



Newsletter

THOMAS F. GLICK, EDITOR

*of the Society for
Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*

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April 1, 1970

Annual Meeting of the Society, April 18 and 19, 1970

The Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies will hold its first annual meeting on April 18 and 19, 1970, at Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut. The Conference will open at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 18, and close at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 19, after the annual business session.

The program will consist of four sessions devoted to different periods and problems of Spanish and Portuguese history: Medieval and Modern Spain and Portugal, Spanish Anarchism, Agrarian Problems and Contemporary Iberian Politics.

The registration fee for non-members of the Society is \$7.50 (including cocktails and dinner on April 18). The fee for Society members is \$5 (for cocktails and dinner). The registration fee for non-members not interested in attending the dinner is \$2.50. Persons planning to attend the Conference should make checks payable to: THE SOCIETY FOR SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE HISTORICAL STUDIES and MAIL NO LATER THAN APRIL 8, 1970 to its General Secretary: Professor Clara E. Lida, Department of History, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut 06457.

PROGRAM

SATURDAY, April 18, 1970: 2 p.m. -- 5 p.m.

A. Contemporary Iberian Politics

James R. O'Connell
(East Carolina University)

A Reconsideration of the Republic's Anti-Clericalism.

Charles Halstead
(Washington College))

Colonel Juan Beigbeder: The Misjudged Africanista.

Thomas F. Glick
(University of Texas,
Austin)

Science, Catholicism and the Franco Crusade.

Stanley G. Payne The Problems of Political Sequences
(University of Wisconsin, in Modern Spanish and Portuguese
Madison) Regimes

B. Spanish Anarchism and the Labor Movement

Clara E. Lida Anarchist Secret Societies in
(Wesleyan University) Andalusia.

Glen Waggoner Order, Not Anarchy: The Organiza-
(University of Michigan tional Structure of the Anarchist
Ann Arbor) Movement in Spain, 1881-1888.

Temma Kaplan Women and the C.N.T.: 1917-1937
(University of California-
Los Angeles)

Gerald H. Meaker Spanish Labor and the Russian Re-
(San Fernando Valley volution: 1917-1922.
State College)

SUNDAY, April 19, 1970: 9 a.m. -- 12 noon

C. Medieval and Modern Spain and Portugal

Robert I. Burns, S. J. Renegades and Adventurers: The XIII
(Brown University) Century Spaniard in the Cause of
Islam.

William Phillips Enrique IV of Castile as Principe
(Rhode Island College) de Asturias.

Morgan Broadhead The Portuguese Titled Nobility in
(Vassar College) the Time of the Phillips:
1580-1640.

Francis A. Dutra The Spanish Military in Portugal,
(University of California- 1580-1640: A Preliminary Report.
Santa Barbara)

T. Bentley Duncan The Wine Trade of Madeira, 1650-
(University of Chicago) 1700.

David R. Ringrose Madrid and New Castile in the XVII
(Rutgers University) Century. An Empirical Capital
in a Regional Economy.

Enoch Resnick The Absolutist Reign of Ferdinand
(University of Maryland) VII: 1814-1820.

SUNDAY, April 19, 1970: 2 p.m. -- 5 p.m.

D. Agrarian Problems

William Watson
(Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

Rural Politics in Spain: Does it
have a History?

Edward Malefakis
(Northeastern University)

Agriculture and Politics in Spain.

E. Business Meeting

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THE LIVING EXPERIENCE OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR COLLECTIVES*

by
Gabriel Jackson

The historic importance of collectivist trends, and the deep, continuing influence of anarchist doctrines in Spain are well known phenomena which have long fascinated historians. Leading 19th century Spanish intellectuals, among them Francisco Pi y Margall, Francisco Giner de los Rios, and Joaquin Costa,¹ felt a strong degree of kinship with the moral ideals of anarchism. The British historian Gerald Brenan expressed his admiration at several points in The Spanish Labyrinth, a book which remains the best single background work concerning the Spanish Republic and Civil War. George Orwell was deeply moved by the human quality of the anarchists he knew in Barcelona and at the Aragon front.² Major scholars on the history of anarchism, notably George Woodcock, James Joll, and Daniel Guerin have interpreted the anarchist experience of Catalonia, Aragon, and the Levant, as one of the more significant social experiments of modern times.³ Most recently a leading American intellectual, Professor Noam Chomsky, has insisted, in American Power and the New Mandarins, on the importance of anarchist collectives during the Civil War, and if I may sound a personal note, has criticized my alleged failure, as a "liberal" historian, to give that experience its due weight in my overall treatment of the Spanish Civil War.⁴

But interest in anarchism today is by no means confined to historians or to those with personal memories of Spain in the 1930's. A considerable proportion of the most intelligent university students all over the world are today fascinated by anarchism. They hope to find in it a viable alternative to the steadily more mechanized bureaucratic, and hierarchical limitations of life in the advanced industrial countries, be they capitalist or socialist in their forms of political economy. Anyone who is concerned to improve the

*Paper presented at the meetings of the American Historical Association, Washington, D. C., December 30, 1969.

quality of individual human life, and of the relations among human beings, must feel some degree of sympathy for anarchist ideals. Of all modern political movements, theirs is the one which has spoken most consistently for the dignity of the individual as such, apart from his professional or economic or educational standing. Theirs are the theorists and leaders who have refused most uncompromisingly the hierarchical, exploitative nature of work relations in both capitalist and communist societies.

In the present paper I should like to look as closely as possible at the role of the anarchists in the revolution which took place behind the lines of Republican Spain in 1936-37, and try to assess both the practical and the moral significance of that activity. It must be realized at the outset that the available evidence is extremely sketchy. Hundreds of businesses and factories were taken over either by the government, by socialist, or anarchist initiative. But we do not have eye witness accounts of what happened over any extended period of time for more than a few dozen instances out of this total. There were also some 1,500 agricultural collectives, differing substantially in size, internal management methods, and longevity. We have some sort of documentary evidence concerning about 80 of the 1,500.⁵ Besides the paucity of evidence, the historian must constantly bear in mind the large effects of the raging civil war: absence of young men at the front, dislocation of markets and transport, steady price inflation, shortage of both raw materials and retail goods of all descriptions, statistics whose undoubtedly large margin of error cannot even be estimated, the politicizing of all activities, and the ideological viewpoints of those whose testimony we do have.

It is of course true that there are many important eras in history for which the evidence is very sketchy. But examples of slavery, coercion, and exploitation are so legion that even if we don't know too much in detail about each separate instance, we feel able to fill in the mournful gaps. In the case of the varied, and decentralized collectivizations of the Spanish Civil War, almost no comparisons can be made with the experience of other countries and periods. There are utopian socialist experiments like Brook Farm, but these did not occur in the midst of war and revolution. There are the collective farms of the Soviet Union, but these, by and large, were created under duress, with tightly centralized planning and party control. There are the kibbutzim of Israel, comparable at least in their variety, their voluntary nature, and their large role in the economy of a small, politically self-conscious nation. But these collectives have been administered by some of the most highly educated men and women of twentieth century Europe, and their success has been greatly aided by decades of devoted financial and moral support from Jews all over the world. Their social composition and the cultural base from which they started are thus

entirely different from that of the Spanish collectives.

The only feasible method, therefore, is to consider the available testimony in the light of general anarchist aims, and in relation to the technical competence and the ideological positions of those giving the testimony. During the first days of the war most large factories, repair and machinshops in the Greater Barcelona and Valencia districts were taken over by the workers under the leadership of the CNT-FAI. Some owners and top management personnel fled, some were shot, and some continued in their old functions. It is absolutely impossible even to estimate the proportions in each of the above categories, and it is likewise impossible to know how many of those who remained at their posts did so voluntarily and how many with the thought that they were simply accommodating themselves to a short wave of revolutionary fever. All factories and businesses employing over 100 persons were officially collectivized in Catalonia by a decree of October 24, 1936. In part this decree confirmed retroactively what the workers had done spontaneously in July and August. In part it represented an attempt by the Generalitat to regain some measure of governmental, hence bourgeois, control of the wartime economy.

We possess fairly detailed observations of a few industrial collectives by two well informed journalists. Dr. Franz Borkenau, author of The Spanish Cockpit, was the observant, widely traveled, and university educated son of an Austrian judge. He held a degree in sociology, had been an employee of the Comintern in the early 1920's, was a keen student of Marxism, and of the many European socialist and communist parties. H. E. Kaminski, author of Ceux de Barcelone, was a biographer of Bakunin and a journalist who had covered the Moroccan War in the 1920's. In 1928 he had visited many of the cities and farm districts in which the revolution of 1936 was occurring. Both men testify to the high morale and the operating efficiency of the collectivized factories which they saw in August and September 1936. Both men noted that many members of the factory committees were men whose technical capacity and character gave them a high standing with their fellow workers. Machinery was well taken care of, long hours and high production norms were cheerfully accepted, personal dignity and working conditions were considered more important than possible salary gains. But these observations concern only a few factories, and were made during the ardent, optimistic first weeks of the revolutionary regime. They provide absolutely no firm basis for judging how collectivized industry might have operated over long periods, after the glow of novelty would have worn off, and when new plans and tooling would be necessary.

The situation is a little bit less vague with regard to the practice of comunismo libertario in the villages. Anarchist

theorists could differ very widely in attitudes towards private property, currency, sexual morality, tobacco and liquor. But they all agreed that the ideal society would be composed of autonomous, voluntary, fairly small, primarily agricultural, communes. The Spanish anarchists thus concentrated their efforts in the agricultural districts, and the intellectuals sympathetic to them were more interested in observing the collectivized villages than they were the factories. A further motive for visiting rural collectives in Aragon and near Valencia was that, during the early months of the war at least, living conditions in them were more "normal" than in the industrial cities.

From July, 1936, until March, 1938, when the area was conquered by the Nationalist army and its Italian and German allies, some 300,000 Aragonese peasants lived in collectivized villages. There were also a number of such collectives in Catalonia, Valencia, New Castile, and northern Andalusia. The geographical density was much the greatest in Aragon, and the collectives there were administered, until July, 1937, by the Consejo de Aragon, which was anarchist-dominated but included representatives of all Popular Front parties. In Catalonia, Valencia, and Andalusia the individual collectives were sponsored by both the UGT and the CNT, i.e., by both the socialist and the anarchist labor federations, with the anarchists taking the lead. In New Castile the important collectives had been established under UGT leadership before the Civil War, and they continued to operate until the entry of Francoist troops.

In Aragon and New Castile the land itself, as well as all tools and supplies, were collectivized. In Catalonia and Valencia, where many peasants had long either owned their land or held it on secure, low rental leases, supplies and facilities were collectivized, but not the land. Most Catalan villages continued to use currency, but in the other provinces various systems of barter, rationing, and use of chits were established for exchange within the collective. Money and other valuables were taken over by the village committees, and used to buy supplies and to pay for the travel of individual members in the "outside world." The committees also arranged for medical care, schools, transport, and the marketing of crops. There were great variations in the availability and use of machines, and in the size of wages or rations, as the case might be.

Besides the evidence of Borkenau and Kaminski, there is considerable documentation on agricultural collectives in the CNT and UGT press, and in books by José Peirats, Agustín Souchy Bauer, and Alardo Prats. Peirats has for decades been the leading archivist of the CNT in exile. He has amassed, and carefully edited the available evidence concerning the anarchist role in both republican and

civil war days. Souchy was an ardent anarchist missionary who saw in the Aragonese collectives of 1936-37 the culmination of long decades of political education. Prats was a Catalan, a non-party socialist and journalist whose very competent account of the Catalan rising of October, 1934 gives him considerable credit as a sympathetic but not woolly minded witness of the village collectives.

The evidence of the Peirats, Souchy, and Prats books, all highly sympathetic to the anarchists, and of the more skeptical Borkenau and Kaminski books, indicates that more land was being cultivated, more intensively, in the collectives than under previous conditions; that such things as food, seed, tools, medical care, and elementary schooling were better distributed than in the past; and that the overall prosperity and efficiency of the collectivized villages varied greatly, following closely the relative prosperity of the specific areas in pre-collective times. If the available statistics for 1937 compared with 1936 can be trusted, it would seem that there were substantial increases of both production and productivity in the grain-raising collectives. There is no reliable way to estimate the increase percentage-wise, nor to know how much of the increase to attribute to collectivist methods, and how much to the spur of wartime needs. Allowance must also be made for the effects of an at least 20% inflation between the two harvests, and for the fact that the 1936 harvest was particularly upset by the beginning of the revolution itself.

But neither the Spanish anarchists themselves nor the students and intellectuals who are today so interested in anarchism, would rest their case principally on economic claims. Much more important was the quality of life in the collectives, and about this it is extremely difficult to make judgments. Peirats and Souchy are almost religious in tone. The internal evidence of their writing shows both men to be intelligent, and humane, but they were so thoroughly convinced in advance, on theoretical grounds, that they were incapable of seeing injustice or moral flaws of any kind. Both men paint tranquil, bucolic scenes, and refer to both work and leisure time decisions as though there was no question of the unanimity, willingness, and wisdom with which such decisions were made. Souchy speaks of schools with "Ferrer norms," but gives no definitions or concrete illustrations. He speaks of the "magnificent spirit" between teachers and pupils, the "modern" methods, and the "extraordinary" results, but we cannot tell specifically what justifies these adjectives. Peirats quotes the President of the Consejo de Aragon to the effect that large numbers of roads and telephone lines had been constructed, but there are no specific illustrations. Prats is less naive in tone, and clearly aware of the limited reliability of the facts and figures he reports. But his descriptions, particularly of the collective at Graus, the birthplace of Joaquín Costa, show high morals, and active, decision-sharing roles for women and

for previously landless peasants. Anyone who has known an Israeli kibbutz, or the hopeful summer of 1964 in many Black communities of the American South, will find his evidence both stirring and credible.

How democratic, and how voluntary, were the collectives? It is clear from both friendly and hostile accounts that most of the Aragonese ones were formed under the leadership of anarchist militia columns, in particular the famous Durruti column. Votes were taken by acclamation, in the presence of militia men. General assemblies were held either at fairly long intervals, or "when necessary." Committee membership changed rapidly, but there is no way of knowing just how representative of village feeling the committees (usually composed of the most assertive and voluble men) actually were. Also, since these committees controlled the financial and technical resources of the collective, and held the police power as well, they must potentially have exercised even greater authority over the villagers than had the government officials and the caciques of the recent past. As one might anticipate from the above discussion, Peirats, Souchy, and Prats insist on the overwhelmingly voluntary, democratic nature of the village regimes. Borkenau and Kaminski are more skeptical. The visiting Soviet journalist Ilya Ehrenburg wrote that the collectivized villagers reminded him of the frightened Indians in the Jesuit reductions of 17th century Paraguay.

The student desiring to reach the truth can only take careful note of those points which are agreed to by all observers and of those things which are conceded by partisans of one or another ideology. Proceeding in this manner, one can come to certain fairly firm qualitative conclusions. Agricultural production evidently increased somewhat in the collectivized villages, under the dual spur of enthusiasm and wartime needs. The success of largely voluntary collectivization was much greater among the poorer peasants. In Catalonia the CNT leadership itself warned its followers not to force collectivization on the smallholders and tenant farmers. These groups were seen as "progressive" in their attitude towards the republic and the Catalan autonomous government, and anarchists who were aware of the total political situation within the republican zone did not wish to alienate these prosperous farmers. In Valencia also, the more well-to-do peasants were opposed to collectivization, and many of them joined the Communist Party because of the latter's readiness to defend the interests of small property. The villages of Aragon, Valencia, and Andalusia which willingly practiced comunismo libertario were the materially less flourishing ones.

It is also fair to conclude, on the basis of friendly as well as hostile accounts, that the Aragonese collectivization took place under the direct auspices of anarchist militia columns, and it would be utterly naive to claim that the executions of landlords and priests, and the procedure of voting by acclamation, did not consti-

tute a considerable element of coercion. However, we also know, and here I depend in some measure upon my own conversations with middle class persons who lived under comunismo libertario during the civil war, that the anarchists made a constant effort to separate their active political enemies from those who were simply bourgeois by birth or ideology or economic function. Anarchist political committees wanted to know what accused monarchists or conservatives had done, not simply what they thought or how they had voted. The Durruti column executed far fewer persons than did the Carlist and Falangist firing squads in villages of the Nationalist zone. The popularity of the Aragonese collectives with the local peasantry is further attested by the fact that after the republican government had dissolved the Consejo de Aragon in August, 1937, it nevertheless permitted the continued existence of the village collectives. There is no inherent contradiction involved in recognizing both that the revolution included some violence and that its social and economic results over a period of roughly 18 months were approved by the majority of peasants in an area of previously very limited prosperity and educational opportunity.

Another conclusion which can reasonably be drawn from all accounts of the village collectives is that the committees, potentially at least, could exercise a very large measure of control over the personal lives of the villagers. Some of them closed cafes, censored movies and books, or prevented the distribution of tobacco and alcohol. Where money was used only in relations with the outside world, the committee exercised virtually absolute control over who would travel and how he might spend a stipulated amount of cash. For poor peasants with austere ideals, the censorship might be morally approved and the financial system might enable them to travel for the first time in their lives. But for those who liked to decide about drinking, smoking, and traveling for themselves, this feature must surely have been onerous. On the other hand, moral fanaticism is likely to be more prevalent in the first days of a revolution than it is over the long haul. The Spanish collectives lasted only a year to 18 months. Over a period of decades such censorship would probably have diminished, and need not be thought of as a permanent feature of comunismo libertario, any more than Prohibition, or literary censorship, need be thought of as an inevitable feature of American capitalist society. Wartime conditions, and the hostility of both the middle class republicans and the Communists inevitably added to the defensiveness, and hence to the censoring tendencies, of the village committees. Indeed, one of the factors which makes it so difficult to arrive at firm conclusions about the anarchist experiment is that their revolution was forced onto the defensive from the moment that the great wave of collectivizations occurred in the summer of 1936. Anarchist political history from September on is one long series of compromises and retreats due to the need to accept central authority in order to fight the anti-

fascist war, the need to placate the urban middle classes and the prosperous peasants, and the need for self-defense against implacable communist hostility.

In summary, the experience of 1936-37 illustrated the great potential for worker management of factories and for a new style of decentralized, collectivized agricultural life. But the experience did not last long enough to prove anything one way or the other about the viability of the new system over a period of years, and the fact is that by mid-1937 CNT reports themselves were critical of poor management and referred to many collectives as living off capital and supplies seized in July, 1936.⁹ The sense of high morale due to increased participation in decisions, and to freedom from old social and professional hierarchies is likewise clear from all accounts. A completely unresolved question is the relationship of such a society to the surrounding world. Anarchist theory has always anticipated the complete destruction of the capitalist or communist state as a precondition for the construction of the collectivist society. But highly organized and centralized industrial states are a fact of life, and will continue so to be. It is conceivable that a number of small, and economically less developed, countries may in the future choose some form of anarchist collectivism, and one can hope that just as capitalist and communist societies are learning to co-exist, a pluralistic world will also have room for anarchism. But nothing in the anarchist experience of 1936-37 in Spain points toward a practical solution for the relationship of the collective comunès to the world outside. The brief period of comunismo libertario appears to have been most meaningful to relatively poor villagers for whom it represented local autonomy, participation in decision-making, and the affirmation of human dignity.

Footnotes

1. G. Jackson, "The Origins of Spanish Anarchism," The Southwestern Social Science Quarterly, Sept., 1955, 135-47.
2. Gerald Brenan, The Spanish Labyrinth (Cambridge University Press, 1943 and 1950) available in a Cambridge paperback edition. George Orwell, Homage to Catalonia (London, 1938), available in a Beacon Press paperback edition.
3. George Woodcock, Anarchism (The World Publishing Co., Cleveland, Ohio, 1962); James Joll, The Anarchists (Little Brown and Co., Boston, 1964), available in a Grosset's Universal Library paperback edition; Daniel Guerin, L'anarchisme (Gallimard, Paris, 1965).

4. G. Jackson, The Spanish Republic and the Civil War (Princeton University Press, 1965) 277-83.
5. Hugh Thomas, "Anarchist Agrarian Collectives in the Spanish Civil War," in Martin Gilbert, ed., A Century of Conflict (London and New York, 1967) 249.
6. Frenz Borkenau, The Spanish Cockpit (Faber and Faber, London, 1937) currently available in a University of Michigan paperback edition; H. E. Kaminski, Ceux de Barcelone (Paris, 1937).
7. José Peirats, La CNT en la revolución española, 3 vols., (Toulouse, 1951-52) and Los anarquistas en la crisis política española (Editorial Alfa, Buenos Aires, 1964); Agustín Souchy Bauer, Entre los campesinos de Aragón (Ediciones Tierra y Libertad, Barcelona, 1938); Alardo Prats, Van guardia y retaguardia de Aragón (Ediciones Perseo, Buenos Aires, 1938).
8. Current Digest of the Soviet Press, 5 Sept., 1962; a passage from Ehrenburg's memoirs in serial publication.
9. Pierre Broue and Emile Temime, La révolution et la guerre d'Espagne (Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1961) 146-50.

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INVENTORY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS IN PROGRESS

The following doctoral dissertations are in progress under the direction of the professor whose name is indicated after that of the institution. The estimated date of completion is indicated in parentheses.

University of California--Los Angeles (J.Rodríguez-Puertolas)

1. Barbara M. Firoozye, "Leyendas artúricas en la Edad Media española" (1971).
2. Thomas A. Lathrop, "An Edition of the Siete Infantes de Lara according to its Prosefied Version in the Refundición toledana de la Crónica de 1344." (1971).

University of California--San Diego (Gabriel Jackson)

3. Patricia R. Fouquet, "The Relationship of Conservative Thought in early 20th Century Spain to European Fascism" (1972).
4. John Mosher, "The Early Career of Alejandro Lerroux" (1973).

University of New Mexico (Robert W. Kern)

5. Shirley F. Fredericks, "The Social Thought and Political Action of Federica Montseny, Spanish Anarchist, 1926-1939" (1970).
6. Ernest A. Mares, "The Generation of 1898: A Special Case of an European Elite" (1970).
7. Dale Miyoko, "Nineteenth Century Spanish Liberalism and the Philippine Archipelago, 1860-1898: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses" (1971).

New York University (Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz)

8. Carla Rahn, "Ciudad Real in the XVIIth Century. Economic and Social Evolution" (1970).

University of Wisconsin (Stanley Payne)

9. John Coverdale, "Italian Intervention in the Spanish Civil War" (1970).
10. Nelson Durán, "O'Donnell and the Liberal Union" (1973).
11. Edward Gingold, "Melquiades Alvarez and the Reformist Republican Party" (1972).

Vale University (Ursula Lamb)

12. Andre Villalon, "The Rise of the Mendoza from the First Mayoralazgo to about 1530" (1970).

Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Pau (France) (Manuel Tuffón de Lara)

13. Jean-Michel Desvoix, "Los orígenes de un diario español: Sol" (investigación sobre sus bases económicas, primer equipo de redactores y colaboradores y orientación de sus principales textos) (1970).
14. Nicole Halbout, "La extensión universitaria de Oviedo" (investigación sobre los cursos para obreros organizados por los profesores krausistas. 1898-1904) (1971).
15. Michelle Jaunier, "El movimiento sindical en Barcelona y los orígenes del anarco-sindicalismo desde 1890 hasta el comienzo del siglo XX" (investigación sobre el movimiento sindical catalán de fines del XIX, su prensa, las huelgas de 1902, y los antecedentes de la Solidaridad Obrera) (1970).
16. Sr. Masplé-Somps, "La guerra civil de España y el Departamento de Bajos Pirineos" (investigación sobre la prensa regional durante la guerra de España, y sobre el problema de los refugiados, el caso de la 43 División en Huesca, etc., a base de prensa y de testimonios orales) (1970).