

[19] *Solidaridad Obrera*, 25 November 1936.

[20] *Solidaridad Obrera*, 24 November 1936.

[21] Chris Ealham, *Class, Culture and Conflict in Barcelona 1898–1937* (London: Routledge, 2005), p.180. Solidaridad Obrera, 16 December, 1936. Tierra y Libertad, 13 February 1937.

[22] *Tierra y Libertad*, 9 January 1937; A.G. Gilabert, *Durruti, un heroe del pueblo* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nervio, 1937), p. 16–7.

[23] *Ibid*, p.47.

[24] *Ibid*, p. 38; Marty referred to Durruti as 'the symbol of the unity of combat against the fascist bandits' and argued that 'to avenge him we will organise and train even better and in this action the military forced of Spain, united and disciplined, will greater exalt the memory of our dead Durruti.' Gilabert would, following the May Days, reissue the work as *Durruti, a hero of the people*, that was ostensibly the same book, but with a new foreword that attacked the PCE and its 'bourgeois attacks' on the revolution. It was printed in Argentina, not Spain, due to its obviously seditious content.

[25] Examples of this can be seen in *Tierra y Libertad*, 16 January 1937; *Solidaridad Obrera*, 20 November 1936; Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca, *SECCIÓN POLÍTICO-SOCIAL/PS-BARCELONA*, 'Carta de Diego López Palain solicitando el envío de 25 ejemplares de un libro sobre Durruti', ES.37274.CDMH/1.38.8.5.2402.684/ /PS- BARCELONA,798,34.

the cult of much of its revolutionary content. Conversely, the book succeeded in emphasising the detail of the antifascist Durruti and his important role in the campaign in Aragón and the defence of Madrid.[26] Therefore Durruti's relationship with the people was extolled, without articulating fully the action that led to the popular connection. He was constantly referred to as 'our Durruti' and as a 'son of the people' (in reference to the anarchist hymn, Hijos del pueblo) yet the roots of this connection were never analysed in official propaganda.[27] Furthermore, whilst evoking his past in the movement, the propaganda explicitly focussed on Durruti's wartime career. This presentation of Durruti exacerbated the wartime antifascist nature of Durruti's living personality cult and created the symbol of a Durruti suitable to the situation at hand.[28]

The CNT leadership also linked itself with Durruti, making his name synonymous with the union; it was no coincidence that the CNT offices were located on Via Durruti, nor that the anarchist 26th Division of the Popular Army was still referred to as the Durruti Column whilst others former columns lost their titles.[29] Durruti was to be repeatedly linked to the movement itself and be seen as its hero. The belief that Durruti always acted in the peoples interests was therefore linked to the union through the presentation of him as a symbol of it. The official cult of Durruti was a symbol replete with charismatic authority, yet devoid of the revolutionary past that had made him the hero of the movement. The reasons for Durruti becoming a cornerstone of oficialista discourse in the Civil War lay in both the strength of the cult of Durruti and the absence of any other symbols of identity in the anarchist movement. The classic touchstones of anarchist theory, apoliticism and the revolution, were now no longer available as mobilising tools due to oficialista participation in the government. The CNT, whilst still a means of anarchist affiliation, was too prone to schism and its organisational structure meant that it was in no position to mobilise the movement in concerted action.[30] Durruti, however, having been established as a heroic figure of the movement in the *Dictadura*, Second Republic and Civil War, remained an individual that was still available for the oficialistas to use as a tool in influencing the anarchist working class due to his ideological ambiguity. His apparent advocacy of militarisation and his lack of outspoken opposition to anarchist governmental participation meant that Durruti could easily be posthumously portrayed as a collaborationist. Yet his lack of actual governmental participation meant that he had never become unpopular, unlike García Oliver and Montseny. Durruti would therefore remain one of the few popular symbols at the disposal of the CNT that could directly influence the movement into action. Political theorist Raymond Firth argues that 'man does not live by symbols alone, but man orders and interprets his reality by his symbols, and even reconstructs it'.[31] This notion would be central in *oficialista* propaganda as the use of Durruti to advocate the actions of the CNT would be seen throughout the period.

In the months prior to May 1937 the *oficialistas* would use the memory of Durruti to propagate their official line of cross party cooperation. The unpopularity of the retreat of the revolution

[26] Gilabert, Durruti…, p. 31.

[27] Tierra y Libertad, 23 January 1937; Solidaridad Obrera, 21 November 1937.

[28] The specifics of the rise of the cult of personality during the years of the *dictadura* are analysed in the full thesis.

[29] The announcement of the renaming of Via Layetana was made in *Solidaridad Obrera*, 22 November 1936; Examples of continued reference to the 26th Division as The Durruti Column can be seen in *Solidaridad Obrera*, 25 November 1936, 13 December 1936, and Carl Einstein, 'The Durruti Column', *Buenaventura Durruti* (Barcelona: Official Propaganda Service of CNT-FAI, 1937), pp. 24- 27.

[30] The CNT's lack of a strict structure are detailed in Chris Ealham, *Class…*, p.100; Casanova, *Anarchism…*, p. 42.

[31] Raymond Firth, *Symbols: Public and Private* (New York: Cornell University Press 1973), p. 73.

and the CNT's assumed acquiescence to it was countered by the use of Durruti and the evocation of his supposed legacy. This legacy was one of discipline and the fight against fascism and was used to counter reservations of the anarchist working class on certain issues. The axiom, 'we renounce everything except victory', that adorned posters and the cover of newspapers, or an equivalent gobbet, accompanied political statements on the controversial subjects of discipline and ideological sacrifice.[32] There are two prominent examples of this cynical attachment of Durruti's name to subjects that were either deeply unpopular, or ostensibly counterrevolutionary. The first, an article from *Solidaridad Obrera* entitled 'Example of discipline', attributed the phrase 'Amongst us there can be no thieves' to Durruti. The article spoke of the execution of a member of the Durruti Column who had been found guilty of stealing the salaries of his comrades and concluded with the phrase 'Durruti said: 'Amongst us there can be no thieves' and his words have just been the ruling that has led to the end of a man who used to be our comrade'.[33] The execution of a miliciano and the apparent imposition of military discipline are, in the final line of the article, ascribed to Durruti and the pursuit of his supposed legacy. The implication being that Durruti was, and would have been, as stark an advocate for CNT policy as the oficialistas. The second example is an article entitled 'We must win the war with our efforts, with our sacrifices' taken from Tierra y Libertad. The article's subject, pan-Republican cooperation, is treated as a duty, an obligation:

> We know that responsibility is for everyone. We join the effort. We organise or we impede economic efforts. We see reality face to face… We will increase our enthusiasm for the highest peaks of our sacrifice.[34]

Durruti's relevance to the article itself is minimal, yet he is evoked in the final line, as a means to add credibility: 'Whatever happens, our duty is as one. Durruti said: Tell the comrades to continue'.[35] This comment, placed at the end of the article to simply emphasise the argument, shows the use of Durruti's name solely as a tool to legitimise rhetoric.

Durruti's personality cult was altered to serve the political purpose of the CNT leadership. The cult retained charismatic authority through Durruti's continued presence in propaganda and public life. This charismatic authority was imbued with the political message of the CNT, 'We renounce everything except victory', a message that, due to its ideological transgressions, could not have been easily disseminated without the attachment of a popular figure. Put simply, the reputation that Durruti amassed whilst alive was later manipulated by the CNT leadership to serve their political ends.

Durruti's personality cult was also used by the revolutionary supporting faction of the anarchist movement, but not on as a wide scale as the official use. Durruti's funeral provided a public event where feelings regarding the 'hero of the people' were easily conveyed and hidden with difficulty, yet further shows were less prominent. This could be attributed to the revolutionary camp's closer adherence to anarchist doctrine and thereby a more pronounced aversion to cults of personality. However, the truth lay with the fact that with oficialista discipline instilled into *Solidaridad Obrera*, and most other anarchist newspapers following Conference of the Confederal and Anarchist Press on 28 March 1937, meant that opportunities for public manifestations

[32] *The Spanish Republic…*, p.277
[33] *Solidaridad Obrera*, 13 December 1936.
[34] *Tierra y Libertad*, 13 February 1937.
[35] *Tierra y Libertad*, 13 February 1937.

of the cult in favour of the revolution were less prevalent.[36] Nevertheless, an example of a prominent exponent of the revolutionary presentation of Durruti existed in the form of the Friends of Durruti group. This group, synonymous with revolutionary activity would match the oficialistas in the calculated use of Durruti's memory for political ends. Formed officially on its first meeting, 17 March 1937, the Friends of Durruti had been in existence as an ideological force since Jaime Balius wrote his final article Solidaridad Obrera article in December the previous year.[37] The group was constituted of anarchist militants, including Durruti's former *Nosotros* and *Los Solidarios* comrade Gregorio Jover, who were fundamentally opposed to anarchist participation in government, militarisation and propagated that the best means to answer the counter-revolution was to make revolution anew.[38] The *Poumista* Jordi Arquer would in 1971 describe the Friends of Durruti as 'a passing eruption, which at one point articulated the deepest feelings of the CNT membership'.[39] Although an overstatement of the influence of the group and its relevance to the entire movement, Arquer's view is not completely erroneous, as for a short period the Friends of Durruti would embody the beliefs of a disenfranchised section of the CNT. This was proven by the inability of the CNT leadership to expel the Friends of Durruti from the union due to rank and file opposition, they would eventually be expelled and made illegal following the 'May Days'.[40]

Balius' article for *Solidaridad Obrera*, 'The testament of Durruti' precipitated the Friends of Durruti ideal and lay a foundation for the group's interpretation of the legacy of Buenaventura Durruti and the use of the cult of personality as a political tool. The 'Friends of Durruti' would thus mimic the *oficialistas* in their institutionalisation of the cult but, due to inferior resources, on a far smaller scale. Balius would state that 'the testament of our mourned comrade is the revolutionary legacy that we must cultivate and put into practice' adding that 'Durruti bluntly stated that we anarchists require that the revolution be of a totalitarian nature'. This interpretation fit perfectly with the revolutionary program of the Friends of Durruti, portraying him as a model revolutionary protagonist and an advocate of the group's policies. In the same article Balius stressed that 'the memory of Durruti cannot be honoured only by the events of his funeral, however spectacular. What is of real interest is the fulfilment of his will, of the fulfilment of the anarchist revolution'.[41] Therefore in the article Balius argued that the only way to honour the memory of Durruti was by defending the revolution, a course of action that served his owned ideological interests. This dynamic would continue as Balius became editor of *La Noche*, an evening daily run by a cooperative of workers and outside of the Confederal press, therefore free of *oficialista* influence.[42] In his editorials for the paper Balius would continue to evoke the legacy and the importance of revolution, arguing that without subscription to Durruti's ideas there could be no loyalty to his memory. The ideas themselves were Balius' own interpretation of Durruti's rhetoric.[43]

Upon the official creation of the group the name was chosen to fit with the existing programme of the use of Durruti's personality cult as a means of propagating the Friends of Durruti's

[36] Casanova, *Anarchism…*, p. 123.

[37] Agustin Guillamón, *The Friends of Durruti Group: 1937–1939* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1996),; *Solidaridad Obrera*, 6 December 1936.

[38] A Manifesto of the movement appears in their newspaper, *El Amigo del Pueblo*, 22 June 1937.

[39] Cited in Guillamón, *The Friends…*, p.112.

[40] *Ibid*, p. 61; p. 73.

[41] *Solidaridad Obrera*, 6 December 1936.

[42] Guillamón, *The Friends…*, pp. 24–25.

[43] *La Noche*, 11 March 1937.

revolutionary ideals. Agustin Guillamón, in explaining the choice of name, states that it was to harness 'his heroic death and mythic status'.[44] The group's notice of inception was to highlight the attempt to utilise the name Durruti to the group's ideological advantage:

> At the instigation of a number of comrades of the anarchist Buenaventura Durruti, who knew how to end his life with those same yearnings for liberation that marked his whole personal trajectory, it has been adjudged appropriate that a group should be launched to keep alive the memory of the man who, by dint of his integrity and courage, was the very symbol of the revolutionary era.
>
> The 'Friends of Durruti' is not just another club. Our intention is that the Spanish Revolution should be filled with our Durruti's revolutionary spirit.[45]

In this statement the Friends of Durruti, through the invocation of Durruti's 'personal trajectory', referenced Durruti's pre-Civil War revolutionary career, the Durruti of 'revolutionary gymnastics'. The presentation of Durruti as an authentic anarchist, as opposed to Durruti as a symbol of the anarchist movement, permitted the fundamental anarchist Friends of Durruti group a means of affiliation to their eponym that excluded the official CNT. The newspaper of the Friends of Durruti, *El Amigo Del Pueblo*, which continued to be published intermittently until February 1938, for much of that time illegally, was in its early issues dominated by imagery and mentions of Durruti. The first number, published legally but heavily censored, on 19 May 1937 was dominated by imagery of Durruti. Its cover saw a red and black print of Durruti carrying the anarchist flag, under which read the legend 'Durruti is our guide! His flag is ours! Nobody will wrest it from us! It is ours!'.[46] The Friends of Durruti here laid exclusive claim to the memory of Durruti, stating that they alone carried the banner of Durruti's ideals. The Friends of Durruti, down to their eponymous name, appointed themselves as the moral guardians of Durruti's memory and the heirs to his revolutionary legacy. A legacy that predated the antifascist warrior celebrated in the official interpretation of the cult of personality and was more resonant with the cult forged while Durruti was still alive. The Durruti of the Friends of Durruti and the revolutionary faction of the CNT was therefore the paragon of revolutionary commitment.

The May Days brought the climax of the 'war versus revolution' debate as both sides took up arms on the streets of Barcelona and Catalonia. The event that sparked the conflict was the attempts of the Police, under the orders of the Catalan Communist Party (Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña, PSUC) to take control of the Barcelona telephone exchange which had been in anarchist hands since July.[47] Barricades were swiftly erected across Barcelona as the CNT's radical element attempted to protect the revolution by imposing its power on the streets. Described as an insurrection by Republican President Manuel Azaña, the May events were more of a spontaneous, pro-revolutionary protest without a clear political programme than a new revolution.[48] The conflict would come to a conclusion following radio addresses from Juan García Oliver and Federica Montseny for their comrades in the CNT to lay down their arms combined with the arrival of five thousand government troops and police from Valencia.[49] *Tierra y Libertad* would

[44] Guillamón, *The Friends…*, p. 36.
[45] *La Noche*, 2 March 1937.
[46] *El Amigo del Pueblo*, 19 May 1937.
[47] Bolloten, *The Spanish Revolution…*, p. 403.
[48] Casanova, *Anarchism…*, p. 146; Ealham, *Class…*, p. 193.
[49] Bolloten, *The Spanish Revolution…*, pp. 427–9; Graham, *The Spanish Republic…*, p. 271; p. 282.

the following day call for an end to all resistance from *cenetistas* in the name of 'proletarian unity, antifascist unity and friendship between all those who fight fascism'.[50] Although the 'May Days' were not a concerted effort to seize power they provided the PCE and its allies with an opportunity to crush the revolutionary elements within the Republic under the auspices of treacherous attempts of fifth columnists to undermine the war effort. A wave of repression would follow and the support of revolutionary ideology was made tantamount to treason. A decree of the 15 June made the Friends of Durruti and in the POUM illegal, denouncing them as 'crypto-fascist'.[51] The revolutionary movement was therefore defeated in its attempts to violently protect the gains of July and robbed of its meagre political representation, the Friends of Durruti and the POUM. Helen Graham best articulates the effect the May Days had on the anarchist movement:

> The meaning of the May Days was not… about 'breaking the CNT', per se – its leadership was already a willing part of the liberal Republican alliance. Rather it was about breaking the CNTs organisational solidarity in Barcelona in order to deprive its constituencies… of the mechanisms and political means of resisting the state.[52]

This meant that the 'revolutionary' cult of Durruti was robbed of its meaning. Without a revolution to fight for, a revolutionary Durruti was obsolete. *El Amigo del Pueblo* would continue to be published, but illegally and to a small readership. Its influence of anarchist public opinion would therefore be minimal to non-existent.

[50] Tierra y Libertad, 8 May 1937.

[51] Antoni Castells Duran, 'Revolution and collectivisations in Civil War Barcelona, 1936–9', in *Red Barcelona – Social protest and labour mobilization in the twentieth century*, ed. Ángel Smith (Routledge: London, 2002),p.132; Kern, *Red Years/Black Years*, p. 230; Bolloten, *The Spanish Revolution*, p. 455.

[52] Helen Graham, ''Against the State': A Genealogy of the Barcelona May Days', *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No.4 (1999), p. 531.

Conclusion

Both the *oficialistas* and the revolutionaries used the memory of Durruti for their own political purposes. Their claims to be honouring Durruti's legacy were not genuine, merely a means of utilising the charismatic authority that Durruti's faultless reputation maintained following his death. The period of November 1936 to June 1937 saw, through the 'routinisation' of the cult along certain political lines, two cults of Durruti arise, each honouring the individual but presenting two very different charismatic figures. Alon Confino, when discussing collective memories, asks why some succeed when others fail.[1] Confino proffers that the historian must consider 'the full spectrum of artefacts', essentially the context, surrounding the memories on offer.[2] The context that led to the prominence of the official cult is clear: of the two memories on offer, the revolutionary interpretation, due to the resolution of the political situation that it was utilised in, became untenable. The aims of the revolutionary cult were no longer conceivable due to the failure of the revolutionary movement and the subsequent repression of the groups responsible for its propagation. The conclusion of this is clear; due to the May events, the *oficialistas* became the sole guardians of the memory of Durruti and their political stance of collaboration became Durruti's only legacy. The cult would therefore take on a new significance following the 'May Days', as a means of unification for the movement following the resolution of the 'war versus revolution' debate and as a symbol of the CNT's commitment to the Republican cause.

[1] Alon Confino, 'Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method', *The American Historical Review*, Vol.102 No.5 (Dec 1997), p.1387.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 1391.

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The Rival Durrutis
The Posthumous Cult of Personality of Buenaventura Durruti, November, 1936 – June, 1937
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This is an extract from a Master's thesis submitted in August 2009, the thesis was concerned with the posthumous cult of personality of Buenaventura Durruti during the Spanish Civil War and detailed the rise of the living cult and the perpetuation of the cult following the subject's death. This extract details the cult in the period November 1936 to June 1937.

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