

HOMAGE TO SPANISH ANARCHISM

HOMAGE TO CATALONIA

I first read George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* when I was 22, on my first major foreign trip to Spain in 1975. Spain under Franco then was closer to Orwell's time than to the vibrant post modern capitalist party town of Barcelona I visited in 2006. It was seventy years since the outbreak of the civil war, where in Barcelona a popular, anarchist based volunteer militia prevented an army takeover in July 1936. This heralded the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, as the Republican government fought against the coup led by Franco, using an army against its own people having failed to conquer Morocco. Orwell's book has stuck in my mind since, in part, for his description of the street fighting between the government Civil Guards and Russian backed communists against the anarchists and libertarian communists, like the POUM (1), with whom Orwell had fought on the front in Aragon. Down this same Rambla in May 1937, where today's ramblers enjoy the new street theatre a very different kind of fight for the streets of Barcelona and for the soul of Spain had taken place (2). Yet, like so much of post modernity, Barcelona's past radical and anarchist tradition has been laid aside in the rush to embrace Capital's success. Where in all this new Barcelona is the memory of the radicalism and of the anarchists who gave the political, social and egalitarian dimension to the 1936 revolt, which resounded not just in Catalonia, but in the Asturias, in Aragon, in the Basque Country, in Valencia, in the fighting around Madrid and across Andalusia?

Reading Orwell again thirty years later, I am struck by his ability to write a popular piece explaining the complicated politics of Catalonia. In the midst of Civil War, of food shortages and of a national Government that opposed them can we learn afresh from the heroic (3) and theoretical legacy of Spanish anarchism? The Spanish anarchist experience is worth pursuing at a number of different levels. It is the major popular movement of the twentieth century which thought of itself as 'anarchist'. It therefore gives us the strongest anarchist connection to the wider West European socialist and trade union movements of the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. The Spanish anarchist experience is thereby rooted in Spanish history. Rather than an abstract theoretical analysis of anarchist ideas or thinkers, I have chosen to learn here by looking at the historical experience of the anarchist movement in Spain.

The Spanish experience too can also warn of the dangers of failing to understand the incorporating powers of client rulers. These must be faced before we can even begin to assess the kind of labour and other coalitions that will need to be assembled to challenge them. In Spain, the anarchists were forced to fight – and lost – a revolution within the Civil war. Here the Catalan nationalist client elite could rule by espousing loyalty to a Stalinist Communist party that had little mass support outside of Asturias before the Russian intervention. Domestic rule in the Empire of Capital has always had duplicity at its heart.

THE PROTEST TRADITION IN CATALONIA

Catalonia has a radical tradition of protest that goes far back beyond 1936. The social and historical tradition on which Spanish anarchism was based also had even deeper roots. The rural pueblo based peasant anarchism of Andalusia benefited the urban trade union, syndicalist and libertarian communist strands within Barcelona, Seville, Zaragoza and other cities. The affinity groups that lay at the heart of twentieth century anarchist solidarity had roots in the old sworn 'sacramental' bond that had set the fourteenth century Catalan peasants on the road to war.

Catalonia's history of social and national revolution puts it on a par with England in terms of the relative success of its own 'peasant wars' – known as the 'Remensas'. These wars beginning in 1388 and still going in 1486 lasted for far longer than the English up-rising of 1381 and were more conspicuously a rural movement. Unlike England, where there was also an urban rising, the peasants of Catalonia often faced resistance from the great bourgeois of mercantile Barcelona. Unlike England where the peasants rose in hope of the King's grace and were defeated by an incipient Absolutism; in Catalonia, the King used the peasants to constrain his own nobility (4).

As with all of Spain in the 1930s it was a long and difficult road for the servile Catalan peasantry to gain their freedom. The underlying problem in Catalonia stemmed, as in that other periphery of European feudalism in the East, from the spaces still open to a freer peasantry. The Spanish 'Reconquista' (completed bar Granada in 1266) led to a tendency for peasants to try and move south to gain their freedom. The Catalan nobility thereby increased the restrictions on their peasants and this was compounded after the Black Death with increased rents and feudal services. As in England, the final revolts broke out after tax increases – or the 'evil customs' (malos usos). The peasants and lords also fought over abandoned holdings.

The malos usos were abolished by the King in 1455 under peasant pressure, when he was opposed by bourgeois, nobility and the bishop of Gerona. This led to war over Barcelona from 1462. By the late fifteenth century, as in Germany in the 1520s, the peasant war also mixed in with a civil war. As with the revolutionary battles of 1937, a parallel social, political and economic fight was taking place amongst the forces opposing a land owning aristocracy. The class hatred was intense – from both unfree 'remensas' and free poor rural tenants. In Catalonia these class wars ended serfdom, the evil customs and the Lords' use of force (5).

As in England, which also gained from its revolt leading to rising real wages, the relative prosperity of the Catalan peasantry stood out against those of Aragon and Castile. The peasant nationalist cause was always to be imbued with this memory of a successful struggle, rather like that of Wallace in Scotland, which by the nineteenth century the Catalan bourgeois were attempting to reduce to a national struggle alone.

BARCELONA'S MERCANTILE EMPIRE AND 'AUSTRALIAN' CASTILE

As the Catalan peasants fought for freedom they did so against the background of a successful mercantile Empire, centred in Barcelona and built in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This stretched not only into Catalonia, and the Balearics, but also in parts of today's South Eastern France and Italy and across the Mediterranean into Sicily and Sardinia, both ruled from the King in Aragon (which had merged its Kingship with Catalonia in 1137) from 1282 and 1323. Barcelona was the largest City of medieval Spain. Its industrial and trading strength stemmed from textiles and also linked it via Northern Castilian trading towns like Burgos and the Northern Cantabrian Coast, into Flanders and Northern Italy. The Black Death, the peasant war, and increasing competition from Genoa led to a banking crash as early as 1381 in Barcelona. The successful Catalan great bourgeois turned to speculating in land and living as rentiers. By the end of the Civil wars the old mercantile Mediterranean economy of Barcelona was in a state of temporary collapse.

The way was open to the more vibrant wool economy of Castile. Now Catalonia brought its cosmopolitan and imperial experience to the military and land owning aristocracy that dominated Castile. The new Union emphasised the disparities between the two kingdoms and the rising power of a Castile that was to become the foundation of Spain as the great 'modern' power of sixteenth century Europe. The expanding Castilian economy was based on wool. Castile was the 'Australia of the Middle Ages'. This successful economy was based on a great inequality in land holdings. Castile's nobility had taken much of the land during the wars of the late Middle Ages and 2-3 per cent of the population owned nearly all the land. Castile was much larger than Aragon – almost four times as big and it covered two third's of the Iberian peninsula. It also had a higher population density. In 1600, it had a population of around 5 million – 5 times that of Aragon. By 1700, despite much emigration to the Americas it had grown to nearly 6 times greater – 8 million versus 1.4 million (6). Castile's (often landless) peasants paid tax to feed Habsburg wars.

Castile and Aragon had no real union that extended further than the monarchy; closer to England and Scotland in 1603 than in 1707. The sprawl of the Habsburg Empire not only called forth the Spanish Inquisition, it helped to arrest Spanish centralisation. Both the Church and the towns, so vital in the Protestant reformations elsewhere, were subordinated and the State took control of church appointments. As the Habsburg Empire became the dominant power from Portugal to Hungary, the Netherlands and Italy, there was no common currency, tax or legal system even across Spain. The Spanish Inquisition then took on the role of the internal Big Brother State. It performed the centralised repressive functions internally within Spain, as the Habsburg Empire increasingly required external repression for its foreign wars. As Anderson puts it: 'Madrid's power in Naples or Milan was actually greater than in Barcelona or Zaragoza' (7). The Spanish towns attempt to reassert their relative independence was crushed in the Comunero revolt of 1520-21. Here artisans rose up in wool boom towns like Valladolid – or towns which had a long standing independence, like Toledo. The resistance to authoritarian centralised dictatorship where Madrid fought Franco had a long history in Spain.

SPANISH ABSOLUTISM, CATALAN REVOLTS AND GUERRILLA WAR

With the towns' defeat, Castile's development was more akin to that of Eastern Europe than to England. Marx concluded that the Spanish towns had lost their 'medieval power without gaining modern importance' (8). The failed Armada of 1588 marked the peak of Spanish power in the West. After the Thirty Years War, the economy was 'in ruins'. Catalonia still the richest province had refused both taxes and soldiers to the Habsburg State as much as it could.

In an attempt to pull Catalonia into the conflict and create a newer centralised Absolutism, Olivares, the Spanish Richelieu, attacked South Eastern France. This fermented a new national Catalan revolution in 1640. Led by the nobility, legitimised by the clergy, it fed off the peasants' older tradition of revolt and the experience of the troops' requisitioning and billeting. There were riots in Barcelona. Nationalist Catalonia was trying to escape being wed to a bankrupt Castile (9). The destruction stemmed as in the 1930s from a Civil War and the French war.

As in the fifteenth century, the Catalan nobility and urban bourgeois took fright again and looked to French (in 1930 to Stalin) rather than popular rule. For ten years, Catalonia became a Protectorate of France. Expelling Spanish soldiers was all very well; the Catalan people discovered that they had merely swapped one occupier for another. Catalonia became a pawn for Richelieu's France. What was worse for the old mercantile Empire of Barcelona – French merchants took Sicilian and Sardinian markets. Portugal gained independence in 1668. Catalonia was finally deserted by the French and British. Barcelona was sacked in 1714 after 'heroic defence' (10). Spanish Absolutism survived until the time of Napoleon, but at a terrible cost to Spain. As one sign of its economic weakness, Spain's population fell from 8.5 million in 1600 to 7 million in 1700. The Spanish regime was so totally moribund in 1808 when Napoleon invaded that the King and nobility collapsed without a fight.

Given that the social and historical tradition on which Spanish anarchism was based had deep roots of protest, this was increased by the Spanish independence struggle of the early nineteenth century. The extent to which the guerrilla war was initiated and manned by ordinary Spanish people has been underplayed in Britain. For once in Spain there was a popular army of the people – so much so that the word guerrilla comes from the Spanish (11). The nobility had gone over to the French and no 'hidalgos' were allowed in the Peoples Army. The atmosphere must have been akin to the popular anarchist militia that Orwell describes on the Aragon front 130 years later. The revolts against Napoleon's imposition of a new King and against the Spanish nobility broke out immediately in Madrid, where a thousand people were killed in the protests. This day - 2 May 1808 - is still a Spanish National Holiday (12). In Madrid, the revolt was led by the younger bourgeois and a small intelligentsia from the upper and middle classes. It spread to the Asturias, into peasant dominated Galicia and into Andalusia and Valencia. The atmosphere must have been akin to the popular anarchism of the militia that Orwell describes on the Aragon front 130 years later.

THE SPANISH 'LIBERAL' LABYRINTH

The nobility as in Catalonia, deserted immediately to the French and accepted the new Bourbon monarchy under the guise of a Spanish 'regeneration'. The Spanish Church rallied to the King fearing a French revolutionary style backlash (which did come in the 1930s). The new King, was so fearful of the peasants he evacuated back to Northern Castile - to Burgos. Middle class ideologists announced a new Liberal Constitution in 1812, borrowed ironically from the French Revolution, as such ideas had been across Germany. A new franchise was proclaimed (later amended by a literacy qualification in 1830), feudal impositions were abolished, as was the Inquisition. So the revolutionary war against France began the first phase of Spain's bourgeois revolution. Like Scotland, Spain gained part of its definition from fighting its auld enemy. If in England's case the 'bourgeois revolution' took over 200 years from 1649 to come to complete fruition, in Spain it was to take virtually as long after 1808.

The new capital of the revolt against both Bourbon establishment and nobility was first based in Seville and then Cadiz. Building on this tradition both later in the century were key centres of anarchist revolts. The attempt to fight the Napoleonic armies in pitched battles were doomed to failure. The destruction in the war against France probably put Catalonia's development back fifty years (13). But in the Northern periphery, peasant guerrillas in Asturias and Galicia grew stronger as the conventional armies were defeated. Marx gives a graphic description of guerrilla war, which would stand as a classic description of insurgency in Iraq in 2003-7. No French supplies could set out without the danger of being known about and potentially intercepted. Here was the classic war on terror: 'thousands of enemies were on the spot though not one could be discovered'.

The political story of Spain from 1812 - 1937 is a repeated one of revolts brutal repression and changing governments and coalitions, with some occasional popular reforms, usually undone later. The danger of the Spanish Independence War, as Marx saw it, was that, as often the case with peasant revolts (Robin Hood and William Wallace) the fighting was in the name of the 'true' King, so when the French were defeated, Spain was still ripe for counter revolution. As Marx put it in his critique of the peasantry, they appeared to prefer rule by king and monks to that of the new middle class. 1823-33 was the 'Ominous Decade' of 'clerical reaction' (14).

The ruling politics of elite 'turnismo' - shifting from Liberal to Conservative - as in much of Latin America - meant nothing to the poor who were to provide the mass base of rural anarchism. In this the Spanish anarchists shared a common heritage with the Italians. Their abstention from traditional parliamentary politics even when they were not excluded from the vote stemmed from a suspicion of the ruling elite that controlled mainstream politics (like Britain today perhaps). The army (as in Africa today) became the main base for any social mobility in the nineteenth century. 'Revolutionary' coups (as in Venezuela) always came from the Army. The army, well before Franco, were the real rulers of Spain. In 1850, it employed 150,000; 90 per cent of State employees and 55 per cent of the budget. Yet it could barely win in Morocco (15).

AGRARIAN RELATIONS AND ANDALUSIAN REVOLT

The fundamental problem of Spain 70 years ago was the agrarian problem. Most of the Spanish small peasant holdings were in the North; the Latifundia, large estates with landless labourers South American style, were in the South. In Castile, in the middle, the pull of colonial demand for wine, olive and wool production had left Spain as a grain importer as early as 1570. The pressure on the land was such that 60 to 70 per cent of the rural population here were already landless agricultural day workers – ‘jornaleros’.

The rural heart of anarchism was in Andalusia - which was not a poor land and had been a granary for Rome. Under Muslim rule, the great cities of the South – Cordova, Seville, Malaga and Almeria – were also centres of silk, cotton and fabric production. Under the Reconquista, the new 'Christian' military orders and land owning rulers were little interested in working the land. Those 'Moors' that did not leave were turned into virtual slave labourers. Immense tracts of land were turned into a virtual wilderness, fit only for sheep and cattle. The new aristocrats were only interested in livestock. As in England and the Scottish Highlands, sheep were made to make war on men and all the agriculturalists grew to hate the cities, where the absentee landlords lived on rents, in idleness and wealth. Both the Church and the Army officer class were seen to be rich parasites, living off the people. The productive potential of the land was destroyed so that around Seville half the land was worked compared to that of 100 years before.

After the French War both Church and State lands were sold to reduce debt. Much of the land was bought by the urban middle classes; as in Australia only they could afford the 20 per cent down payment required. By the 1830s came the beginning of what passed for Spain's agricultural revolution. There were legislative attempts to enclose common land – in 1835-6 and 1855-6. The bulk of church lands were sold between 1856-67. 10 million hectares, around 20 per cent of the available land, 40 per cent of the arable lands for peasant subsistence were pounced on by the monied classes. With or without enclosure, the wool economy was driving people off the land.

The new world was bitterly resisted by the peasants. Andalusian peasant and anarchist revolts were a common feature after 1855. The repeated legislative attempts to enclose common land were violently opposed. The anarchists were at the heart of this. The landless agricultural labourers, peasants and later industrial workers who became the Spanish anarchists all shared - a culture of the ancient pueblo (town/village) that was not co-opted by the rulers or their ideology. From here came the anarchist hatred of domination and hierarchy; in Andalusia this was not a theoretical thing but a practical experience of day hire for landless labourers or of exploitation of sharecroppers or for peasants in debt and losing their land. There were at least 5 major up-risings against the break up of common lands - in 1840, 1855, 1857, 1861 and 1865 (16). In Valencia as early as 1801, the protests were led by a mythical Pep L'Orta - a Spanish equivalent to the English Captain Swing Riots that were a major cause of English reform in the early 1830s. At the same time as across Latin Americas native peoples similarly rose up against a largely Spanish nobility also taking their lands.

THE RISE OF A CAPITALIST ECONOMY IN SPAIN'S PERIPHERY

To understand the changing politics in Spain also requires recognition of her slow move towards a capitalist economy in the nineteenth century. Harrison for example even dates the formation of a 'capitalist society' from as late as 1914. British exports had out competed Catalan production in foreign markets and looked increasingly likely to dominate the Spanish home market. The Spanish government therefore banned all textile imports in 1832 - if only the global trade justice lobby could achieve as much for the 'South' today - but the industry was hardly aided by a British ban in return on all textile machinery exports to Spain until 1841. Nevertheless, the Catalan textile industry was able to modernise itself. A spinning industry that almost entirely manual in 1835 was mechanised by 1861. The population of Barcelona exploded after 1850 as industry grew and as peasants in this era from rural Catalonia, Aragon and Valencia provinces left or were forced off the land. By 1910, Barcelona's textile industry was the fifth largest in the world and out of 150,000 industrial jobs in Catalonia, cotton was responsible for 84,000 and wool for another 25,000. With the growth of the Cuban market cotton exports peaked at in 1897, but then fell to a third of their old level by 1902, after the loss of the colony in the war versus the USA.

Outside of Catalonia, the other major industry was the Basque iron industry, which had substantial British, French and German investment and where 90 per cent of output went abroad. The Bilboa exchange floated 45 companies between 1886-1901. 40 per cent of these companies were in mining. Linked also to naval shipbuilding, the Basques had a negotiated the right to raise some of their own taxes by 1876. The problem for Catalonia was that unlike the Basques most of her exports went to the rest of Spain. In the 1890s the Catalan attempt to gain the same right floundered, while a Bill to make Barcelona a free port was thrown out. In the consequent unrest martial law was declared and in response the Catalan bourgeois founded its own party – the 'Lliga' - after the elections in 1901. Catalonia did get a limited autonomy in 1914, but by then seeds of further unrest had been sown (17). This Catalan nationalist party was to play a key role in local politics until 1939.

The spread of capitalist industrialisation in the periphery of Spain had done little to change relations on the land before 1936. The agricultural depression which gathered pace in the 1880s also afflicted Spain. It was cheaper to import US grain to the Catalan coast than to ship it from Castile. The protectionist lobby quickly appeared so that in 1891 and 1906 tariffs were in place that Trotsky describes as both too late to aid Capital and at the same time the highest in Europe (18). Although the Spanish State was not a Capitalist State it was seen to embody both the old and new forms of repression. As in Scotland, for the growing and wealthier nationalist middle classes in both the Basque country and Catalonia, the trick from the 1890s was to takeover the popular hatred of all forms of oppression and make it serve their own interests - that of creating more space for them against the archaic Castilian State. Industrial growth before 1914 built upon a Spanish State 'owned by archaic agricultural interests' - not so different from that in Argentina at the same time. Manufacturers may be able enter power by the 'back door' but the petty bourgeois, the peasants and the workers were all excluded.

CLASS CONFLICT IN ANDALUSIA AND BARCELONA

Borkenau linked the protest in the towns and the countryside; where the capitalist intrusions into the old pueblo traditions were the strongest, there appeared the greatest anarchist insurrections. Anarchism in Spain from 1855-1939 was for Borkenau the Spanish lower classes resistance to 'capitalist intrusion'. When anarchist preachers appeared on the scene from Italy they found a ready audience in Seville and Andalusia. In protests in Seville in 1857, where the first socialist student groups appeared, 100 had already been killed. In 1861, at least 10,000 peasants took part in unrest near Granada. In 1868 there was yet another coup, to be followed by a short lived Republic in 1873-4. As a part of the ferment in 1872 a meeting of 20,000 gathered at Cordova. By 1873, whatever the nature of the Marx/Bakunin quarrel, 45,000 had joined the Anarchist groupings in Spain. This grew to 60,000 by 1875 at its first peak during the Republican years of whom 40,000 were from Andalusia. In 1873, the Alcoy insurrection took place between Valencia and Alicante in what in England reads like a combination of 1381 and the Luddites - the town's mayor had his head cut off and the town factory was burnt to the ground. With the monarch's restoration the persecution of the anarchists also reached its first heights. Yet despite the collapse of Bakunin's International in 1877 the anarchists could call on up to 50,000 activists in 1882 and Seville with 30,000 was its stronghold. Despite the repression, during the agricultural depression of 1892, there was a major anarchist led up-rising in Jerez, with crop burning, cattle and vine destruction. It was not that Bakunin or others created Spanish anarchism, as some accounts imply, they provided an intellectual theory and attitude, for what the poor already knew, felt and tried to live. Engels and Trotsky later argued against the peasants disdain for parliamentary politics; Bakunin understood it. It is not apathy but hatred of the elite definition of what constitutes 'politics'. The people - and thereby the anarchists - often preferred direct action. This was first learnt in Catalonia in the Middle Ages and in Andalusia, revolts ran which alongside banditry as major forms of rural protest.

Barcelona was a 'wild city', ruled by private capital for private gain, represented by the Lliga and the Radicals, it was divided into a middle class city and working class slums. Engels describes Barcelona as having 'more barricade fighting than any other city in the world'. The strength of the anarcho-syndicalist trade unions in Barcelona stemmed from and fed their exclusion from both Catalan bourgeois rule and from that of the Spanish State. Two third's of the workers pouring into Barcelona were in unskilled jobs, many in the docks and construction, rather than the old textile base. By the early 1890s Barcelona had up to 4,000 active anarchists. In 1891 bombs went off in the middle class Tivoli and Liceo Theatres on the Rambla. Four anarchists were executed on thin evidence. 400 anarchists were imprisoned. After a general strike in 1902, in 1909 it turned into a social insurrection, when combined to opposition against conscription for the Moroccan War. 600 died in this 'Tragic week'. In the overcrowded barrios, behind the barricades, the State found the workers districts were virtual no go areas. As they had used the Civil Guard to keep the pueblos down, now they relied on Civil Guards violence to 'restore order'. The anarchist tradition of violent direct action was slowly being transmitted from rural landless and peasants to urban workers and lumpen proletariat (19).

A PLAGUE OF INITIALS: PSOE AND UNIONS

As Orwell complained, to understand the history and complexity of the different movements across Spain we need to understand what Orwell called the 'plague of initials'. The Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) was founded in 1879 – fourteen years before the ILP in Britain - and its trade union arm, the UGT followed in 1888 - the opposite way round to that in Britain, where the unions founded the Labour party. The PSOE was Marxist in rhetoric, but like the German SDP by the 1890s followed a reformist line in practice. The UGT had some limited success recruiting skilled industrial workers in Bilbao, the miners in Asturias and at RioTinto, amongst the craft workers of Madrid and the peasants of Castile and later Granada, but had no impact in Catalonia. In 1900, it had 25,000 members. In Barcelona, below subsistence wages meant the embryonic unions had no strike funds; strikes were short with often violent street fighting. Alongside the more traditional political parties and trade unions, the new fusion of anarchist direct action with industrial strikes in the twentieth century came to be called anarcho-syndicalism and was to be a key factor in the next thirty years. The Federal workers union - the CNT - was founded in 1910 and its membership was 30,000 mainly in Catalonia. The Great War provided both agricultural and industrial opportunities for Spain. Catalan wool exports to Argentina increased fourfold. Manufacturing exports doubled in 1913-17. Industry grew from 16 percent of GDP in 1910 to 22 percent by 1920 and to 27 percent in 1930. Agriculture declined from 66 percent to 46 percent. Spectacular capitalist profits were being made: in Bilbao shipbuilding profits were up six fold in 1913-14 and doubled again to 1915. Profits in steel doubled. The number of mine companies in the Basque area increased three fold and the number of Asturias miners doubled. Basque industrial production spread from its first province in Vizcaya over into Guipizcoa. Industrial hegemony now shifted from Catalonia to the Basque Provinces.

The industrial bourgeois looked for a new coalition – with middle class Republicans and petty bourgeois democrats. They also wanted to use the workers' industrial muscle to force new regional concessions out of the landowners' State. The UGT was used to making concessions with the reforming bourgeois - they had accepted a new industrial Conciliation Law in 1908. The CNT agreed to work with the UGT in a new coalition enshrined in the Pact of Zaragossa in 1916. A three day strike in August 1917 was broken at its strongest points - on the railways and in the mines. The Peasant Federation supported the towns but the landless were less enthusiastic; they could not afford to strike. The industrial middle class quickly turned on their temporary allies - and in the style of Germany and France then drowned the workers' strikes in blood. 70 were killed in street fighting in Barcelona (20).

THE CNT VERSUS BOURGEOIS AND STATE

Spain hit an economic crisis almost immediately after the war boom. As other industrial economies recovered demand for Spanish shipbuilding, coal and steel fell and unemployment rose. CNT membership took off again rising from 75000 in June to 350,000 by the end of 1918. A new strike wave burst out in Barcelona in 1919. The number of working days lost in Spain reached a new peak and Barcelona accounted for 50 per cent. The strikers got their wage increases and an eight hour day just four months before the German workers got the same in their November revolution.

The CNT was always much more than a trade union. Besides containing its revolutionary elements, the movement reflected the needs of the peasantry from which many of its members had sprung. Its pragmatic reform programme was a classic radical/liberal combination with the demand for a Republic, the separation of church and state, a militia not an army, divorce and a minimum wage. In its Congress of June 1918 it moved from the demand for the nationalisation of the land to giving the 'land for those who work it'. But first generation unemployed migrants found there was not enough land for them to return to.

Instead, some landowners left for the cities or Latin America. The Catalan industrialists changed alliances - now the Madrid bureaucracy was preferable to their own workers. Their main enemy was now symbolised by the CNT rather than Castilian or Andalusian landowners. In May 1919 martial law was declared and 3000 CNT leaders were jailed. As the Freikorps rampaged around Germany in 1920 in Spain, there were more arrests, more bombs and more killings. Between 1918-23 Bookchin estimates 900 CNT workers were killed in Barcelona out of 1500 in Spain. Despite the violent attacks the CNT membership still grew in strength. By the end of 1919 membership had reached 700,000 - with over 400,000 in Catalonia, 130,000 amongst the mountain peasants in Levant and another 90,000 in Andalusia, although up to 200,000 jobs had been lost in that year. The CNT officially adopted the objective of 'comunismo anarquico'.

By 1923 the ruling class feared the labour movement and 'Bolshevism' more than ever before. The old nineteenth century system of control had clearly broken down. The King was keen to bury a parliamentary inquiry into yet another army disaster in Morocco and had toyed with ruling as his own dictator. He then ushered in General Rivera in a coup. Rivera had been army commander in Barcelona after March 1922 who liked to see himself as the 'iron surgeon'. The new regime practiced and presided over the 'gun law' that ruled in the Barcelona barrios - hiring 'pistoleros' whose job was to enter the no go anarchist areas and shoot down anarchist leaders in what was called the 'politics of the mauser'. The most important anarchist leader – Seguí was killed in this way in '23 (21).

THE RIVERA DICTATORSHIP

Rivera gained support from the same kind of agrarian and industrial elites (strongest in Castile and Catalonia respectively) that underpinned Mussolini, but he did not have the kind of mass support that the fascists in Italy provided. As with Franco later, Rivera was an older style of nineteenth century army ruler who had virtually no mass base. His style was of straight forward repression which succeeded via compulsory collective bargaining in keeping wages down until 1931. Since they perceived the crisis to be desperate Rivera was supported by the Spanish bourgeois and by elements in the much weaker UGT. When the CNT was forced underground in 1923 and its leaders imprisoned, the UGT stayed legal. Attempts by miners' leaders in the Asturias particularly to get the UGT and CNT to work together continually foundered on the rocks of mutual suspicion.

Rivera was always uncertain of middle class support but was too weak to rule as a pure reactionary in opposition to it. He could never satisfy the unions nor could anyone agree on agrarian reform, as the 1930s Republican governments were also to learn to their great cost. Nor could he build a party to support him. While Mussolini rode the 1929 recession with a more developed Northern Italian corporate State, the Spanish bourgeois felt ruined by a falling currency, despite paying low taxes. Like an ancient feudalism the fiscal burden for Spain's corporatism fell on the workers and peasants who supported the third largest public sector – after Russia and Italy in the 1920s. If Rivera had retired in 1926 he may have retired a hero of the bourgeois. Real wages were falling from 1925 and the end of a little boom from 1923-27 resulted in increasing unemployment and strikes. Between early 1927 and late 1928 unemployment doubled. By 1929 only the leaders of the PSOE and UGT were formally supporting Rivera (22). The CNT and UGT had not protested much about the downfall of the illiberal monarchy, although there had been a one day Communist led general strike in Bilbao. By 1930 strikes were running at 10 times the level of 1929 and 3 times that of 1927. For Trotsky by January 1930 when Rivera fell the upper classes were so desperate that they abandoned the monarchy as well in 1931 (23).

Economic power was still vested in the oligarchy and upper capitalists, but now the professional middle and lower middle class were to be offered the illusion of political power. Zaragoza in Aragon grew to be the fifth largest Spanish industrial city. The industrial workforce actually grew faster than in the Franco boom of the 1960s. Over 40 per cent of the population now lived in towns over 10,000(24). In 1931 47 out of 52 new urban councils were run by coalitions of Republicans and Socialists. By the San Sebastian Pact in August '30 the PSOE had agreed a joint slate with the Left Republicans and Radicals which was centred on land reform. The Left Republicans largely represented the progressive middle class and lower middle classes gaining from the new industry which still worked for capitalism if not for the landlords. Their commitment to land reform was an intellectual commitment to 'modernising' Spain rather than a rooted passionate belief or need (25). When therefore they met opposition from left and right they folded.

LA NINA BONITA

The elections of April 1931 revealed a nation split down the middle between right and left; each with around 200 seats. A sign of the new hope and protest from the late 1920s had been the sudden spurt in the membership of the UGT, which grew from 230,000 in 1929 to 960,000 in 1931. Of these 450,000 were rural workers organised in the FNTT and linked to the UGT. Many in the new Spanish working classes, rather like the Germans in 1918, Scots in 1922, or Italians in 1945 saw the new Republic as their salvation. The early nickname for the new Republic reflected the hopes of this Spanish Spring: it was known as 'la Nina Bonita' – the pretty girl. As the PSOE could not be a dominant electoral force on its own, the majority PSOE view of their role in the 1930-1 crisis was to assist the middle class in making a bourgeois revolution - similar then to the German SPD in 1918-33.

Unlike the UGT bought off by the Rivera regime, the Anarchists had no reason to be complacent about this process. The PSOE were not about to make an assault on 'feudal' Spain and resisted the anarchists at all points when they did so. In 1931 the landowners declared an 'agrarian war' against both rural workers, peasant unrest and 'anarchist' protest - 5 years before the military coup which was the peak of this struggle, not its start. As early as the troubles of 1927, a new Anarchist Federation for the whole of the Iberian peninsular was founded (the FAI). The CNT had been made legal again in 1930 and membership swiftly grew back to 500,000. It had further established its peasant support in Aragon and Galicia, but was also strong in the Southern Cities, in addition to Barcelona, in Cadiz, Cordoba, Malaga and Seville. Many anarchists viewed the Republic as little different from the Monarchy. The anarchists, with a strong landless peasant base derided the land reform proposals as a farce. Their members were gripped by starvation wages on the land which were still the norm. In Aragon wages in 1927 were still lower than in 1921 and Zaragoza's employers refused to negotiate in 1931. With a tradition going back to 1872, the CNT in Zaragoza had increased rapidly: it had more members in the town than the UGT had in the whole province. Both the FAI and CNT were spreading in small villages in South East Huesca and North East Teruel (26).

The defection of ex Monarchists gave the Republican government a continuing repressive aura. Maura, the new Minister of the Interior was the son of the Prime Minister who had led the Tragic Week repression in 1909. Whatever legislation was in place to protect the trade unionists and the 8 hour day (of July '31) was ignored by the landlords and Civil Guards. As it was clear that new land legislation was on the way, landlords and their underlings in the South joined the Radical Party, pushing it into the arms of the conservatives and making their electoral pact and coalition alliance with the UGT/PSOE increasingly fragile. The PSOE was in any case suspicious of the Radical leader, Lerroux, who had a reputation for shady dealings. In 1931, even the Republican authorities' main concern in the South, Aragon and Catalonia was 'law and order'. In Aragon, the army were called out three times against anarchist protests in December 1931 and February 1932. For the FAI/CNT at least any illusions about the Republic ended quickly (27).

CLASS STRUGGLE IN CATALONIA AFTER 1931

Besides the problem on the land, the Republican government faced the pressures for autonomy from Catalonia, and in a different way from the Basque region. Catalonia's industrial importance remained as it provided 25 per cent of State revenues. In Catalonia, the newly created Esquerra – or Republican Left – took 36 per cent of the vote, while the Lliga and Radicals took 24 per cent each. For once the majority of the working class had voted in April and a majority of them probably voted for Esquerra. The new Autonomy Statute got a 99 per cent approval in a 75 per cent turn out. In June 1931's parliamentary elections, Esquerra got 68 per cent of the vote and won 41 out of 54 seats in Catalonia. The underlying class conflicts of Barcelona rapidly re-surfaced. 60 per cent of Barcelona's workers were in the CNT in the middle of 1931. By August with 40,000 metalworkers on strike factories were occupied, 5 years before the mass sit-in became the tactic in the USA.

In Madrid meanwhile, both Maura and PSOE/UGT leaders like Francisco Largo Carballero (henceforth Largo) were suspicious of Esquerra. One of the more reformist leaders of the CNT – Angel Pestana was included in the ruling Catalan coalition, while the industrialist-dominated Lliga was excluded. Largo was furious at what he saw as CNT ‘adventurers’ ‘bringing down the Republic’. The CNT headquarters was blown up by army artillery in Seville. In 1931 the Republican authorities - not Rivera please note - fired artillery shells on anarchist protests in several cities - as in Seville, for example, killing 30. In October the government was using internment without trial for strikers and made wildcat strikes and picketing illegal. The FAI, whose main support came from the unemployed and unskilled, was again made illegal. By 1932 Spain had 50 per cent more police than under Rivera, mainly used against anarchists. The ruling class had not been defeated in 1931. It had just retreated.

In October, the leader of the left Republicans Manuel Azana'a became Prime Minister. In January 1932, in the valley of Llobregat 15 miles south of the city, miners, textile workers and peasants disarmed the Civil Guards and proclaimed a Libertarian Communist Council. Azana set in the army and the miners were crushed in 5 days of fighting. Azana then attempted to deport the miners' leaders. Protests against this led not only to more violence but to all trade unions (largely the CNT) being closed in the Barcelona area for six months.

After much delay and an attempted officer coup in Seville in August, Catalonia finally got its autonomy in September 1932. In common with the rest of Spain by late 1932 and on into 1935, the Catalan middle class (having got what it wanted) was moving right. The workers moved left assuming the Republic was going to give them nothing. Esquerra chose to rule alone. In January 1933 gun battles broke out in the streets in Barcelona and in July in Madrid, Seville and Valencia. The new rulers – oligarchy, capitalists and middle class - democracy was based on violent repression (28).

THE TWO BLACK YEARS: THE BIENIO NEGRO

The election victory for the right in November '33 seemed like an electoral fix. Because the winner of the majority in any province took 80 per cent of the seats, this structure favoured pacts. Azana was destroyed by the police state he had helped create – in the election his party only kept 5 seats. CEDA, under Gil Robles from Salamanca, became the new parliamentary force – with 112 seats, though it had no more votes than the PSOE. The Left Republicans split three ways and their working class vote disappeared. In 1933, the PSOE now thoroughly distrustful of the Radicals and Left Republicans made no alliances, as in 1931. The PSOE vote held up well at 1.6 m – but the number of PSOE seats more than halved – from being the biggest single party with 117 in '31 to only 58 in '33. The Radicals also remained as an important force – holding the balance with 103 seats, despite having only 0.8m votes, and Lerroux confirming the left view of his opportunism, became the new Premier. In Catalonia new Esquerra legislation in April 1934 was over-ruled in Madrid.

The CNT's long standing wariness of the middle class political parties resumed and they campaigned for the workers not to vote for any of them in 1933. Some areas in Teruel, Aragon had a turn out of less than 50 per cent. In provinces like Barcelona, Tarragona and abstentions ran at 40 per cent and in Cadiz, Malaga and Seville at 45 per cent. With little trust in this democracy, another wave of up-risings broke out. The biggest was perhaps in the Ebro Valley in Aragon in December 1933. Fighting lasted for between 2 to 4 days all over Huesca, Rioja and Teruel. Thousands were arrested in the backlash. Spain now felt like a 'vast prison'. The Anarchists of Aragon were still in jail in April 1934 and not tried until August 1935.

Despite the repression, peasant resistance continued. Agricultural strikes rose from 198 in '32 to 448 in '33. By December after a General Strike in Madrid, martial law ruled in Barcelona. CEDA had 7 Ministers in the governments of the next two years and enacted the 'politics of reprisal'. 19,000 peasants settled in Extramadura by the land reform of September 1932 were evicted. Only 12,000 new families had obtained land by 1934. The landlords were given tacit support as an 'employers' offensive' resumed – they were allowed to bring in cheap labour from outside a province - often to break strikes and lower wages. On top of the on-going evictions, wage cuts (of up to 60 per cent) both seasonal and full unemployment had increased. In late 1933 unemployment reached nearly 50 per cent in Jaen, over 34 per cent in Badajoz and around 25 per cent in Cordoba and Seville. In more Northern Provinces like Toledo and Valencia it reached 20 per cent. Wholly unemployed numbers were at 29 per cent in Jaen and 21 per cent in Badajoz. In December 1933 of Spain's 12 per cent unemployed of 668,000, rural workers accounted for 415,000. The peasant and rural union - the FNTT, as was often the case with the UGT and PSOE, had become increasingly radicalised. As the FNTT slogan put it 'without revolution' 'no agrarian reform'. The Anarchist wing of the rural movement was even more strident: the agrarian reform, which had achieved so little after so much debate was seen as a 'hoax' (29).

THE LAND, ZARAGOSSA AND ASTURIAS

In April 1934 came the Zaragoza General Strike: one of the most extraordinary in Spanish labour history. Building on the widespread protests of late 1933, it lasted for five weeks. The unions ran the city and there was no violence. The situation on the land and elsewhere grew more violent. Not only were the FNTT very critical of the PSOE's old allies like Azana's Left Republicans, they increasingly looked to revolutionary solutions and called for a strike during the harvest of 1934. Given the fix of November '33, the view of the rural anarchists tended to be revolution first, ballot box second. The government, under increasing CEDA pressure, declared the harvest 'sacred' and used troops to bring it in. By September 1934 CEDA was holding big rallies to press its case for more ministers in Lerroux's government, which fell on October 1st. Robles looked set for power. Spain looked more and more like two polarised and armed camps.

As CEDA look set for power - the thin end of a new 'fascist' wedge for many on the left - came an armed up-rising in the Asturias. The opening up of Asturias coal mines had begun from the 1860s for the railways and iron industries of the Basque areas. The Miners Union of Asturias (SMA) was not founded until 1910 and always had an incentive to persuade governments to either raise tariffs or subsidise transport or wage costs, if they wished 'Spanish coal' to compete with cheaper British coal. This need to pressurise or control goes some way to explain the miners' determination to get a government that responded to their needs - anarchist, socialist or communist ideologists - were subservient to this need. The social divisions that resulted from the unequally shared wealth of the war boom only made the post war situation worse. 300 mines closed after 1919, falling from over 1,400 to 1100. Unemployment rose to 6000 miners out of a peak employment of 39,000 in 1922.

The SMA had always worked hard to keep everyone on board. But the political regional and social conflicts in the rest of Spain were impossible to keep out. As the PSOE debated and decided against joining Lenin's International, an alternative Communist led Union (SM) was created. Until 1925 there was not a year where there was not a major strike over pay cuts and working conditions. The Asturian miners came up with the same slogan as the British miners of 1926 'not a peseta less, not a minute more'. Wanting to keep a Spanish coal industry, Rivera's government intervened aggressively not to smash strikes but in 1925/6 to subsidise their wages. It was the Communist Union, with links to the CNT, which had remained illegal until 1930, which led a major 20,000 worker strike in November 1930. Regular coal strikes were common place again after 1931 and there had been also a big strike at the La Felguera steel works outside of Gijon in early 1933.

By March 1934, the Asturias had a Workers Alliance - Anarchists, Communists and Socialists. The revolutionary tradition was strong in the port city of Gijon. The union there in 1871 had joined Marx's International Working Men's Association. Taking what was seen as the fall of an illegitimate government in October, the alliance of workers in the Asturias rising hoped to be part of a movement across Spain (30).

THE PRELUDE TO CIVIL WAR?

By October 1934, for the Spanish left, the memories of CEDA's equivalent - Dolfuss' Catholic Party – violent demolition of the Socialists in Austria in February '34 were fresher than even Hitler's rise to power in January 1933. But in 1934 the harvest strike had exhausted the peasants in the South. Both Catalonia and the Basques (still looking for autonomy) had their own issues, whilst a bungled rising in Madrid was squashed easily. When the Asturias rose it was on its own. As the generals later admitted the army could not have coped with so many pressure points. But after October 4th – the Asturias up-rising date – it was able to concentrate on squashing the revolutionaries in Asturias. The army declared a state of war – and this was 1934, not 1936.

The Asturias rising has since – like the Paris Commune – had mythical status for the Spanish working class. Not only was it heroic, in the very short term, like the 1936 revolutions it was a military and political success. Like the old Carlists who came down from the mountains and took the towns, the miners took most of Oviedo on the first day. Looking like an anarchist up-rising it was in fact led by a Strike Insurrection Committee of 5 Socialists, 2 Communists and an Anarchist. Oviedo, some of which was destroyed by the Spanish air force, became a trap. The mining areas were also bombed while Gijon sustained artillery fire from the navy. But the new commune held out for two weeks – with around 2000 armed workers in the end resisting an army of 26,000 led by General Franco and using Moroccan troops brutally. Only at the very end did the Commune execute some of its prisoners as the word got back from the villages of the ravages of the Moroccan army. 9 priests and one coal company director were killed.

Schubert argues that the miners failed by not linking up with the anarchists in Gijon. This is clutching at straws. The combined forces of army, navy and air would have destroyed the Asturian rising unless all the workers had been armed – as many more eventually were in 1936. This is one lesson the radicals took from Asturias 1934; while the PSOE, UGT and CNT at last saw the need to work together. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of October 1934 to the Spanish left (31). As in the German experience from 1919-23, local outbursts with no national co-ordination revealed the continuing resentment against government, bourgeois and landowners, but the military and oligarchy was usually able to deal with each in turn. Estimates of the workers killed range from 1000 to over 3000, with at least 3000 wounded. The repressive State that was Spain until 1976 showed itself again – many Socialist leaders even ex Ministers like Largo were jailed. All the major FAI leaders had fled or were arrested and deported. In all up to 40,000 were imprisoned after the rising.

THE PEOPLE IN ARMS

A military defeat for the Asturian miners turned into a political defeat for the left. In the CEDA led repression that followed peasants were evicted and (socialist) town councillors removed all over Spain. There were no parliamentary protests as parliament was shut down. Even Catalan autonomy was 'suspended'. Censorship, torture and executions ruled, masterminded by Franco. Nor were developments merely political or judicial: a 48 hour week was soon re-imposed on workers throughout Spain.

CEDA's power had reached its peak in 1935. Robles was already encouraging the military to make a coup as the tide turned. In the 1936 elections the 'Left versus Right' split was still close – 4.5 m votes versus 4.3 m. Unlike 1933, a united Left now mobilised under the new Popular Front banner borrowed from France and Joe Stalin, had a clear majority in the Cortes with 271 seats against the Right and Centre's 171. CEDA still had the second highest number of deputies. The consequences of 1931-3 were still felt; this time the Socialists refused to serve in a Republican government it remembered as authoritarian. After two years of repression, whatever the election results, the working class was now suspicious of 'parliamentary trickery' and the FAI warned at its Congress in February 1936 that a military coup was on the way. The peasants and workers took the law into their own hands. Land seizures from March to July comfortably exceeded all the land given in the reforms, while a new wave of strikes broke out. In the guise of an attempted military coup the class war was to break out again.

When the military began their coup on 19 July 1936, the first response of the bourgeois Republic, unlike their later portrayal as defenders of 'democracy' against 'fascism', was to do a deal. The government had been re-shuffled two days before so a deal could be done with the 'insurgent' military. It was the People taking up arms especially in the Asturias, Barcelona, Madrid and Valencia who made a revolution within the Republic. The FAI in Valencia took the Radio Station six days before the Generals' ordered their troops to take-over. The CNT ordered a General Strike in Barcelona the day after; the CNT and FAI were helped because armed troops came over. The extent of the popular revolution is shown that within 10 days the Republic had 150,000 volunteers. In Zaragoza where the strong anarchist group wanted to stop the troops they could not because they had no access to arms. The 'Durrati column', named after one of the leading anarchists, set off from Barcelona to relieve them (32). At this point the Communist party in Catalonia had no role at all.

Franco came to power via the usual nineteenth century Spanish route - that is, by the army. One of the reasons for his forty year survival in power was his careful avoidance of the colonial adventures that had provided his original sponsors, in contrast to his military neighbours in Portugal (33). The Franco regime became a swirling mix of army, church, monarchists and Falangists. The Franco dictatorship was closer to the traditional Spanish model - as in Rivera's of 1923-31 - although it was often convenient, if lazy, for the left to describe it as 'fascist'. Given Franco's support from Italy and Germany, the Russian influence on the other side was barely comparable practically.

THE POLITICS OF TRANSITION IN SPAIN

When it became clear that the 'fascists' would not win the world war, Franco began to distance himself from the Falangists - the closest party Spain had to the label. It meant that Franco's dictatorship never had the semblance of a mass party with a popular base which both Hitler and Mussolini had, whether one likes their 'popularity' or not. When the Franco regime was ending this meant that some semblance of a popular party had to be cobbled together.

Franco had successfully followed the old Italian trick as Sassoon puts it to 'change everything so that everything stays the same' (34). The economy that Franco had pulverised in the civil war took a long time to rise from the ruins. The economy did not reach the 1936 level again until 1954. Even then by 1957 it was close to bankrupt. Like Rivera, Franco kept wages down and cut public expenditure. Low wages attracted Capital as the boom elsewhere in Western Europe had absorbed more of the other labour coming off the land in France and Italy. The 'desarrollo' - the years of development - ran from 1961 to 1973. Income from 1961-73 grew at 7 per cent per capita; but in 1973 wages were still only half those of the EU and less than those in Ireland. Manufacturing (especially of cars) now accounted for 67 per cent of exports and doubled in 1960-74 (35). With agriculture only representing 20 per cent of GDP in the late 1970s, the domination of agrarian relations which had so determined the political problems and options of the 1930s has now gone.

Yet the sharp political divisions remained. In the first elections after Franco in 1977, the left right split was almost identical to 1936. The Spanish right was terrified by the prospects of Franco's demise. All the old political parties, however, were demanding a 'ruptura' - a break with the past. Suarez campaigned as if the old oligarchic rulers who were funding him had nothing to do with the new regime. The new UCD gained 34 per cent versus 29 per cent for the PSOE. The short term rule of the UCD offered 'change without trauma' and a 'ruptura negociada' which all parties could sign up to. This was Spain's 'historic compromise' and with the underlying agrarian issue dormant, the prospects looked good for a sustainable Spanish democracy.

The old business elite had banked the UCD because an alliance for peace in 1977-8 - looked important after the working class militancy of 1973-6. The UCD and the old elite would have preferred something closer to the Italian solution - a bigger communist party and a small socialist party could have been permanently blocked leaving the centre right in power. But with the oil price recession biting by the early 1980s, the pressure was onto make the UCD a more conventional right wing 'business' party. The employers no longer wanted a compromise coalition; they would not rule via a coalition with labour. If the UCD could not change, the employers would destroy it. Elements in the military, sensing this tried a last gasp coup in February 1981, but neither the monarchy nor business would support it (36).

THE PSOE'S POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NEO-LIBERALISM?

The PSOE had done well in the cities in the 1979 elections. An agreement with the Communist Party left PSOE Mayors in Madrid, Barcelona, Seville and Valencia. By 1981-2, the PSOE was also happy to see the UCD die. By playing down its Marxist and socialist traditions and rhetoric, it positioned itself like the Republican government of 1936 as the only defender of democracy. It had been its leaders who had been held at gun point for several hours. In the 1982 elections, having held their 35 per cent share in 1979, the UCD vote split. 50 per cent went to the Popular Party, conventionally on the right and 20 per cent went to the PSOE. The UCD vote plummeted to 7 per cent; the PP managed 25 per cent, but the PSOE triumphed with a remarkable 48 per cent, it was never to reach again. The PSOE was in power from 1982 to 1997 and then again from 2004 (37).

Apart from its desirability either as a retirement or holiday destination, Spanish politics rarely gets any mention in the British media. In the days after the bombing at Atocha Station on 3/11 which eclipsed the horror and death toll of London's 7/7, the alliance of the UK and Spain at that point in the Iraq war, did feature. So too did the remarkable PSOE victory as Aznar's Popular Party (PP)'s attempt to manipulate the bombings just days before the 2004 election. The PSOE voters who had seemed indifferent after the corruption of the Gonzales years suddenly turned out and the new Primer Minister, Zapatero fulfilled his promise of bringing Spanish troops out of Iraq (38). Turn out in the 2004 elections rose by to 77 per cent - equivalent to 1993 and 1996 - but much increased from the 69 per cent of the previous PP election victory. The PSOE got 11 m votes. Zapatero's election has brought back some of the old themes - his grandfather was shot in Leon in 1936 because he was a Republican. As the law goes through in 2007 to compensate Franco's victims, the Catholic Church retaliates by making 500 martyr priest and nuns of 1936 into saints.

Petras points out the contradictions of PSOE rule - a further warning from Spain, akin to that from Australia - of the dangers of a nominally socialist party driving ahead with an essentially Capitalist transformation. As in Britain under New Labour, Petras sees a party rising to power on the back of the working class. In Spain the militant period was around Franco's death in 1975-6. Thereafter a 'socialist' party promises to strengthen civil society but actually strengthens the State. Like the careerists of New Labour, the PSOE lives off and reinforce a new upwardly mobile professional middle class. This was also the fate of Craxi's PSI in Italy. In Spain, fortunes have been made out of public office. The neo Liberal 'Socialist' parties have borrowed a slogan from the Chinese Communists: it is good to get rich. Given the stance of the rest of this book, readers will not now be surprised of my wariness of the PSOE's 20 years in power. This is more than just a critique of Spanish sleaze and corruption. It reflects what Petras calls the rise of a new Spanish ruling class (39) - the new form of an old power relationship which still separates the new elite from even its own supporters. But with the old Spanish anarchist movement trampled upon after 1939 and now a vestige of a heroic past it is hard to see what new popular forces from within civil society will rise up to challenge the ascendancy of an elite that as in Britain runs Spain for Global Capital.

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