

But we know that work is a lot more productive when the land is worked in common. If ten small-holders were to abolish the boundaries between their fields, they could use modern machinery that would reduce the exertions required of them. On the other hand, the individual small-holder cannot afford such machinery and has to labour mightily to bring in his harvest. And his isolation leaves him defenceless in a bad year. There is work that, unlike wheat and cereal crops, does not require farm machinery; for instance, there is market gardening. Here too, joint production produces outstanding results. On the outskirts of the great cities of Europe there are three or four harvests per year, thanks to this form of farming. But it requires special piping, heating, green-housing and wintering equipment; it requires the use of special chemicals, too dear for the individual peasant to afford. The only ones who can utilize them are those who operate as collectives, or landowners who exploit eight, ten or more workers. In order to cut back on your exertions, or to ensure that you produce is at least doubled, you must, comrade peasants, work the land in common. Which does not mean that we want to impose this by force. Anybody who says that we do is a liar. We know that, over time, as they see the improvement in results, those who start out as doubters will later be won over. But we would caution you, comrades, against those who want to add to the existing number of small-holdings and who tell you that small-holdings are a necessity. They do this in order to turn you against us, so that division between the rural workers and urban workers protects them from a concerted backlash against those who keep them in wretchedness. We have no desire to forcibly wrest his land from the small-holder, but we say to him: "Small-holding renders farm machinery purchase, or, once bought, payments on it, impossible; it prevents proper improvements to the working of the land. And thereby keeps and will always keep the peasant owner in poverty. Property keeps the peasant at the mercy of the rich man who buys up his land for nothing in times of bad harvests. It makes him the victim of the middle-man who pays him nothing for his produce. Whoever advocates this practices wretched deception against the peasant. You should shun him as a liar, a hypocrite and a traitor.

ALL TOGETHER, COMRADE

All together, comrade, we shall build a workers' world. But it will belong to real workers, the sort who use hoe

or hammer, file or axe, pick or shovel, who man the plough and the tractor. All together, comrades, we shall do away with poverty, so that our children may be strangers to shortages of food, clothing, care and education. All together, comrades, we shall prevent the return of the landlord, the owner of the land that you work, the collector of pointless taxes, the thieving middle-man. Workers and peasants together, in the CNT and in the FAI, let us set out to free ourselves forever and let us seek the triumph of justice, equality and happiness in a world redeemed and organised on our own account and to meet our needs. If this strikes you as right, comrades, join our ranks. We are waiting for you.

This is a translation of a CNT-FAI pamphlet approved at the December 6, 1936 Regional Plenum of the FAI for distribution to Spanish peasants unfamiliar with the CNT-FAI, in order to assure them that the CNT-FAI was opposed to the forced collectivisation of the land, but also to convince them of the benefits of libertarian communism. It was intended to be included in Chapter 25, "The Spanish Revolution," in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300CE-1939)* by Robert Graham.

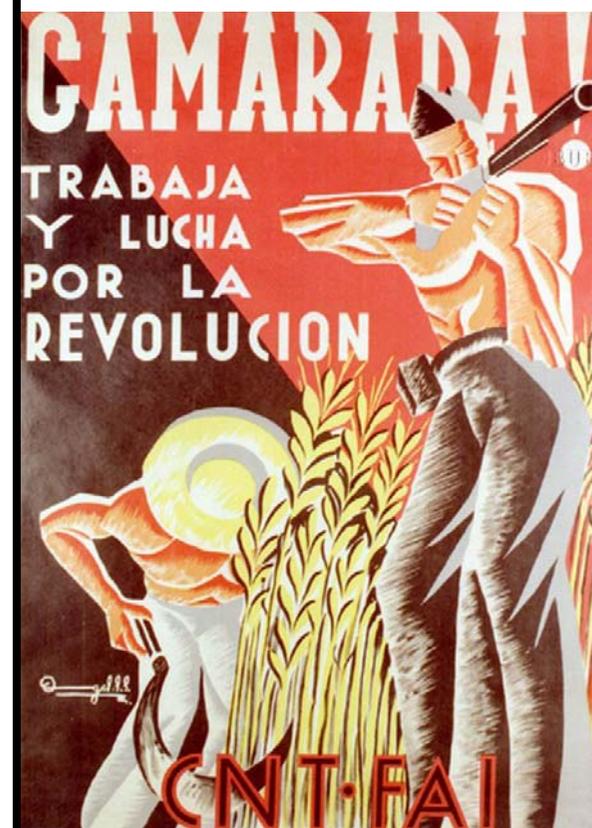
The translation is by Paul Sharkey.

Source: Robert Graham's Anarchism Weblog
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COMRADE PEASANT, LISTEN!



CNT-FAI

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WHO WE ARE

The National Confederation of Labour (CNT) and Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) address you. Both are made up of urban and rural workers, by workers and peasants who, like yourself, work for their poor fare and would like to live better. Of workers, and no one else. In our ranks you will not find folk who live off somebody else's labours - property-owners, capitalists, rentiers or bourgeois who purloin the fruits of another man's sweat. You and we, we and you like are members of the same family as all who produce all of the wherewithal of life and who have always, thus far, seen those who did nothing living a life of luxury and wallowing in everything while we lack life's necessities. The time has come for this to end. Listen, comrade, to what we, the peasants and workers of the CNT and FAI have to say to you.

YOUR LIFE

Your parents, your grandparents, your forebears worked on the land and made it ready for cultivation. Can you still remember them, with hoe or pitchfork in their hands? You too labour as they did. And your children will labour, as you do.

Who benefited from that toil by your forebears, your grandparents, your parents? Whom does yours profit? And tomorrow, who will benefit from your childrens', unless things change? The boss, the landlord, the proprietor. The State and the whole bureaucracy that oppress us with their levies and taxes. The middle-man

who traffics in the fruits of your labour. You hand over thirty or forty per cent of your crops to the landlord. You pay very heavy taxes to the tax-collector. The middle-man charges a hundred pesetas for what he bought from you at fifty.

The fact is that right now, thanks to the revolution made by the CNT and the FAI, this has eased or stopped for a while. But that pause will be a fleeting one unless you make up your mind to join with us to ensure that the landowners, tax-collectors and middle-men cannot gain the upper hand again. When the wheat, rice, potato, orange, grape or any other harvest is good, instead of your benefiting from this, as ought to be the case, you are worse off, because, on the pretext of a glut, they pay you such a poor return that you get no reward and you are denied what you need to live. When the harvest is a poor one, you have little to sell and earn little. Everything backfires, everything works against you, the way things are organised. But the landlord carries on living the high life, the State gets its taxes and the middle-man carries on trading. Does this seem fair to you? Is it the truth or not?

WHAT WE WANT

We of the CNT and FAI want to see these injustices ended. We want to prevent others from being masters of the land that you work. We want to stop others from living off your exertions by depriving you of twenty, thirty or forty per cent of your harvests. We want an end to a situation whereby there are the rich who do nothing alongside so many of the poor who labour.

Let's look at something familiar to you. Say there is a cold snap, or a drought and a crop is destroyed. As you well know, this is a frequent occurrence. The peasants hit by it are left penniless and facing a year of wretchedness, hunger or scarcity. Is that reasonable? Is the fault theirs? Is it your fault if the rain stops falling, if there is an unexpected cold snap, killing the buds on the trees, or if a blight wipes out your cereal crops? Yes or no? And, that being the case, why should you and your family have to be denied the means to exist which can be found elsewhere, when these are sometimes wrested from you, leaving you short? We want an end to all this. Should you be unable to market as much produce one year as you did the year before, because of the vagaries of nature, we want you to have the same access to what you need, provided, of course, that it can be drawn in from other parts. We know the circum-

stances in which you too would be prepared to send your produce to other peasant victims of cold snaps, drought or blight. So, in addition to doing away with those who exploit other people's labours, those who grow rich on it, we want to establish a society in which all men live in fellowship, where no one goes hungry, where everyone is ready to help anyone in need and gets such help whenever required too. This is what the CNT and the FAI stand for.

HOW IS THIS TO BE BROUGHT ABOUT?

Now let us explain to you how we mean to organise all this. We want to do it without politicians, without bureaucracy, without parliament. The world should belong to the workers. We, you and we, labour in the fields, the factories, the mines. We must look to organising ourselves, on our own account, in our unions and our communes. Workers' associations are all that we need. Everything else is a nursery for parasites. Some peasants produce olives and grapes. Others produce rice, or wheat, or oranges. The olive- and grape-growers form one association, the rice-, vegetable-, wheat- and orange-growers another. Along with the other peasants belonging to your federation, you ship your produce to others. They send you theirs. You ship your produce to the cities. The workers in the cities in return send you clothing, footwear, furniture, tools machinery, wireless sets, etc. Is that hard? Certainly not. It merely requires determination to do it and you need only join with us in this work of emancipation and it will be accomplished in very little time.

SMALL-HOLDING

Those who seek to keep you impoverished so that they can live off you argue that we want to strip the rural small-holder of his land. That is a strategem to ensure that you do not join with those who are pointing the way ahead. We want to take the land from him who does not work it. We want to take it from him who has more than he can cultivate. We know that most of the rural small-holders would be a lot better off if society was fairer. WE understand your love of the land which supplies you with the wherewithal for living. For these reasons, we cannot target the small-holder.