



English

ERC's history (Resum de la història d'ERC)

Origins

The confluence and evolution of two social phenomena in Catalonia (the socio-economic transformations derived from the Industrial Revolution and the cultural and political explosion of the Renaixença) during the first third of the 20th century led to the formation of ERC as a meeting place for many left-wing organizations.

These acknowledged the need of creating a common front against a reactionary, backward Spanish State, still anchored in old 19th century structures and incapable of providing answers to new concerns and needs for a good part of its citizens.

1931. Foundation

Between the 17th and 19th of March 1931 the Conference of the Left takes place in Barcelona, in which ERC is founded as a political party by the merging of three organizations: Estat Català (Catalan State), Partit Republicà Català (Republican Catalan Party) and L'Opinió (The Opinion). Many other local and regional associations also joined. The main political principles included the recognition of the Catalanian's own national personality, the defense of human rights and freedoms and the socialization of wealth. Francesc Macià is chosen president by popular acclaim.

1931-1936. Government of the Generalitat

One month after its foundation, ERC won a sweeping victory in the municipal elections of 1931. Two days later Macià proclaimed the Catalan Republic, which became the Generalitat de Catalunya, recovering the name of this medieval government institution that had been abolished after the War of Succession (1705-1717) by Philip V. Francesc Macià is then elected president of the Generalitat of Catalonia. In August 1931 the Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia is approved in a referendum providing the legal framework through which Catalonia recovered some self-government and part of the sovereignty lost in 1714. From that time on and within the context of the Spanish 2nd Republic, ERC wins all the successive elections that take place. On December 1933 Macià dies and is succeeded by Lluís Companys as President of the Generalitat. The 6th of October 1934 Companys, facing the ever-increasing regressiveness of the Spanish right and the risk of a military coup d'état, proclaims the Catalan State. Two days later the Generalitat was closed and its members given extended jail terms. The Generalitat is abolished and won't be restored until ERC wins again the general elections in February 1936 as part of a broader coalition called the Popular Front. This movement echoes other "Popular Fronts" set up all over Europe as an answer to fascist expansionism of the 30's.



1936-1939. War and Exile

On July 1936 the Spanish military revolt against democratic legitimacy, represented by the 2nd Republic. The uprising is defeated in 48 hours in Catalonia, but not in Spain. The Civil War breaks out, with the conflict lasting for three cruel years. The victory of general's Franco fascist army begins a dark period of social and political repression that will last for around 36 years, el Franquisme or Francoism (1939-1975). Half of more than 70,000 ERC party members would go into exile and a quarter were imprisoned, executed or killed during the war. President Lluís Companys is handed over to the Spanish fascist government by the Gestapo, being vilely executed by firing squad in Montjuïc in October 15th 1940. Companys was succeeded as the head of the Catalan government-in-exile by Josep Irla, a former ERC MP. In 1943 ERC members agree with Emmanuel d'Astier de la Vigerie, representing general Charles De Gaulle, to join the French Resistance movement. In 1945, the ERC Conference in Toulouse (Languedoc) elects Josep Tarradellas as secretary-general until 1954, when he becomes the President of the Generalitat-in-exile succeeding Josep Irla.

1939-1975. Anti-Franco Resistance

From 1939 on ERC goes underground and organizes itself around Manuel Juliachs and Jaume Serra as anti-Franco resistance. At the end of World War II the leadership of ERC in exile sends back Pere Puig and afterwards Joan Rodriguez-Papasseit expecting the possible overthrow of the Spanish fascists by entering allied troops. During these years, ERC is part of the Consell de la Democràcia Catalana (Council of Catalan Democracy) and the Consell de Forces Democràtiques (Council of Democratic Forces). In 1952 Heribert Barrera returns to Catalonia to take on the party leadership. On September 11th 1964, Catalonia's National Day, ERC together with other groups organize the first anti-Franco demonstration since the end of the war. ERC takes part successively in the Consell Català del Moviment Europeu (Catalan Council of the European Movement), the Secretariat de la Democràcia Social Catalana (Catalan Social Democracy Secretariat), the Coordinadora de Forces Polítiques (Political Forces Coordinator), the Assemblea de Catalunya (Catalan Assembly), the Consell de Forces Polítiques (Political Forces Council) and any initiative confronting Franco.

Resumption

After Franco's death in 1975, the 8th National Conference is held in July 1976 and Heribert Barrera was elected secretary-general. In the 1977 general elections ERC had to form part of a coalition, being a republican party it was not legally allowed to participate as such. Barrera is elected MP for the Constituent Assembly. In the talks defining the contents of the new Spanish Constitution, ERC is the only Catalan party defending the republican principles and the right of peoples to self-determination. These ideas were not supported by the Spanish parties, so in the constitutional referendum of December 1978 ERC will declare itself against it. In October 1977, President Tarradellas returns and the Generalitat is restored. A new Statute of Autonomy was written and ERC would reject it as it did not guarantee minimum self-government. In the 1979 referendum ERC campaigned for a "yes" vote, as the only option to this limited autonomy was none.



In the 1980 elections for the Catalan Parliament ERC will obtain 240,000 votes (14 seats, 8.9%). In 1984 ERC saw the number of MPs cut to only 5, unleashing a brief period of decline which will continue in 1986 when ERC loses all representation in the Madrid Congress.

In 1987 the “Crida Nacional a ERC” (National Appeal to ERC) steps into the public arena. This is a manifesto signed by around a hundred Catalan public figures led by Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira and Àngel Colom, who wanted ERC to draw together the new generations of the pro-independence left that emerged after a disappointing Spanish Transition.

At the 16th National Conference (November 1989) a new leadership is elected, adopting the Independence of the Catalan Countries as a political aim. As a result of the evolution and clarification of the political panorama, Terra Lliure (Free Land) rethinks its strategy giving up armed fight and promoting the entry in ERC of its members and of most of those that formed Catalunya Lliure (Free Catalonia).

The results obtained in the Catalan Parliamentary elections of 1992 put, for the first time, ERC as the third political force of the Principality of Catalonia with more than 210,000 votes (11 seats, 7.96%). This was also the first time, since the beginning of the Transition, that an openly pro-independence party obtains widespread popular support. At the 19th National Conference (December 1993) the current Party Platform is approved.

Present day

The 21st National Conference (November 1996) saw the election of Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira as secretary-general. Under his leadership the traditional single-issue pro-independence course is changed, focusing on more left-oriented policies but without renouncing the aim of building Catalonia's own state.

This new strategy bears fruit in 2003. In the municipal elections ERC wins 414,000 votes (12.77%), 1,383 town councilors and 116 mayor's offices. In Catalonia's Parliamentary elections ERC obtains 545,000 votes (23 seats, 16.44%) and becomes the decisive force for articulating a new left-wing, Catalan-nationalist government.