

Dear Reader,

I was born in the south of Spain, Málaga, in 1944, and in that time, the 50s and 60s, in Spain was very bad because Spain have a civil war, and it start in 1936 and finish 1939. And was all depressed, no work, no school, no nothing for the poor, for the workers.

My family emigrate to Catalonia when I was 13 years. Before Catalonia, my father go to Valencia when I was 11, and we live there two year. When I was 13, go to Catalonia looking for a job because there was no job, no nothing. My father sell the land and the house, in a suburb in Barcelona, and I grow up there. My education is very, very, very poor because in Andalusia, no was any school for the people.

My father tried to teach us, and when I came to Barcelona, I was 13 and the situation was so sad. So I started working because when you get 14 years old, you can start working. But there were children working from 12. I start working when I was 12 in Valencia, but I continue because my family said, for one year, we needed money so you can look for a job. So I go to job and I start going to school at night, after. Later on, I enrolled in high school. But because was no freedom for anything, I contact people who work underground and they pass some books about the civil war from France because in Spain, nobody talk about this. All the people was terrified with that. They don't want to talk about politics, about nothing because if you talk and somebody hear and was a fascist, he ask for identification and take you to the police. You can get killed, disappear. It was a very bad situation.

After two years I stay there, I start going to a meeting with people underground that tried to start a union, because there was no freedom, and political parties, Socialist Party and Communist Party. That party was in the underground working, make pamphlet and just a few things because they have the risk to go to prison. I didn't understand much, but I saw the injustice everywhere, and I go ahead and became a member of a union and, after that a radical party. I leave school and just I tried my best in the organisation and make a lot of things with them – went to strikes and painting the walls and throwing pamphlets.

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I married with a person similar to me – was even more radical in some way because she was an anarchist. After a week, we went on honeymoon. I come back to work in the factory, and a week after, in come the police. The police come to the factory, say to me, “Go to the office,” just like that. In the office was the police, and take me to the police headquarters. I discover in the organisation was a police infiltration. They take all the list that people who worked in the organisation and go, and they let the police in. There was 20 people taken to the police, and that is because we made all these manifestos and strikes. And the police tried to discover who organised that. I was held by the police for a week and all the week they tortured me with to find more people, to find from us information and catch more people.

My brother Sebastian – I have a lot of brothers – he was in the party too and I told him you go out because they look for you. After I go back to the work, the police tried to find any more people. They do the same to all the other, and this goes for 31 days. After that, we sign a declaration but with no lawyers or anything. Before we signed, we were tortured. They tried to get information by torturing people. You were bashed until you lost consciousness. I was very, very afraid because I thought, well, probably they kill me here. After that, I go to the prison and wait for the martial



court. I told my brother, "You go out because they look for you and for others" and he decided to come here [to Australia]. He was a fitter and turner and he worked together with Anna's first husband and became friends.

After 18 months in the prison, I have a sentence, 18 years prison. Others have even more, and just for that, for trying to become a member of a party in the left. This happen for several years in the 60s, 70s, because of Franco. I go to prison in 1970, and I stay there five year because Franco died five years later, and all the prisoners like me, political ones, were free. They say no charge, no nothing, but that is rubbish. I was in the lists. And in that time, my wife became sick. She was with breast cancer. And when I come out, she was very sick. And two years later, she died. I stay with my parents and in the three years without her I leave the political things and I was thinking about the meaning of the thing and continuing or not. It was very confused time for me.

But when I meet Anna, I like Anna and was in a similar situation, and we decided to marry. When I meet Anna and I told my father probably I marry soon. My father said, "Well, that is the best thing I hear from you for a long time." After that, in 1981, another general tried to make a coup d'état in Spain, like Franco. And I think, that is all the same – continue the same. So we decide to come here. We can survive very well because she, Anna, have a good job and me too because already I was boilermaker welder so we can survive there. But because the political situation, in my experience and history, I decide to give up and come here.

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When I come here, I have a very nice surprise because more freedom. Nobody asks you nothing. And you can work and live like you want and it was fantastic for me even though we come to Queensland, in that time was Joh Bjelke-Petersen here. I even became a member of the union. When we come to Brisbane we go to my brother's house and stay there for several months and in the second week, we look for job. This was in Goodna, and we go walking to a factory in Wacol, and we ask for job, and I not speak nothing. Anna could speak and she was the interpreter. The foreman told me, "You can weld this?" And I weld. And, "In that position?" Okay "In that other?" and I do it. And he say, "You can start tomorrow?" And Anna say, "You can start tomorrow?" And I'm like okay, and I start the next day and I not stop.

For me, it was very easy. I don't need to speak English because Anna do everything for me, translator and relayed everything to me. I was just thinking about my family here with no money, and I had a possibility to work and even make overtime and have a little bit more money. And we think about to buy a house, and we buy a house after a year. And I look for other job for have more money so I work in the dam, Wivenhoe Dam. It was nearly finished but I worked there for five year welding, and I have very good money because there was plenty work, overtime. We work even Saturday and we live in a camp with the meat all free and the money was very good. When the work finished I find a job in earthmoving plant. I started working there, and I work for 17 years there. I had good money too because I become the foreman. And all that time, I enjoyed the life because I was just thinking about work hard and on the weekend, go fishing and I buy a dinghy.

For me, it was very easy because no worry about nothing – no English, no nothing, just work. And still now the thing is this world's very easy and good in one way, and, otherwise, no, because I don't go to school for learn English, and I still with problem with that. Now, I'm going to TAFE three days to learn English. The problem now is I have not much memory for spelling, but I have a lot of friends in the TAFE.

And I have friends from all the places I work. When I was working in Wivenhoe Dam, there was

Spanish, Italian, from a lot of countries through Europe was working there too. But I was working together with some Australian, and even one year more than other, because after welding, they pick up the job to make fence, and I was in that group. And always I remember I have a very good time because when we finish work, we go to the pub.

Here for me was very, very easy work because in Spain were different. They were more classist. When you go to work, the foreman, the owner even more, not talk with you, nothing. When I come here and the foreman was talking to you or try to, and the owners were there so for me, it was very, very different from Spain, and I appreciate that. Even when I start working, I not speak much English, and sometimes the foreman say, "Hey, Tom, come with me. Come with me. I show you the factory because you no talk, nothing; you just work, work, work."

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Australia is changing like everywhere. After 40 years living here, we see the big change – in the culture in the city, for example, is now different. You can go any day, any time and you will find anything, cafes, restaurants, and before wasn't.

And other thing is my two sons have a good education from here; they were all educated here. I am Australian citizen, but they are Australian. They live, work, have a family. They feel like Australian, they are Australian. They're happy here. The situation in Spain is not very good. There is a lot of suffering and there no freedom in Spain. When I was growing up there in Catalonia, I have a lot of friends, and we made a lot of good things. I have good memories from when I was young there, making things and cultural activities and I loved the excursions to the mountains. That is still here. It's good memories from there too even though you had bad things.

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