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L'Espagne Nouvelle

Durruti on the militarisation decree

November 1936

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Forced to choose between submitting to the new law or laying down their arms and leaving the militias, most of the fighters will refuse to do either. They believe that either option would be destructive to the revolution that they intend to carry forward, regardless of the orders received. But it's a blow to the militiamen's fighting spirit. The Durruti Column decided to feign ignorance of the new regulations, although it did institute some of their positive aspects and, by doing so, protected itself from charges of indiscipline. This demonstrates Durruti's personal realism as well as his moral influence on the men in his Column and the country. His peasant slyness is evident in his obstinate and astute responses to our questions:

"Is it true that they're going to reestablish the old army Military Code and hierarchy of command in the militias?"

"No! That's not how things are. Some conscripts have been mobilized and the single command has been instituted. The discipline necessary for street battles wasn't enough for a long and hard mil-

itary campaign against a well-equipped, modern army. We had to overcome that deficiency.”

“What does the re-enforcement of discipline mean exactly?”

“Up to now, we had a large number of units, each with their own leaders and forces (which varied radically from one day to the next), with their own armory, transport, supply, a distinct policy toward rearguard inhabitants, and often a very unique way of seeing the war. That had to stop. Some corrections have been made and surely others will follow.”

“But the ranks, military salutes, punishments, and rewards?”

“We don’t need any of that. Here we are anarchists.”

“Hasn’t a recent decree from Madrid put the old Military Code of Justice into effect?”

“Yes, and the government’s decision has had a deplorable effect. They have absolutely no sense of reality. The spirit of that decree totally contradicts the sentiment among the militiamen. We’re very conciliatory, but we know that those two ways of approaching the struggle can’t coexist.”

“If the war is prolonged, do you think that militarism could stabilize itself and put the revolution in danger?”

“Well, that’s exactly why we have to win the war as soon as possible!”

With this reply, comrade Durruti smiles at us and we shake hands.