Abstract Belen de Sarraga (1879-1950)

Gerald Brenan notes in his account of the background to the Spanish Civil War, *The Spanish Labyrinth*, that: “A woman, Belen Sarraga, founded a society for working women in the province of Malaga, which had 20,000 members, mostly field labourers.” Such passing references as like these have rescued freemasons, feminist anarchists from oblivion. The daughter of a Freemason in the Spanish army, Belen de Sarraga (1879-1950), was born in Valladolid but brought up in her father’s native Puerto Rico until, having graduated as a teacher, she returned to Barcelona to study medicine. She quickly involved in the buoyant activity of the Freethinkers, and joined something similar to an adoption lodge, which became the origins of Feminism in Spain. This group was known as the Women of Gracia, the name of the street where they met. Together with other Freemason women like Angeles Lopez de Ayala (1858-1926), Amalia Domingo Soler (1835-1909), a spiritualist, or Teresa Claramunt (1862-1931), a workers’ activist, they founded a newspaper called *La conciencia libre*. These women wrote in several periodicals each gradually developing in their own field.

Together with her husband, the republican mason Balaguer, Belen Sarraga moved to Andalousia and with other Freemason politicians like Lerroux, they organized society of workers and schools for girls, and women workers. Belen also attended the freethinking congresses of Geneva 1902 and Rome in 1904, Buenos Aires,1906. In 1905 she returned to Latin America where she resided in Uruguay and later, Mexico and Argentina. From 1905 to 1930 she toured all over Latin America, giving anticlerical, feminist, unionist and anti-imperialist lectures that caused furor either in favor or against her. She supposedly used her own masonic networks to promote these causes. She emerges as a visible link in a network established in 1906 by her and other Spanish republicans whose mission was to unify a freethinking Latin America Federation for the workers of the world. (314words)