

The Anarchist Movement and the Origins of the Argentinian Libertarian Federation

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First Stage of the Libertarian Movement (1890-1930)

The anarchists do not wait for a theoretical maturity of the times or for a certain evolution before acting, because they know that action is in itself what better ripens both evolution and times.

The anarchist argentinian movement, born in the second half of the nineteenth century, grew steadily for many decades. The creation of "cultural groups," "libraries," "philodramatic companies," "schools" and the Federación Obrera (Worker's Federation), made of it the expression of wide sections of the working people. Thousands of immigrants and american natives, with their voice silenced, subjected to days on end of degrading labor, crammed in overcrowded habitation, found in this movement a space of vindication. For them mankind is not redeemed on heaven, but here, sharing the banquet of life, with no other authority but freedom, no hierarchies and no bosses. In this way they evolved creating their own answers, developing an alternative cultural movement, winning victories in the work place. We can but remember Enrico Malatesta's visit in the 1880's or that of Pietro Gori, in 1900, with his conferences all over the country and his lectures at the Faculty of Law : both give vitality and unity to the local movement .

But it is in April of 1902 when anarchism starts shedding its brighter light. It is in this date when the socialist delegates leave the FOA. This sets the stage for the creation of the Federacion Obrera Regional Argentina (FORA) [Argentinian Regional Worker's Federation], which grows very quickly to become the strongest group in between the working class. At the same time, on the 23 rd of November the argentinian state passes its "Ley de Residencia" (Bill of Residence), a law specially designed against the anarchists. This subjects them to hundreds of arrests and deportations. This "Orden Conservador" [Conservative Order] does not cease in its persecutions, regardless of which, on the 7th of November 1903, "La Protesta" [The Protest] is born. It was the biggest anarchist argentinian newspaper and one of the most important in the world. Anarchism doesn't stop growing, having a prime role in all the social conflicts and popular struggles of that first decade of the century. The reports of the huge street rallies show a real mass movement. The leading classes could not ignore the constant pressure and in 1904, the home secretary, Joaquin, V. Gonzalez, raises a bill to congress to limit the working hours to eight a day and to sanction some other worker's demands; but faced with the opposition of the businessmen it didn't pass. In 1907 the congress creates the Labor department, a new attempt to control a working class movement which is questioning the status quo.

Meanwhile, in 1905, FORA has had its fifth Congress, in which it adopts "Libertarian Communism" as its aim. It is not only the worker's movement which is strengthened in FORA, but many other diverse experiences are carried out on cultural issues, such as the creation of rationalist schools, fostered by Julio Barcos. In 1910, "La Protesta" is reaching its peak, becoming the only anarchist diary in the world to have also an evening edition: "La Batalla" [The Battle]. But this will prove short lived, though. While in 1904 Joaquin V. Gonzalez's progressive proposal had been quickly vetoed, now the Congress passes a new repressive bill, in just under 48 hours: the "Ley de defensa Social" [Law of Social Defense]. This leads to the closure of the libertarian dailies and the persecution, arrest and deportation of many militants.

All the 1900 decade is one of growth, struggles, birth of new projects and internal debate for the anarchist movement. Under its principles of freedom, opposition to authority and hierarchy in any form, and the promotion of equality between men, many different ways and expressions

are sheltered. These differences can be traced across the many publications of the time and, even if it is true that "La protesta" becomes the privileged speaker for the movement, other groups with a different approach to reality, with a different position regarding the worker's movement and organization, have a vocal of their own. This adds up to a big libertarian span which does not divide forces but, on the contrary, widens the offer and allows the movement to reach to broader parts of society.

How can the influence of the libertarian movement be measured in each historical period?

This difficult question refers to other wider one. What is the influence of the social struggles, altogether, in the unfolding of history, in the construction of an everyday reality?

William Morris can point us towards an answer when he says that " ...I studied all these things, and how men fight and lose the battle, and then that which they fought for happens, regardless of their defeat, and when it arrives, is different to what they intended and does it under another name."

This ambitious question that I have posed, which has worried many important theoreticians, carries in itself a debate and a task. Without trying to answer it here, I do believe that it must be always present, and kept as a guide for every research. If we limit our scope to the first decade of the century, we'll see that the anarchism is, at the least, the origin of many projects, representing big popular groups, with a Federacion Obrera [Worker's Federation] more powerful than the socialist UGT, carrying out struggles which do not allow the state to disregard the social question.

To what extent did the anarchist relentless attitude help to bring about the fall of the Orden Conservador and the beginning of representative politics? Without pretending it, alien to parliamentary dealings and unwilling of bourgeois policy, it cornered the old form of state into opening to include new sectors so to present itself as everyone's representative. So it would take into account the new voices, so it would recognize this new talking, shouting and demanding subject, which language was made from the libertarian movement. But before opening this space the state had to take the identity away from these new sectors. It had to give not the demanded equality, but an illusion of it; it had to "make" argentinian citizens. Against the conservative state were not only the anarchists, also radicals and socialists had their qualms. But it is not possible to deny anarchists' relevance in the country's political life. May be we can quote again W. Morris' sentence, since the anarchists did not fight for political aperturism, as they did not put any faith in parliamentarism, regardless of which they might have contributed to bring about the new representative scenario, a concession made by the repressive state to keep its hegemony.

For some historians, the Saenz Peña Bill, which decrees universal suffrage, marks the end of the political influence of anarchism. Also on the social and cultural areas its field of action shrank greatly, due to the changes in the social structure: the new leisure offered to the popular classes (football, cinema), the modification of the urban environment (the increase in the distance between living areas and working centers), and the aggressive campaign of argentinization of the state (patriotic symbols, lengthening of the primary school, compulsory military service). The state and the capitalist economy spread and penetrated those areas which they had not been able to reach until then. The worker's movement, as well, felt the new political reality with a president (Hipolito Yrigoyen), chosen by universal, secret and compulsory suffrage. Direct action, as the tactic for the struggle, might not have lacked a point, but it did lack representation in many popular sectors, as the new mechanisms for negotiation spread from the state.

We can not explain the loose of relevance of the argentinian anarchism, from 1910 onwards, only by the fierce repression unleashed: raids, deportations, shootings and prison sentences for

thousands of people. But we can not blame it only, either, on the opening of political representation, on the changes in the social habits of the population or on the transformation that the national productive system was undergoing at the time. Even less can we credit the marxist point of view which has identified anarchism with a kind of under evolved worker, vestige of precapitalistic societies in the verge of extinction. May be all the explanations mentioned (apart from this last one) can contribute to explain the decline of a movement. But we can still be confident in saying that anarchism had not disappeared at all. And it will show all its vitality in the two following decades, up to the second libertarian stage, with which we are concerned now and were we find the origins of the Federacion Libertaria Argentina in the decade of 1930.

If in the beginning the debate was focused around the adoption of individualism, collectivism or libertarian communism, historical developments will bring to the fore new lines of discussion. The closed state, alien and simply a representative of the powerful was opening up, even if this was only a tactical retreat of the ruling class to a less visible but more effective control. The political scene was changing and many thought that their strategies should do it as well. This is how the split in FORA happens, in the ninth congress of 1915, when it removes, by 46 votes against 14, the definition of "libertarian communism" as its finality and declares itself against the adoption of any particular philosophical system or ideology. The smaller faction will name itself FORA V Congress, and will assert the same principles as it had before. Regardless of the relevance of a unionist point of view in the new FORA IX, we can find in it many members who adhere to and have been formed in anarchism. Its slogans still call for "revolutionary class struggle" and the "revolutionary general strike" even when its successor, the Union Sindical Argentina [Argentinian Sindicalist Union], came to life in 1922. It is generally thought of this group as having a purely unionist position. However it kept a strong anarchist influence, or more precisely anarchist-bolshevist, with the ALA (Alianza Libertaria Argentina) keeping control of it in a similar way as to what the Iberian FAI did on the spanish CNT. The origins of ALA can be traced to the first regional anarchist congress of Buenos Aires in October 1922. It brought together 84 national groups, 2 foreign ones and 40 individuals, with the anarcho-bolshevist being excluded. These held their own congress with 60 delegates from 8 groups from the capital and 9 from the interior of the country. In this the ALA was constituted, on the 23 rd of January 1923 in Buenos Aires. As soon as on the 3 rd of April they started publishing their official publication, "El libertario," which will carry on until 1932, with a total of 109 issues.

The debates were both bitter and intense between the two currents, as can be seen from the mutual accusations in "La Protesta" and "El Trabajo" [The work], later on "Union Sindical" and even later on "Bandera Proletaria" [Proletarian Flag]. But from 1917, the russian revolution became yet another issue to divide the anarchist movement. The original support and expectation produced by the rising of the russian people against the tyrannical oppression of many centuries will develop into groups critical of the revolution, mainly by the murder of anarchists in Kronstadt at the hands of the red army led by Trotsky, while others will support the construction of the USSR at any cost. This debate happens in all the publications of the time and is graphically portrayed in "La Protesta," "El Trabajo" and "Bandera Roja" [Red Flag]. With the years this divide will heal, but by the time the soviet state is recognized to have lost all its revolutionary spirit and the anarchists are united against it there will be a new actor in the argentinian political scene, one which can not be snubbed: the argentinian communist party.

Apart from these debates that we have mentioned there are others caused by the actions of other smaller groups, but with a big repercussion and which were, to some extent, characteristic of anarchism: "expropriating anarchism" or "anarchobanditism," as "La Protesta" called it.

The decade of 1920, with a new state, universal suffrage and a new relationship between the working class and the government, was not an easy or quiet time . The massive shooting of rural workers in Patagonia, the massacre of Jacinto Arauz in the pampa , the regular killings of nationalist groups, organized around the Liga Patriótica [Patriotic League] leadered by Manuel Carles...faced on the other side fighters ready to take the arms, defend themselves, put to death their enemies, expropriate resources to finance their publications and to support those in jail. Severino de Giovanni was the best known of them, together with America and the Scarfo brothers. Miguel Arcangel Roscigna , mastermind of spectacular jail breaks, was the first in the tragic list of desaparecidos¹ in Argentina , after being arrested by the police. We must also mention the group of Tamayo Gavilan, and of course the brief stay of Durruti, Ascaso and Jover in Argentina , with the robberies to the underground station of Caballito and to the Provincial Bank of Buenos Aires , in San Martín. This groups must have had a very big impact, relentlessly pursued by the police and the army, in constant flee and in many cases bringing about the death of innocent bystanders. Under this light we can understand the growing opposition of "La Protesta," which made public their condemnation, accusing them of using fascist violence and denying their anarchist spirit. But opposed to this attitude were groups like "La antorcha," "Brazo y Cerebro"[Arm and Brain], "Pampa Libre" [Free Pampa] and "Ideas" (from La Plata), which had a more sympathetic position. The fact is that these "expropriators" had millions of pesos in their hands and still lived in poverty, constantly supporting the families of prisoners, publishing anarchist texts, like the mythical "Culmine," and ended in a way which was a symbol of the lives they led. Let's remember Di Giovanni who was arrested in a print shop, proofreading the edition of the complete works of Eliseo Reclus, Roscigna who fell after risking his life to free his comrades from the Montevideo jail or Durruti, who died in the heroic defense of Madrid.

The decade of 1920 was one of a bitter and bloody strife between anarchists , in accordance to the general social climate of violence and state repression, of patriotic killings by the Liga of Manuel Carles. We can not understand the violence between anarchist factions without taking into account its social context, without considering the violence to which they were subjected by the state, which cornered them, at a time when political options were felt as a choice for survival. Probably this interpretation of the violence that anarchists used all along the decade to solve their political differences is not complete, and many other interesting factors could be added. In the next decade repression will be very strong under the dictatorship but, regardless of this, the anarchist movement is ready to find other ways to overcome disagreements. It is at this time that the idea of the Federación Libertaria Argentina starts taking shape. However, that surely is an element which needs to be considered.

It is not the intention of this work to define the borders of the anarchist movement, deciding what is or is not part of it, or fixing an orthodoxy or finished body of thought for an "anarchism." As we know, the development of anarchist thought has always encompassed many nuances as well as those who pretended to be the real conveyors of "The Idea." "La Protesta" and the FORA V were between those which strictly observed the postulates, but what can be said of

¹ Desaparecido is the word used for those executed under police custody, murdered unofficially, and whose body has never been found.

the "antorchism" (from the group editing "La Antorcha" magazine), of the anarcho-syndicalism of ALA, of the anarchist-bolsheviks, of the expropriatory anarchism, and even of those individualities who were never part of any of those groups?. How can we judge their ideas when their actions were always confronting capitalism, refusing any hierarchies and trying to liberate the oppressed? While in the previous decades the many different options increased the reach to the various social sectors now there was no room for divergences and violence solved the disagreements. The economical, political and social developments were confronting the movement with unforeseen difficulties, after enjoying a wide popularity thanks to its crystal clear principles. Should these be kept, even if that meant a smaller popularity with the masses? And if this was chosen, how to act on reality?, how could the dream of bringing capitalism down be kept?, how to make politics? Let's recall here similar situations in other movements, like the second international (to which the anarchists didn't belong). We can mention Karl Kautsky, Rose Luxemburg and Jean Jaures who, even with ideas they wouldn't compromise on, managed to coexist in the organization keeping a permanent debate, thus acknowledging each other as valid speakers. Maybe it was the coincidence between the theory and the mass militancy that allowed them three to share a common group. Or better still, it was the mass action of the proletariat, organizing, struggling and questioning the mere foundations of capitalism which allowed to build an optimistic idea of history and then adopt as a theory the different points in the debate. To sum it up, it was the existence of a revolutionary subject. Later, the first world war, the defeat of the revolutionary processes at the end of the 1910s, the stalinization of the communist parties, the ability of capitalism to break its crisis cycles thanks to the state and the lack of a revolutionary movement in the most industrialized countries will break down this willingness to dialogue and construction, crystallizing in clearly separated tendencies which will end up smashing opposition through violence. As Perry Anderson puts it, what had happened was "a fracture in the unity between the socialist theory and the practices of the working class".

This digression in marxist history is relevant to us in one point: it shows that, by now, the popular believe in a revolutionary change, in the sudden downfall of capitalism, had ended. Gramsci resumes the period when he says: "pessimism of the reason, optimism of the will."

In anarchism there are other variables in play, since it is not a finished theory implying the downfall of capitalism, and neither is it the succession of means of production what brings about communism. Here is only stronger the demand for justice, the indomitable attitude against every form of exploitation, the shrill cry against oppression. In this way we can understand the solidarity and reivindicative attitude of many anarchists, like Radowitzky, Wilckens and Wladimirovich. An if it is true that it was thought that wherever there is oppression there must be an act of rebellion, it was all framed in the firm believe that the libertarian society would soon be reached, and capitalism would necessarily fall.

Now, at the start of this work we said that anarchism was by no means dead in 1910. This is true, but only as long as we can recognize that the movement is not the same as it used to be any more. At this time it was fractured in different sectors, feeding from new practices in a changed reality, but still with a strong will to act on the argentinian scene. The FORA will accuse the others, may be truly, of deviationism. But it refuses to recognize that its purism alienates it from the people and makes it shrink. The others try new ways of carrying forward their libertarian ideas, of working in a quickly changing reality, but without realizing how far they are from a time when the downfall of the whole system seemed to be at hand.

Then, now: How to act on this reality? How to make a political build up from now on? Time, and more precisely the 1930 decade will give shape to this search for answers in the libertarian movement.

Second stage of the libertarian movement.

There are libertarian communists, collectivists and individualists; there are religious anarchists and atheists, there are those who think that the idea of organization is a vital part of the anarchist idea and those others who think that organization is in material and ideological opposition to anarchy. There are a hundred divisions, often in contradiction, in matters of tactics. They argue, quarrel, debate. But amidst all these divisions, a common idea defines them, and gives them the right to call themselves anarchists. That idea is the refusal of physical force used by man on man, as a factor of social order and evolution.

La Pampa Libre, 1927.

On 6 th september 1930 the general Uriburu inaugurates the history of the coup d'etat in twentieth century argentina . Just a few months before being deposed, President Yrigoyen will give a victory to the anarchists: he pardoned Simon Radowitzky. But this will speed up the unavoidable deposition of the radical leader. Immediately, all the anarchist publications were banned and their locals raided . One of the times of strongest repression against the movement will follow. Taken by surprise dealing with its internal divisions, unorganized and without any chance of fighting back, the anarchists will suffer thousands of arrests, transportations to Ushuaia, deportations, executions and tortures. At this time neither the FORA, which had tried to keep its distance with what it saw as an internal conflict in the bourgeois regime, nor the "La Protesta" group, which had tried to distance itself from the violent groups in anarchism so to present a more humane face, found their reservations helpful to escape repression. Confronting the dictatorship all the differences are blurred. For the authoritarians there are no grey areas, just an enemy. Theoretical subtleties are not its cup of tea, and torture will emerge as the summary of its discourse.

Paradoxically, it was the repression which made the anarchists think about the bitter fight that developed in the twenties. It seemed as if history was violently punishing those who had used violence, making a call for unity against the true enemy. Dictatorship provided the scenario for the birth of unity: the third bis block of the Villa Devoto prison, were many militants of different tendencies were grouped together, in many cases as a previous step for transportation to Ushuaia. The libertarians, after a few confrontations, manage to expel the communists from the block . This deed must have contributed to their mutual recognition and the strengthening of their identity since they joined in a common battle, which was secondary but not less important for the libertarian thought. Now the space was ripe for the start of discussions. They focused on autocriticism and this brought about something that would have been unthinkable only some time before: 300 militants, of all the tendencies, on september 1931 organized a congress while in jail . This was the beginning of unity and reconstruction, and also the start of a new topic of discussion: a specific organization of anarchists, which would co-ordinate and unify their forces. "Specificism" wasn't really that new. There had always been some thought of making a united organization, and the First Regional Congress of 1922 might have paved the way. The truth is that

everyone, though not on a loud voice, acknowledged the FORA as a finalist organization, and they kept a distance from other structures more like those of bourgeois or authoritarian political parties. At the end of the day, it was the proletariat under its own federative principles, the true expression of local anarchism, its fighting tool and may be the embryo of the future society. But the FORA had every time less relevance in the worker's movement. And on the other hand, how would it be possible to incorporate other growing sectors to the struggle, like the students or the cultural groups? These questions were paramount at the time of shaping the new organization. It seemed that the argentinian anarchism had started changing its composition.

But the 1930s are also the decade which signals the end of the agrarian system of exports in Argentina. It's the end of the dream of harmony, in the role of the world's "wheat granary" which had been allocated to the country as part of the international division of labor and production. With this all the productive system will start transforming, speeding up changes that had already been initiated during the first world war. This will reopen the debate between those in favor of an organization by industry or by trade. The FORA will remain true to its federative principles opposing any organization by industry. This position, which had already decided many unions to join the USA will make many anarchists foster the creation of intersectional groups in the reformist unions, and will make them recognize the changes in the capitalist system as a fact, according to which they have to act.

With these main discussion issues: to overcome the deadly differences of the previous decade, to build up an specific anarchist organization and to revive FORA without ceasing to take into account other ways of union participation, a big meeting was hold in September 1932 in Rosario: the second regional anarchist congress.

All the different sectors took part in its preparation. La Protesta made a call from its pages for the writing of presentations, which would outline the issues to be discussed, by way of a survey among its readers. Other militants traveled around the country, taking to the old traditions of getting in touch between the groups, to encourage participation.

The congress opens on the 13 th of september with 53 delegates, representing 30 organizations form all over the country. Once again, a public square for recognition, construction and reciprocal contribution was open in anarchist history. But, had the differences really been overcome so much as to allow unity? Truly, what seemed to happen was that some issues had been closed while others had just surfaced, brought about by the new historical situation and the evolution of groups and militants trying to accommodate new realities. In this way the representatives from La Antorcha were together with the FORA ones when voting for the losing proposition in the congress (3 votes). While on the other hand another 49 delegates supported the creation of a specific libertarian organization. The main resolutions adopted in the meeting called for the creation of a federal organization of groups, including all the tendencies, with wide freedom, while at the same time giving FORA the recognition of a finalist organization of anarchism. Why was then FORA opposed to the creation of the specific organization? We need to consider that other resolutions called for the creation of groups between different unions outside FORA and even in opposing unions. The decision was whether to resist, from FORA, and push for the workers to perceive the real struggle and then nourish its ranks, or to recognize the drift of the workers movement away from anarchism and act as anarchists but from the inside of other unions. The congress did never fully accept the second option but it voted for the tacit recognition of reality as it was, convinced that this would bring back the missing worker's masses. If now, 70 years later, we see this tactic as of little use we need to recall William Morris again. This second meet-

ing in Rosario , while failing to achieve its revolutionary objectives, always open and present, originated the Comité Regional de Relaciones Anarquistas [Regional Committee of Anarchist Relations], which would breathe new life into the movement in the country and renewed the strength of the libertarian ideas. As soon as September 1933 it gave birth to Accion Libertaria as its publication, covering nearly forty years of history until its end in 1971. This CRRA played an important role in the organization of militancy, being able to make the six area committees created in the congress (Rosario , Resistencia , Bahia Blanca , Santa Fe , Tucuman and Capital) increase until 16 in September 1933. They will later reach to be 30. It managed to transform an intersindical group into the textiles union, the reorganization of the Asociación de Empleados de Comercio de Rosario [Rosario Association of Commerce Workers] and the creation of the Sindicato de Obreros Tranviarios y Anexos [Union of Railway and Dependencies Workers] in Buenos Aires, which will expand to cover the whole country (and was not a part of FORA).

Meanwhile, FORA will have two main events at the beginning of the decade: the dockyard workers strike in January 1931, and in July, at the arrival of a Nazi warship, the agitation and strike called from the Federación Obrera Local Bonaerense [Local Worker's Federation of Buenos Aires]. Meanwhile the CRRA activities continued to grow , putting in touch different areas and getting the militants ready for a following congress, which would bring about the creation of the specific organization. Now the results from the FORA general assembly were eagerly awaited. This was to be held in October 1934 and if it is true that the opposition of most of the FORA members to the specific organization was well known, it was hoped that the unanimity of the voting for the resolution in the congress of Rosario would have an effect on them. But finally, the decisions taken by the FORA were not at all encouraging for those behind the agreements of 1932: the organization by trades and the opposition to the intersindical and specific groups were asserted, adopting a hardcore stance against the emergence of the new organization. At this, the CRRA opted openly for the strengthening of the work inside the unions by industry. The rift was again open.

However, this didn't spoil its efforts and the work done by the CRRA for three years gave fruit, on October 1935, in the foundational congress of the Federación Anarco Comunista Argentina (FACA) [Anarco-comunist federation of Argentina].

FACA, the first specific organization of Argentina has its offices in Buenos Aires , and starts by developing many different activities all over the country, continuing with those that CRRA did. We can highlight the campaign for the release of the prisoners of Bragado: Pascual Vuotto, Reclus de Diago y Santiago Mainini, tortured and imprisoned for a crime they didn't commit in 1931. The magazine Justicia, speaker for the campaign, had thousands of issues printed. Meetings were done all over the country, under persecution and even murder , until a pardon was given in 1942.

In 1936 happens one of the most important things for anarchism in the world. The rebellion of General Franco against the Spanish Republic started the civil war, but also the revolutionary process which had been brewing, and which main actor was the big Spanish anarchist movement. The libertarian movement had a fundamental role in smashing the rebellion in many places and gained control of extensive areas, where it could develop its revolutionary project. In this way were created the anarchist collectivities of Aragon , and the collectivization of industry and services in most of Catalonia . In Argentina , FACA carried out a successful campaign in support of the Spanish movement. It took part in the organization of many popular committees of Aid to Spain . It founded, in agreement with the Spanish CNT and FAI the Servicio de Propaganda de España

[Service of Propaganda for Spain], publishing the Documentos Históricos de España [Historical Documents from Spain] magazine and pushed for the creation of the Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista [Antifascist International Solidarity] (SIA). Three militants were proposed as delegates in Spain : Jacobo Prince, Jacobo Maguid and Jose Grunfeld. They went on to hold positions of the maximum responsibility in the confederal publication "Solidaridad Obrera," in that of the FAI, "Tierra y Libertad," and in the Peninsular secretariat of the FAI, respectively.

The decade of the 1930 was one of development and growth for FACA, under the harsh conditions of repression which had decimated the movement at the start of the dictatorship. In 1939, with the aim of opening up the movement, and with men who were not libertarian, was founded the "Hombre de America" [Man from America] magazine. In 1941 the daily "Solidaridad Obrera" is born, as the speaker for a wide section of independent unions organized by FACA. In 1946 the founding of the "Reconstruir" editorial house had a big relevance for the diffusion of the libertarian ideas, with the publication of pamphlets and books up to our days.

The defeat of the spanish revolution and the start of the second world war gave new relevance to antimilitarist campaigns, as well as to the help of the refugees. To this aim a campaign was started to help the comrades who survived the nazi terror, by sending food and clothes to germany

The enormity of the repression that fascism brought to the world, its spread, the raise of the nazi regime and the existence in Argentina of groups which killed workers and supported those fascist tendencies created a political climate which focused on stopping the creation of similar movements in the country. The peronismo seemed to have all the characteristics of a local fascist movement, supported by the working class, organized in state sponsored unions and with an authoritarian bias. Most of the libertarians didn't hesitate in attacking peronist state, suffering jail and having their publications closed: in 1946 the "Reconstruir" magazine was taken to court for difamation and its distribution was banned. In the end it had to move its print shop to Rosario. In 1952 the dockyard workers members of Fora were arrested.

1945 was another year of change for argentinian history. Juan Domingo Peron takes office as prime minister and brings about one of the most important changes in the century. The final crisis of the agrarian argentinian system, which had given so many profits up to the 1930s, and the conditions imposed by the second world war encouraged some sectors of homegrown bourgeoisie to implement a project of internal development. National industry and, above all, state control of economy would be the mantras of peronism. At the same time there was a need to create an internal market which would allow for national production. The social and political changes derived from these tenets were so huge that they generated a mass movement of world relevance. Union membership rose from 500.000 workers to 2.500.000, and the benefits that the workers received, under conditions of full employment produced a quick support for peronism. This attitude of the biggest part of the working class, which lasts up to now, relegated the richness of its previous experiences, bringing about a disappearance, mainly of the anarchist movement.

However, the peronist discourse took on board many already existing workers demands, made a call to the dignity of the oppressed and used it to exaltate the homeland. But, if in the previous decades the homeland was used by the power against the workers with "foreign" ideas, now it would be used as a name for those who dwelled in the underground of the nation. The real creator of the homeland was now the working people, those who created the national riches with their effort. The working class, which for decades had built its struggle in direct opposition to the idea of homeland, understanding it as the root of militarism, war and a benefit to the bourgeoisie,

could see now how its demands were articulated through that very idea. The worker was now covered by a legislation, completely lacking some time before, the redistribution of the national income was biased to benefit the poorest, wages increased, many socialist and anarchist demands were met and millions had access to benefits which had been denied before.

But if the social and economical benefits were real, and the ruthless exploitation of the powerful was somehow mitigated, the dignity attained was very far away from the revolutionary postulates of the first half of the century. The improvement in social conditions seemed to renovate the working class movement and lead it along a path with a sense of belonging and inclusion. The struggle was no longer directed to the emancipation of mankind, to bring down the borders that keep the men apart or to destroy capitalism. The dignity pretended had a clear limit in its highest ideals, born in the revolutionary movements.

In this sense, if the opening of the conservative order to universal suffrage meant the inclusion of wide sections in political representation, peronism created a second stage of opening, now in the economical and social orders and the construction of a belonging to the capitalist system. We will have to wait for a few decades for a new phase of capitalism to make away with the need for full employment and mass consumerism to feed it back. Then accumulation will be able to coexist with the exclusion of big swathes of people from the work market and consumerism.

The position taken by FACA regarding the peronist government was shown in the "Accion Libertaria" magazine, as well as in the Resolutions and Declarations approved by the different congresses and national meetings held by the organization.

Since its start as FACA, until it was renamed as Federacion Libertaria Argentina there were six big meetings:

- December 1936: National meeting of provincial agrupations.
- February 1938: First regular congress.
- July 1940: Second regular congress.
- October 1942: National Meeting of groups and militants.
- December 1951: Third regular congress.
- February 1955: Fourth regular congress. FLA is founded.

If it is true that at this time the anarchist ideas were no longer a mass movement and didn't represent the working class any more, it is remarkable the continuity and consolidation achieved by the specific organization. While anarchism was relegated on its workers side to an ever reducing space, a new way to foster the libertarian ideals took form, which, without scaping the general shrinking of the movement, aimed at proving the relevance of the anarchist ideas. This new historical stage, lived through by its main actors with the sense of a need for a change of tactics, which would include the militancy not belonging to FORA, brought new blood to the movement and gave birth to the Libertarian Argentina Federation (FLA), active up to our days. Regardless of the FORA, which had articulated thousands of workers in the previous decades, a new stage had began and it required a new kind of militancy. However, they both had reserved a place in the minorities.

But even if this is true, we can not say that the anarchist ideas have disappeared. Neither can we say that when they were accepted by big numbers of people they were any truer. This can only reflect the special atmosphere of the time, when a majority was ready to break away with the values that upheld the whole system. This is a possibility which is always open, in this short stage of history that is capitalism and in which anarchist ideas, through its questions about freedom and equality, continue to assert their relevance and, mainly, their firm shout against every form of oppression.

Epilogue

This short article has the only intention of giving a general overview, built up out of publications held in our archive and to try some answers to questions which I understand are important.

The time we have covered can be divided in many more than just two stages. For example, up to 1900 with the domination of the organizational sector in Argentina, and anarcocomunism in the world. Or up to 1912, with the universal suffrage, secret and compulsory, preceding the breaking down of FORA. Or up to 1945 with the implantation of Peronism and, in fact, the ending point of the publications in our catalogue.

But we think the two stages chosen are justified as a first period of organization, growth and division and a second of reunification and reconstruction.

We said before that anarchism had, spanning through a big arch of clear principles, different sections, where their meetings and discussions showed dialogue and growth through stern debate. Some historical contexts allowed convergence, the recognition of the other and the offer to society of a wide span of anarchist options. Others only allowed violent strife. Ones allowed the coincidence of a mass movement and the anarchist ideas while others brought about the division between the masses and the libertarian ideal. If it was the special revolutionary atmosphere of the times which allowed this wonderful mix, if we can not be sure of how or when a similar situation will happen, there is something we can be sure of. The capitalist system has its essence in the permanent and endless production of goods, in the constant conquest of technological frontiers, in the destruction of its own making to raise above it with still more complex creations. As much as in the transformation of the cultural and symbolical worlds with the pervasive invention of new subjectivities. But also in its inability to solve basic problems, with an oversupply of goods as the same time as there is death by starvation, with space tourist travels as much as shocking misery, with fancy ads and the deprivation of millions of people. To confront this the struggle continues in the streets and the revolutionary and "impossible" dreams are the products of the known reality, its external borders. We dream with the sweetness of the biggest expression of what we know, we have imagined its flavor and we have sometimes been able to taste it in live. Because of this we fight. Above everything the struggle goes on, firm, indomitable, renewed with the pass of time, confronting the contrasts which happen in most of historical times, between the dreams arising from reality and the miserable deaths of millions who are destroyed to keep the limited pleasure of those who don't dream.

This catalogue is then to uncover and recover dreams and make of them a new reality.

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Pablo M. Perez
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