Anarchism in Spain

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It is commonly accepted that the history of Spanish anarchism started in the early nineteenth century with the economist and social reformer Ramón de la Sagra (1798–1871). In 1845, he launched the first anarchist periodical, *El Porvenir*, which introduced to Spain the ideas of Proudhon, Fourier, and Saint-Simon. Between 1848 and 1849, de la Sagra and Proudhon founded the Banco Popular. Despite this, the Spanish anarchist movement did not properly get underway until after the International Workingmen's Association (IWA) meeting in London in 1864, when the supporters of Bakunin sent the Italian Giuseppe Fanelli to Spain. His mission was to establish the Spanish section of the First International (Sección Española de la Primera Internacional), which occurred in 1869. The triumph of Bakunin's anarchosyndicalist theories was so great that when Pablo Lafargue arrived in Madrid in 1871 with the intention of founding a workers' political party, he was told by the Catalan statesman Francisco Pi y Margall that a Marxist political party would never succeed in Spain.

Francisco Pi y Margall (1824–1901) was one of the most influential thinkers who contributed to the popularization of anarchism in Spain. After emigrating to France in 1866, he came into irect contact with the theories of Proudhon, which he translated and analyzed in various books. He defended the principle of federalism against centralism and achieved wide popularity among anarchists. After the declaration of the First Spanish Republic in 1873 he became president, but resigned his position after just a week.

After the restoration of the monarchy in 1874, IWA sympathizers were suppressed and workers' organizations were proscribed. In around 1882, an apparently secret anarchist organization, La Mano Negra (The Black Hand), dedicated to committing murder and robbery, was persecuted in Andalucía. However, the principal anarchist organization of that time, the Federación de Trabajadores de la Región Española (FTRE), denied any connection with it, claiming that the organization did not exist and was simply an invention of police and landowners who needed an excuse to pursue a repressive campaign against peasant associations.

In 1892 in Cádiz, an insurrection took place at Jerez de la Frontera which led to the split of anarchism into two groups: the Andaluz fraction, characterized by primitivism, ruralism, violence, and individualism, and the organized, syndicalist, and urban anarchism of Cataluña, led by Rafael Farga Pellicer and José Llunas (founder of the anarchist satirical periodical *La Tramontana*).

Following the assassination of ten people in the Corpus Christi procession in Barcelona in 1896, during which another 24 were injured, on May 4, 1897, 28 people were sentenced to death. During the so-called Montjuic trial, the government of Cánovas del Castillo persecuted and tortured the presumed leaders of the attack. They included Tárrida del Mármol, Pere Coro-minas, Ramón Sempau, Teresa Mañé i Miravet (known as Soledad Gustavo), and Joan Montseny (known as Federico Urales). In August 1897, the Italian anarchist Michele Angiolillo assassinated Cánovas in revenge for those murdered and tortured in Montjuic.

On August 3, 1907, the labor federation Solidaridad Obrera (Workers' Solidarity) was created in Barcelona with the intention of uniting all Spanish social-anarchist movements that refused to join the General Workers' Union (Unión General de Trabajadores, UGT), founded in 1888 under the political control of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español, PSOE). Solidaridad Obrera had a profound influence on anarcho-syndicalism in Spain, especially through its periodical, *Solidaridad Obrera*, which disseminated propaganda during strikes. The organization also played a significant role in the *Semana Trágica* in Barcelona from July 25 to August 1, 1909, which led to the execution of the anarchist pedagogue Francisco Ferrer y Guardia, the founder of the Escuela Moderna (Modern School), on October 13, 1909. Finally, at its 1910

congress, Solidaridad Obrera created the National Confederation of Labor (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, CNT).

At the beginning of February 1919, a strike began in Barcelona at the La Canadiense company. The appointment of Governor Martínez Anido and his chief of police Arlegui initiated an epoch during which anarchists and trade unionists were severely persecuted, and *pistolerismo* ("gunfighterism") ruled Barcelona for several years. Using the chaos of the era as a pretext, King Alfonso XIII allowed General José Antonio Primo de Rivera to form a government that repressed the proletariat and anarchist unions. During the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923–30), all CNT activities were prohibited, although the organization continued to exist illegally.

In 1927, an underground organization of Spanish and Portuguese anarchists, called the Iberian Anarchist Federation (Federación Anarquista Ibérica, FAI), emerged. FAI coordinated violent actions aimed at the elimination of the dictatorship and the king. However, violence was not necessary: on January 28, 1930, the dictator resigned and the elections of April 12, 1931, which resulted in the proclamation of the Second Republic, sent the king into exile. Three months later, Angel Pestana, Juan Peiró, Horacio M. Prieto, and a large number of CNT members signed the famous "Manifesto of the 30: To All Anarchists," in which they proposed that anarchism should play a part in professional politics. In opposition to the FAI, which advocated the immediate introduction of libertarian communism, the signatories believed in the necessity of a transitional phase between capitalism and anarchist society. They wanted to create anarchist political parties: the Partido Sindicalista, Partido Libertario, and Sindicalismo Político. However, they were eventually expelled from the CNT, which opened up a rift between trade unionists and the FAIists. Those who distanced themselves from reformist anarchism created the Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth (FIJL) in 1932, and Mujeres Libres in 1936.

During its early days, the Second Republic was euphorically considered by many to be a panacea powerful enough to resolve the four great problems that had dragged Spain down for over a century: latifundism, religiosity of the state, exploitation of the proletariat, and centralism. It soon became clear that the Republic was nothing more than a reformist political regime perpetuating the same problems. A good illustration of the gap that existed between the government and the people is the crime that occurred in the village of Casas Viejas (Cádiz) in January 1933, when 25 people, including coal merchant Francisco Cruz, known as "Seisdedos," were burned alive by the republican Civil Guards. The motive for the attack was the proclamation of libertarian communism in Andalucía. The Civil Guards produced an effect contrary to the one they had desired: rather than silencing the anarchists, they elevated the humble peasants to the status of martyrs, ignited libertarianism in a number of areas (mostly in Asturias, Aragón, Barcelona, and Levante), and aroused radical discontent toward the Second Republic.

On November 19, 1933, the elections were won by an alliance of religious political parties sympathizing with Italian and German fascism, the Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right (Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas, CEDA), who proceeded to paralyze all progressive reforms and projects that had been started. During the elections, the CNT issued the slogan: "Do not vote, get ready for social revolution. If the right wins, decisive struggles will have to be carried out in the street." The organization kept its word and ignited uprisings in Aragón and Asturias, which resulted in 3,000 dead, 7,000 wounded, and around 30,000 arrested, almost all of whom were anarchosyndicalists.

During the next elections in 1936, the fear that the right might win again led to the creation of the Popular Front coalition consisting of a number of political parties and trade unions, in-

cluding the Republican Left (Izquierda Republicana), the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista, POUM), and the Republican Left of Catalonia (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, ERC). The CNT, with over 1,500,000 members, decided not to boycott the Popular Front, since it promised amnesty for all political prisoners. The coalition won and the amnesty occurred.

The unstable coalition fell apart, however, as each group began to follow its own interests. The CNT tried to establish the libertarian communism that it had defended since its congress in 1936 in Zaragoza. In this volatile situation, a part of the army rebelled in July against the Republic. The CNT declared a general strike in response and started to implement revolutionary urban guerilla tactics. These events marked the beginnings of the Spanish Civil War. The anarcho-syndicalists controlled the main Spanish cities, including Barcelona – "the capital of Spanish anarchism" – and collectivized factories, transport, and the health system.

During the Civil War, the revolution was secondary: the priority was the creation of a united front against fascism. Trade unionist Francisco Largo Caballero hoped that with such political burdens, the anarchists would abandon spontaneous struggles in the streets and follow the discipline required to be given weapons. This implied the dissolution of anarchist militias so that they could join the professional army, which the CNT eventually refused to do. In May 1937, the communists betrayed the revolution in Barcelona by directly attacking the libertarian movement, assassinating their own comrades, and assaulting the Telefónica building in which the anarchists had barricaded themselves.

The victory of Franco resulted in a dictatorship that lasted from 1939 until his death on November 20, 1975. Anarchism during this period was characterized by illegality, exile, and decline. Nevertheless, anarchist guerillas known as *Maquis* lived hidden in the mountains, boycotting and sabotaging everything they could in the Francoist regime. Due to both external repression and internal conflicts, however, the CNT continued to deteriorate. History repeated itself: on the one hand were the orthodox defenders of revolutionary syndicalism, direct action, and libertarian communism, on the other were those who believed in ideological change and considered political syndicalism, closer to socialism. The CNT unified in 1961, but the unification was short-lived and the subsequent separation was so severe that the anarchist movement practically disappeared.

On March 2, 1974, as Franco was nearing death, the young anarchist Salvador Puig Antich was executed by garrote. As a member of the anti-capitalist Iberian Liberation Movement (Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación, MIL), he had contacts with the French anarchist movement and Spanish exiles living in Toulouse. His death was another example of the atrocities carried out by the Francoist regime, recognized by western democracies.

Even after Franco's death, however, anarchism did not regain its former popularity. Democratizing projects, while recognizing communists, did not take anarchists into account, and neither did anarchists want to repeat the mistake of participating in professional politics. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Spanish anarchism has experienced a resurgence, primarily in two ways. The first is through the recovery of historical memory. A number of foundations dedicated to research have been founded, including the Fundación de Estudios Libertarios Anselmo Lorenzo, Ateneo Virtual, Fundación Andreu Nin, Ateneu Enciclopédic Popular, Centre d'Estudis Llibertaris Federica Montseny, and the Fundación Casas Viejas 1933. The second is through practical anarchism, in the context of which the CNT accommodates such divergent movements and activities as libertarian syndicalism, feminism, anti-globalization protests, environmentalism, the defense of homosexual rights, free love, urban punks and squatters, and centers of free education.

This is a reminder that nowhere else in the world has anarchism been so extensively assimilated into the masses as in Spain, where the echoes of the decades-old slogan – *Uníos Hermanos Proletarios: Proletarian Brothers Unite* – can still be heard.

SEE ALSO: Anarchosyndicalism ; Bakunin, Mikhail Alexandrovich (1814–1876) ; Barcelona General Strike, 1919 ; Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) ; Escuela Moderna Movement (The Modern School) ; Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI) ; Mujeres Libres ; POUM (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification) ; Puig Antich, Salvador (1948–1974) ; Spanish Revolution

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