

LORENZO, CÉSAR M. *Le mouvement anarchiste en Espagne. Pouvoir et révolution sociale*. Les Éditions Libertaires, S.l. 2006. 559 pp. € 35.00. DOI: 50020859007023267

This is a revised, updated, and considerably expanded edition of a study which first appeared in 1969. The bulk of it is divided into four parts, which provide a more or less chronological account. Part 1 covers the rise of a libertarian workers' movement, analysing its ideological foundations, and tracing its development from the September Revolution of 1868 to the CNT's Saragossa conference of May 1936. Part 2 provides a "panorama" of the revolution of July 1936, each chapter analysing the revolutionary political structures thrown up in different parts of the country, and the role played within them by the CNT. Part 3 concentrates on "the civil war within the civil war", from the autumn of 1936 through the counter-revolution of May 1937 to the CNT's relations with the Negrin government; it also examines the strengths and weaknesses of the collectivizations (still a seriously under-researched area). The shorter Part 4 analyses what the author calls the "period of decadence and retreat" from the defeat of 1939 through to the experience of exile and the divisions of the post-Franco era.

In a thirty-seven-page "appendix", Lorenzo addresses critically the various more or less dubious attempts to explain why there has been, as the French anarchist Louis Lecoin once put it, "no other country where Anarchism has put down such deep roots as in Spain".¹ Whilst rejecting what he bluntly dismisses as "racist" attempts at explanation and praising the work of some Marxist historians (Pierre Vilar, notably), Lorenzo goes on to analyse Spanish culture and the set of values and attitudes which, he argues, left their mark on what would become a distinctively Spanish anarchism. Two final sections examine links with the Portuguese CGT (General Labour Confederation) and the FORA (Argentinian Regional Workers' Federation).

It was in 1868–1869 that the Italian revolutionary, Giuseppe Fanelli, travelled to Madrid and Barcelona in order to spread the ideas of the IWMA. Spain by that time already had a long tradition of working-class militancy: trade unions had been in existence since at least 1840, and Proudhonism, democratic socialism, and republican federalism were widespread. Insurrectionalist habits also had deep roots. Since Fanelli belonged to the "anti-bureaucratic" tendency of the IWMA led by Bakunin, the latter's ideas on libertarian socialism would become extremely influential, thanks to a combination of national and international factors (disappointment with bourgeois progressive republicanism, the Cuban war of national liberation, the Paris Commune). In later years, Spanish anarchism would also exhibit a strong dose of voluntarism derived from Errico Malatesta, who was influential in both Spain and Latin America.

Sections of the International were quickly created across Spain and, from 1871, in Portugal. In 1870, in Barcelona, a Bakunist "Alliance of Socialist Democracy" was created. Later that year, the first Spanish Workers' Congress took place, and Bakunist ideas won out over those of reformist or "trade-unionist" (as opposed to revolutionary syndicalist) or republican activists. Thus was born the Spanish Regional Federation of the First International. In 1907, after a series of setbacks for the whole labour movement and the decline of the regional federation, a new syndicalist organization would be created by socialists and libertarians sickened by the individual terrorism which, as in France, had

1. Louis Lecoin, *Le cours d'une vie*, édité par l'auteur en supplément du journal *Liberté* (Paris, 1965), p. 153.

caused so many problems within the movement. It was this new organization, Workers' Solidarity, which called what would become the founding conference of the CNT in Barcelona in 1910.

Before 1907, anarchist groups had tended to reject syndicalism and had, as a consequence, more or less vegetated, with a narrow audience and minimal influence. By the 1920s, virtually all anarchists were also syndicalists, and the CNT had become the principal oppositional force in the country. However, as Lorenzo comments, "it is always easy for minorities with no influence to display a magnificent revolutionary purity, it is easy for them to condemn, to criticize; but everything changes when hundreds of thousands of men [*sic*] begin to move and it is time for serious initiatives" (p. 68). For Lorenzo, many of the inexperienced, younger generation of anarcho-syndicalists in the 1920s and 1930s had too simple a faith in social revolution. They failed to understand, amongst other things, the importance of the petty bourgeoisie or of international complications, and they failed to give any thought to how to combat a preventative military dictatorship. They had transformed libertarian communism into an *ersatz* religion, Lorenzo argues, and in the process had become dogmatic and intolerant of those who questioned anarchist "principles".

This was even more the case of the FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation), created in 1927 in order to federate the previously autonomous "affinity groups" which had been in existence since the end of the nineteenth century: "the '*faïstas*' undertook to 'purify' the CNT of reformists and revisionists, imposing themselves by virtue of their radicalism, the violence of their language, and their incessant criticisms, constantly predicting the Social Revolution for the next day, inflaming the youth, pulling the unions with them" (p. 69). Lorenzo provides a detailed analysis of the ideological struggles between these "fundamentalist" or "pure" anarchists (*anarchistes intégristes*) of the FAI and other groups or tendencies, from the *Treintistas* to the "anarcho-bolsheviks" to the "Friends of Durruti".

By the time of the CNT's Saragossa congress of May 1936, Lorenzo believes that "the Spanish libertarian movement, showing a complete disregard for material contingencies, had escaped into a dream world" (p. 143). The programme adopted there – the "Confederal concept of libertarian communism" – was, in Lorenzo's words, naive and utopian. Unfortunately, a majority believed that the spontaneity of the masses would suffice to make the social revolution.

Lorenzo engages at length with the issue of the CNT's participation in government and examines the various arguments that have been put forward from different perspectives. He argues that given the state of affairs in July 1936, the most convincing strategic proposal was that put forward by Horacio Prieto, national secretary of the CNT in 1936, a "reformist" and leading advocate of participation in government. Lorenzo concludes that without a revolution on at least a European scale, a libertarian communist Spain could not possibly have survived.

Instead, what was in the process of being created, for Lorenzo, was a form of libertarian socialism, inspired largely by anarchism but revised pragmatically in the light of experience and characterized by economic pluralism in a framework of industrial democracy, with an emphasis on experiments in self-management and with a central role for the unions; regional autonomy within a federal, socialist republic; separation of church and state and the secularization of education; the political party as a means of action complementary to mass direct action; a pluralistic and flexible libertarian movement, integrated with a

renovated anarcho-syndicalism; doctrinal renewal (revision of the theory of the state, of the conception of the economy, of the idea of revolution).

So whilst not uncritical of the CNT leadership, Lorenzo distances himself from those he regards as unrealistic purists who were critical of the CNT's decisions, from the refusal to campaign for abstention in the February 1936 elections, through militarization, to participation in government; and this applies both to Spanish militants such as José Peirats, to leading anarchists in other countries, such as the Frenchman Pierre Besnard, and to later commentators, such as the English anarchist Vernon Richards (whose 1953 *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution* is nevertheless praised as being the best history of the revolution written from a "fundamentalist anarchist" viewpoint).

This is still a contentious area, and Lorenzo criticizes the alleged reductionism of many Marxist analyses and the "liberalism" which he claims characterizes many British and American studies of the Spanish Civil War. When Lorenzo's book first appeared in 1969, his analysis was also attacked by some for being biased (Horacio Prieto was his father). But Lorenzo is unapologetic: "No historian has ever written or will ever write from 'nowhere', *sub specie aeternitatis*, whether consciously or not. [...] What is important is the intellectual probity demonstrated by the historian" (p. 4). And this book is indeed an impressive piece of scholarship, whether one agrees with all aspects of the analysis or not: thoroughly researched, clearly and intelligently argued, and a valuable contribution to the literature.

Lorenzo comments on the limitations of a work of political history, arguing that a more general history of Spanish anarchism would necessitate a much longer study of several volumes and remains to be done. But this history is thoroughly contextualized in terms of economic and social developments, and is also good on the international context and the impact of particular events, such as Spain's colonial wars. There is an interesting examination of the relative influence of the French CGT and the Amiens Congress of 1906 as compared to the FORA or even the IWW. And there are some interesting (if brief) remarks on the ideological consequences of worker migration.

This large-format book has been attractively produced by the Editions Libertaires (<http://perso.orange.fr/libertaire/index-librairie.htm>) and includes thirty-two pages of illustrations, many in colour; five very useful maps; fourteen pages of photographs of leading figures in the movement; and a selection of colour posters from the Civil War period. It includes a list of initials and acronyms and a sixteen-page select bibliography – select, as Lorenzo insists, because so much of what has been published on the subject has been poorly researched and is often superficial and repetitive.

David Berry

SÁNCHEZ PÉREZ, FRANCISCO. *La protesta de un pueblo. Acción colectiva y organización obrera*. Madrid 1901–1923. Ediciones Cinca, Madrid 2005. xxiv, 425 pp. Ill. € 25.00. DOI: 50020859007033263

In what is an important new contribution to the social history of Madrid, this study constitutes a prequel to the excellent studies of the Spanish capital during the Second Republic by Sandra Souto Kustrín, "*Y ¿Madrid? ¿Qué hace Madrid?*" *Movimiento revolucionario y acción colectiva (1933–1936)* (Madrid, 2004), and Santos Juliá Díaz, *Madrid, 1931–1934 de la fiesta popular a la lucha de clases* (Madrid, 1984).