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Salvador Gurucharri aka Salva, Comrade and Friend

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16 May 2014

Paying homage to a person is not the done thing among anarchists. Not just because of the allergy to ritual but also because we prefer our dealings with whomsoever we come into contact with to be between equals. Despite that, every time some comrade, male or female, leaves us, we feel slightly orphaned and it is only natural that we should express this and want to share our grief at the loss and the memory of what that absent comrade or friend means to us. The memory is a pretty distant one, but it is almost always bound up with the fight to which anarchists committed themselves, from whatever their circumstances happened to be at the time.

Salvador Gurruchari is a case in point; to us, he was just *Salva*, ever since life's vagaries and the fight against the Francoist dictatorship brought us into contact at the beginning of the 60s of what is now "last" century. He was one of our own

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As has been recalled lately, it was in 1956 that Salva joined the London branches of the CNT and FIJL. From then on, he was an activist, so it will come as no surprise that he

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was actively involved in the CNT reunification process that culminated in the congress held in September 1961 in Limoges (France) at which it was resolved that an agency to combat the Francoist dictatorship would be set up. That secret agency eventually came to be known as Defensa Interior (DI).

The reason we met up in London a few days later was that we both backed the resolutions passed at the congress, which the FIJL had embraced as its own, especially with regard to the DI, for which the youth organisation had been lobbying for some years.

What followed has been recounted from a range of viewpoints since. I will say only that the connection with Salva as well as with other young FIJL comrades, male and female, was crucial in my decision to agree to engage with the DI, my departure from Mexico and my incorporation into that “secret” agency in March 1962. I say ‘crucial’ not just because they all displayed the same enthusiasm, but also the same appetite for a fight. In Salva’s case, there was also his preparedness to quit England to join the clandestine fight against the Franco regime from France. This was also the case with another young comrade, Floreal Ocaña (aka *Florico*), who was then based in Mexico. And so, over that spring we would meet up and began to share in the ups and downs of the clandestine anti-Franco struggle together with all the other comrades from the FIJL, FAI and CNT who supported the operations of the DI. During that period of active struggle, Salva was involved as FIJL secretary on the MLE (Spanish Libertarian Movement) Defence Commission, an umbrella for the CNT, FAI and FIJL, and in August 1963 he was arrested during a massive swoop by the French authorities on libertarian circles in the wake of the [Francoist] executions of young libertarians Joaquin Delgado and Francisco Granado.

The DI was effectively wound up following the October 1963 CNT congress in Toulouse and the situation in France was becoming ever more difficult for young libertarians, so in

1965 Salva and Antonio Ros moved to Brussels to run the FIJL's Delegation Abroad from there. From then on that Delegation played an important part in the operations mounted by the FIJL against the Franco regime – under the “First of May Group” flag – up until the events in Paris in May 1968 which, in a way, led to the winding-up of the FIJL towards the end of that year.

Following Franco's death in 1975, Salva decided to return to Spain, his mind and heart set on lending a hand in the process of rebuilding the CNT and Libertarian Movement in general. He was unable to make any headway until 1976 and, as has been stated elsewhere, he aligned himself with the “official” sector, although he did not take part in the divisive Vth Congress. In the 1990s he was active in the “*deconfederada*” (de-confederated) CNT of Catalonia and ran *Solidaridad Obrera* up until 1999.

His commitment to militant activity left him scarcely any time to write; writing and reading were his passions. Be that as it may, he produced an interesting *Bibliography of Spanish Anarchism 1869–1975: Notes towards a Reasoned Bibliography*, published (in Spanish) by Ediciones Rosa de Foc in Barcelona in 2004. And, together with Tomás Ibañez, he co-wrote the book *Libertarian Insurgency. The Libertarian Youth in the Fight against Francoism* (in Spanish, Editorial Virus, 2011). In that book he and Tomás, relying upon precious documentary evidence, describe the Libertarian Youth's contribution to the fight against Francoism from the beginning of the 1960s up until the FIJL was disbanded in 1968. The book has been translated into French and published by Editions Acracia in 2012.

My most recent memory of Salva dates from December 2011 when Ariane and I met up with Tomás and him at the Anarchist Book Fair in Madrid, at which the four of us took part in the launch of his book *Insurgencia Libertaria* at that event, the organisers of which used it as the launch-pad for a discussion on the subject of “Reflections for the Present”.

We knew that Salva had moved to Gerona some time ago and it was there that his journey ended. I received the news first from Tomás and then confirmation from his son, Félix. For health reasons we ourselves were unable to attend his funeral (the years are beginning to exact a heavy toll). May these few lines serve to remind us all of a cherished comrade and friend.

[Original titles of works mentioned:

Bibliografía del anarquismo español 1869–1975. Barcelona : Librería la Rosa de Foc, 2004.

Insurgencia libertaria : las juventudes libertarias en la lucha contra el franquismo. Barcelona : Virus, 2010.

Une résurgence anarchiste : les jeunesses libertaires dans la lutte contre le franquisme : la FIJL dans les années 1960. La Bussière (Vienne) : Acratie, impr. 2012.]