

### **Barcelona, 1937**

In May 1937 festering differences between factions of the Popular front came violently to a head. The dispute essentially rested on two opposing beliefs; the first, put forward by the Communists, the right-wing of the Socialist Party, and the bourgeois Republican politicians was that the first priority was to win the war, thus the revolution should be put on hold. The alternative view, expounded by the Anarchists and the Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista (POUM), was that this was a revolutionary war, that war and revolution were inseparable, that it was the actions of the working classes on the streets of Madrid and Barcelona that had countered the rising.

By the spring of 1937 Communists, Republicans and reformist Socialists were taking command of the political and military structures of the Republic, at the expense of the Socialist left, the anarchists and the POUM. Accusations by the quasi-Trotskyist POUM that the PCE had betrayed the Spanish revolution ensured the particular hatred of the Communists, who denounced the POUM as fascist spies and Trotskyist agents and called for their extermination.

On May 3rd, the PSUC police commissioner for Catalonia ordered a raid on the CNT-controlled central telephone exchange. This led to the outbreak of street-fighting between the CNT, the POUM, on one side and the Communists on the other. After several days fighting, the CNT leadership- aware that the fighting risked losing the war for the Republic- ordered its militants to lay down their arms. This gave the Spanish communists the excuse they needed to crush the POUM, and in the ensuing crackdown the POUM leader, Andres Nin, was imprisoned, tortured and brutally murdered.