

Half a century of parliamentarism

Anselmo Lorenzo

1886

When the French Revolution took place and liberal ideas came to Spain along with the invading armies, the enlightened youth enthusiastically accepted those ideas aimed at regenerating Spanish society, which had already reached the extreme decadence as a natural consequence of absolutism.

That youth understood that, by destroying the old political regime, it was necessary to open new paths to achieve a political-social transformation in accordance with an ideal of justice, and adopted parliamentarism and called itself progressive.

Parliamentarism, therefore, had to be an interim regime that satisfied the double objective of meeting the conditions and demands of practical life and gradually developing future reforms; it was conservative, because it allowed the good of the past to subsist; positivist, because it attended to the needs of the present; progressive, because it accepted and proposed the theoretical progress developed by thought.

There were many political vicissitudes: those who were obstinate and interested in the old created all kinds of difficulties, ranging from intrigue to bloody civil war, and the progressives, who assumed the great responsibility of facilitating the work of progress, stagnated in the most repugnant doctrinarism and tried to perpetuate the country in irrational political formulas that, far from being inspired by generous and scientific ideals, only obeyed the petty interests of the different leaders of the liberal parties.

The political constitutions, although responding to such poor ends, were far from achieving the perpetuity that their authors dreamed of; that is why we see that in little more than half a century of parliamentarism the following Constitutions have been drawn up in Spain: that of 1812, restored in 1820 and 1836; the one of 1837, the one of 1845, the one of 1855, the one of 1869, the one of 1873 and the one of 1876 in force today. We have not caught up with the French in this, who from 1789 to the present have promulgated 16 Constitutions.

Those who declared that the nation was not the patrimony of the monarch were ahead of their time; those who decreed the disentailment for the benefit of the middle class were accredited as cautious; those who want to perpetuate the salary within the future republic, promising that the republic will guarantee the fair amount of salaries, are already living outside the century.

Because that is the bourgeoisie: in the beginning, enthusiastic, it sacrifices itself for freedom; in the middle, selfish, it takes advantage of the benefits of the revolution, and in the end, hypocritical, it wants to perpetuate its privileges by distracting the workers with fantastic ideals.

Parallel to the political development of the bourgeoisie, militarism has developed, which has given our country a special fame and which alternately serves the revolution to corrupt it and the reaction to weaken it.

Now that the latest events give us the opportunity, let us reproduce, taken from Garibaldi, a liberal history of the 19th century, the list of pronouncements made in the last seventy years:

In 1814, upon the return of Ferdinand VII from exile, the military chief of Tarragona proclaimed Ferdinand absolute king.

In the same year, General Mina attempted a military uprising to restore the Constitution.

Shortly afterwards, Generals Lacy and Porlier followed suit, who, unlucky, paid for their defeat with their lives.

At the beginning of 1820, Riego, Quiroga, Arco Agüero, López Baños, with several battalions, revolted in the province of Cadiz, and O'Donnell, Count of Abisbal, in charge of pursuing them, joined the movement by revolting in Ocaña with his entire division.

The royal guard revolted in Madrid on July 7, 1822, to reestablish despotism.

In 1824, Besieres, with four companies of the Santiago regiment, spoke out against Ferdinand VII, accusing him of being a freemason and an accomplice of the liberals, because he did not want to reestablish the odious tribunal of the Inquisition.

Valdés, Manzanares, Torrijos, Vidal, Márquez, Chapalangarra, Milans, Mina, all army chiefs, and many others, promoted uprisings during the last ten years of the reign of Ferdinand VII, and with the exception of the last two, all perished on the battlefield or on the scaffold.

At that time the marine infantry forces of La Carraca also revolted, and the governor was assassinated.

As soon as Ferdinand VII died, General D. Santos Ladrón inaugurated the Carlist rebellion, being shot dead after the defeat in the fields of Old Castile. Despite such an unfortunate end, his example was followed by Generals Moreno, Eguía, Jáuregui, the Count of Spain, Lieutenant Colonel Zumalacárregui and many others.

In 1835, D. Cayetano Cardero revolted in Madrid with a battalion of the second light infantry regiment to reestablish the Constitution of 1812.

Shortly afterwards, the Army of the North also spoke out, proclaiming the same Constitution.

In 1837, three thousand men of the royal guard, led by three sergeants, revolted in La Granja, forcing Queen Cristina to swear allegiance to the Constitution of 1812.

In 1838, Generals Córdova and Narváez attempted a sedition in Seville, which failed, forcing them to emigrate: the former died in emigration.

In 1840, the armies assembled under the command of Espartero supported the uprising initiated by the Madrid City Council.

A year later, Generals Concha, O'Donnell, León and Borso di Carminati led a military sedition in Pamplona, Zaragoza and Madrid, to overthrow the progressives, led by Espartero, from power.

In 1843, Prim, Ortega, Serrano, Narváez, Concha, Figueras, Lara, Aspiroz and many other leaders, some alone and most of them at the head of the forces under their command, led the insurrection that overthrew the regent.

That same year, Ametller, Martell, Bellera, Baiges, Par, Herbella and several others, rose up in Catalonia at the head of several battalions, proclaiming the Central Junta.

Captain D. José Ordax Avecilla supported the movement in León, and other leaders and officers took a very active part in the movements in Vigo and Zaragoza.

At the beginning of 1844, Colonel Boné spoke out in Alicante against moderate domination, supported in Cartagena by Generals Santa Cruz and Ruiz. Colonel Boné and more than twenty leaders of the extinct national militia were shot: the rebels of Cartagena emigrated to Algeria.

A few months later, Zurbano and his sons were shot, as a result of an aborted conspiracy.

In 1846, almost the entire garrison of Galicia revolted under the orders of Brigadiers Solís and Rubín de Celis, and General Iriarte also supported them in Old Castile.

In 1848, the two Ametllers and Bellera renewed the civil war in Catalonia.

In May of the same year, Commander Buceta revolted in Madrid with the regiment of Spain, and in July Commanders Portal and Gutiérrez rose up in Seville with a battalion and three cavalry squadrons, being forced to emigrate to Portugal.

At the beginning of 1854, Brigadier Hore rebelled in Zaragoza at the head of his regiment, and was killed because other committed commanders refused to keep their word.

In June of the same year, Generals Dulce, O'Donnell, Messina, Ros de Olano, Echagüe and Serrano, at the head of the Prince's regiment and two thousand horses, rebelled in Campo de Guardias, Madrid. A few days later, Colonel Manso de Zúñiga in Barcelona, and La Roche, captain general of the Principality with his entire garrison, supported this movement, which the entire army joined before the end of July.

In 1855, Commander Corrales raised two squadrons in Zaragoza, leading them out of the city proclaiming Carlos VI, dying shortly after, shot and his troops dispersed.

In July 1856, General Ruiz, commander-in-chief of the province of Gerona, revolted with the troops under his command against the O'Donnell-Ríos Rosas cabinet: the captain general of Galicia did the same; the captain general of Aragon revolted in Zaragoza; General Gurrea led the insurrection in Logroño, and the regiment of Aragon with its colonel at the head supported the movement.

In July 1859, military uprisings aimed at proclaiming the republic were discovered in Alicante, Seville and Olivenza, just as they were about to break out.

In 1860, General Ortega, captain general of the Balearic Islands, with more than three thousand men, showed up in San Carlos de la Rápita with the aim of proclaiming Carlos VI, abandoning his troops and being shot dead in Tortosa.

On January 3, 1866, Prim revolted in Alcalá at the head of the cavalry regiments of Bailén and Calatrava, and was forced to take refuge in Portugal.

On June 22 of the same year, the famous insurrection of the artillerymen of the San Gil barracks in Madrid took place.

In September 1868, the September Revolution was initiated in Cadiz by the navy and the garrison of the square, which brought down the secular Spanish monarchy.

On January 3, 1874, the captain general of Madrid, at the head of the garrison, rebelled against the republic and dissolved the Constituent Cortes.

In December 1874, General Martínez Campos, in Sagunto, proclaimed Alfonso XII.

During the restoration, the uprisings of Badajoz and Santo Domingo de la Calzada took place, as did the tragic attempts of Captain Mangado and the shootings of Ferrándiz and Bellés; now, during the time of the regency, Madrid has just witnessed the uprising of part of two regiments proclaiming the republic.

Throughout the century, the bourgeoisie has not ceased to commit blunders from power and to agitate in the club and in the barracks when it has found itself in opposition.

Meanwhile, the country has lived and continues to live in constant turmoil, wavering like someone who lacks a true path, one day lavishing its praise on the hero of fortune and then confusing with its anathema the one who ends up discovering under the tinsel of popularity the most vulgar ambition.

Seventy years of interim rule spent in conspiracies, pronouncements, programs, speeches, riots, dictatorships, civil war accuse the bourgeoisie of being incapable, which has not known how in so long to replace with a regime of peace and progress the absolute regime buried with the corpse of Ferdinand VII.

The working people, who yearn to live and work free of exploiters and mandarins, deny the bourgeoisie that has subjected them to capitalism in times of peace, and that has led them and still tries to lead them to the barricades when they cannot control the excessive ambition that devours them; It also renounces militarism, its accomplice, whose principal glories consist in having shed Spanish blood in alternative and even periodic defense of reaction and revolution, but with the sole purpose of providing itself with stripes and braid. In the revolutionary concept, the army is like the moneylender, who gets out of a tight spot on condition of creating bigger ones later. Militarism is to the nation what usury is to the individual. This is what is prepared for the people, both by those who want a lot of infantry, a lot of cavalry and a lot of artillery, as well as by those who never stop practicing bribery.

The working people have their own ideals, and today, by grouping themselves together as a social class outside and opposed to all bourgeois political parties, they are the only hope for progress, whose formula is: abolition of all exploitation and all government, and universalization of the universal patrimony.

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