

A Psychiatrist Caught in a Civil War: Rodríguez Lafora's Work in Valencia, Capital of The Republic (1936-1938)

María J. Monteagudo-Soto y Mauricio Chisvert-Perales

Departamento de Psicología Básica, Universitat de València (Valencia, España)

INFORMACIÓN ART.

Recibido: 12 junio 2018
Aceptado: 20 agosto 2018

Key words

Rodríguez Lafora,
Spanish Civil War,
Military Psychiatry,
Valencia,
Military War Hospital in Godella,
War Neurosis.

Palabras clave

Rodríguez Lafora,
Guerra Civil Española,
psiquiatría militar,
Valencia,
Hospital de Sangre de Godella,
Neurosis de guerra.

ABSTRACT

A little-known period in the life of Gonzalo Rodríguez Lafora consists of the time he spent in Valencia during the Spanish Civil War from 1936 until 1938. During the war, Valencia became the capital of the Republic, and many scientists and intellectuals found refuge there and could continue their work. Along with other evacuated intellectuals, Lafora participated in numerous scientific and academic activities organized by the Valencian House of Culture, where he had a dispute with Antonio Machado and other intellectuals due to its closing. We especially highlight his work as a psychiatrist in the Military War Hospital in Godella, where, under his direction, a neurological section was created, and where he would coincide with the psychiatrist José Sacristan and the neurologist Justo Gonzalo. The existing archived documentation about the hospital is scant, but thanks to publications from that time, especially the journals *Madrid* and *Sanidad de Guerra*, we were able to recover his work, which shows his interest in war psychiatry, especially war neuroses. His publications also reveal his concern about the future of psychiatry and university education in Spain. These academic interests and his relationship with the government of the Republic—collaborative, but disagreeing about some aspects—along with concern about his own personal future, would define his war experiences.

Un Psiquiatra Atrapado en una Guerra Civil: El Trabajo de Rodríguez Lafora en la Valencia Capital de la República (1936-1938)

RESUMEN

Un periodo poco conocido de la vida de Rodríguez Lafora es el que pasó en Valencia durante la guerra civil española, desde 1936 hasta su exilio en 1938. Durante la guerra, Valencia se convirtió en capital de la república y muchos científicos e intelectuales encontraron allí un refugio donde tratar de continuar su labor. Lafora participó, junto a otros intelectuales evacuados, en numerosas actividades científicas y académicas organizadas desde la Casa de la Cultura de Valencia, donde llegó a mantener una controversia con Antonio Machado y otros intelectuales a raíz de la disolución de la misma. Destacamos especialmente su trabajo como médico psiquiatra en el Hospital Militar de Sangre de Godella, donde se creó, bajo su dirección, una sección neurológica y donde coincidirá con el psiquiatra José Miguel Sacristán y el neurólogo Justo Gonzalo. Es escasa la documentación de archivo existente sobre el hospital, pero gracias a sus publicaciones de la época, especialmente en las revistas *Madrid* y *Sanidad de Guerra*, hemos podido recuperar su trabajo, que muestra su interés por la psiquiatría de guerra, especialmente las neurosis de guerra. También ponemos de manifiesto, a través de sus publicaciones, su inquietud por el futuro de la psiquiatría en España, así como su preocupación por la enseñanza universitaria. Estos intereses académicos y su relación con el gobierno de la república—colaborativa pero discrepante en algunos aspectos—unido a la inquietud por su propio futuro personal marcarán sus vivencias de guerra, con las vistas puestas en el exilio.

Correspondencia: María J. Monteagudo, Departamento de Psicología Básica, Universidad de Valencia, Avda. Blasco Ibañez, 21, 46010 Valencia, España. E-mail: monteagu@uv.es

ISSN: 2445-0928 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5093/rhp2018a14>

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Para citar este artículo/To cite this article:

Monteagudo-Soto, M.J. & Chisvert-Perales, M. (2018). A Psychiatrist Caught in a Civil War: Rodríguez Lafora's Work in Valencia, Capital of The Republic (1936-1938). *Revista de Historia de la Psicología*, 39(3), 28-37. Doi: 10.5093/rhp2018a14

Vínculo al artículo/Link to this article:

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5093/rhp2018a14>

In the years before the outbreak of the Civil War, a large group of authors had established the so-called *first Spanish scientific psychiatry*; these authors were also referred to as the *generación de Archivos de Neurobiología* [generation of the Archivos de Neurobiología], a group of psychiatrists who had made important progress in psychiatric care in Spain with the creation of the *Asociación Española de Neuropsiquiatría* [Spanish Neuropsychiatry Association] and the *Liga de Higiene Mental* [Mental Health League] (González, 1988; Villasante, 2010a). Among the authors in this group, some psychiatrists who were followers of Ramón y Cajal or Luis Simarro stand out, such as Emilio Mira, José Miguel Sacristán, José Sanchis Banús or Gonzalo Rodríguez Lafora (López et al., 2008). All of them, like many other scientists and intellectuals, found themselves trapped in a dispute that caused them to lose their jobs, their homes, and in some cases, their lives.

This paper addresses and reconstructs the personal and scientific trajectory of Gonzalo Rodríguez Lafora (hereinafter Lafora) during the years of the Spanish Civil War, drawing a biographical profile of the author in the scientific, political, and personal domains. This profile allows us to understand the repercussions that the complex and difficult context of the civil war had on his scientific work and contribution to the development of Spanish psychiatry.

With this aim in mind, we performed a document search in the Valencian Library, the Historical Archive of the *Diputación de Valencia* (Provincial Government of Valencia), the Military Historical Library of Valencia, the Military Historical Library of Segovia, and the *Hemeroteca Nacional* (National Periodicals Library). This search allowed us to access, in addition to various documents from original archives of the period, Lafora's publications, as well as those of his colleague and collaborator, the psychiatrist José Miguel Sacristán (hereinafter Sacristán), in academic and intellectual journals- for example, *Sanidad de Guerra* [War Health] and *Madrid: Cuadernos de la Casa de la Cultura* [Madrid: Notebooks from the House of Culture], both published by the Republican side in Valencia- and in periodicals of that period, such as *Fragua Social* [Social Forge]. These documents provide samples of the author's numerous interests and concerns, which range from psychiatric topics, such as the neurosis of war, to his concern about the future of university education in Spain in the political situation at that time. In the reconstruction of this critical period in his life and work, we will also delve into his almost uninterrupted epistolary relationship with the psychiatrist *Luis Valenciano* (hereinafter Valenciano) during this time, which provided first-hand testimony about his interests and deepest concerns.

Before the Conflict: From Madrid to Valencia

It is well known that in the moments prior to the civil war, Spanish psychiatry had reached a high level of institutionalization, and the country had well-organized psychiatric services. These services were divided by the war, situating Spanish psychiatrists on one side of the conflict or the other (Álvarez & Huertas, 1987; Huertas, 1998; Hernández, 2006).

Lafora belonged to the so-called *generation of the Archivos de Neurobiología*, and he was one of the main forces behind the journal *Archivos de Neurobiología* and an active member of the *Mental Health*

League, of which he was vice-president since its establishment in 1927 (Gracia, 1971). Likewise, he was president of the Neuropsychiatric Association when the Civil War broke out. In the February 1936 election, based on what we can deduce from the letters he exchanged with Valenciano (Valenciano, 1977), it is likely that Lafora voted for the *Frente Popular*, as he had shown a recognized tendency toward progressive liberalism in his youth, although he may have been somewhat less radical than his maestro Luis Simarro. Therefore, his reaction when the conflict broke out, similar to that of many other progressive liberals, was one of perplexity and rejection. Thus, he wrote to Valenciano on August 2nd 1936, "Yo estoy muy decaído con esta guerra civil, que tiene cariz de durar mucho tiempo y destrozará toda la riqueza artística de España, la economía y segar las vidas de toda una generación [I am very discouraged about this civil war, which looks like it will last a long time and destroy all the artistic wealth of Spain, the economy, and cut short the lives of an entire generation]" (Valenciano, 1977, p. 130). With the advance of the dispute, and given the direction the events had taken, Lafora began to fear for his life, as his name began to circulate on the *black list* of people who would have to be *suppressed* when Madrid fell into the hands of the nationals. The first executions of colleagues on one political side or the other had already taken place, such as the psychiatrist José María Villaverde (hereinafter Villaverde) in the Republican Madrid of the first months of the war, or Ruiz Maya, a psychiatrist close to the Republic in the national band in Cordoba. Concerned about his family, Lafora decided to move with them to Benidorm in the Valencian Region, where they had a summer house, with the intention of later returning to his sanatorium in Carabanchel and his post at the Provincial Hospital of Madrid (Moya, 1986).

Lafora left Madrid in September 1936, settled his family in Benidorm, and moved to the city of Valencia. At the beginning of October 1936, he already began to have doubts about whether to return to Madrid, due to the conflict between fear for his life and concern about the consequences of abandoning his position in the Provincial Hospital. Later, he would find out that these consequences consisted of a sanction and his later expulsion from the service by means of an order from the health authorities published at the end of that same year (Villasante, 2010b). Thus, he remained in Valencia and undertook different activities that we will describe below. However, his true interest was in escaping from Spain. For this reason, among other possible options, he tried to obtain a passport visa, which would allow him to leave the country, from Juan Negrín, Minister of Finance at the time. He was not able to do so because during the war it was almost impossible to leave Spain without having, in addition to a visa, a mission or assignment from the government. In a letter sent to Valenciano in October 1936, Lafora complained about the way the government had left him in the lurch, even though he had participated in and signed numerous protests and petitions they had requested: "Así es como paga el político (...) la lección es dura, pero provechosa, no la olvidaré si sobrevivo a esta horrible contienda [This is the way the politician pays (...) it is a hard but valuable lesson, I won't forget it if I survive this horrible war]" (Valenciano, 1977, p. 132). Despite this epistolary protest, in the two years of the war that he would eventually spend in Valencia, Lafora made an effort to adapt to the new circumstances by maintaining a pragmatic line of collaboration with the government of the Republic.

Valenciano wrote to him at the beginning of November 1936, informing him that they had had to leave the Carabanchel sanatorium and that the situation in Madrid was very tumultuous. Days later, on November 7th 1936, the government of the Republic was transferred from Madrid to Valencia. Shortly thereafter, Lafora linked his destiny to the city, looking for some possibility of protection and work alongside other evacuated intellectuals.

The city of Valencia, as the new headquarters of the Government of the Republic, was a witness to and protagonist in the most important events that occurred in the part of Spain that remained within constitutional legality, having to adapt its infrastructures and services to the new needs arising from its situation as the new capital. Among these needs, it was a priority to take in and protect the evacuees from Madrid, especially when a large group of intellectuals and scientists arrived to the city and were housed in the *Hotel Palace*, which from that moment on was used as a residence for intellectuals and for the *House of Culture*. Hence, for many defenders of the Republic, culture was the instrument that would allow them to construct the new society to which they aspired, in the face of an enemy that represented brutality, destruction, and a step backward in the complex social progress experienced in Spain in the years before the war. They held the conviction that a nation is only the master of its own destiny if its organization is based on a culture open to all the social classes (Aznar, Barona & Navarro, 2008).

Lafora in the House of Culture of Valencia: The Madrid Journal,

In November 1936, Lafora traveled from Valencia to Madrid to pick up his belongings and, upon arrival, was informed that he had been definitively dismissed from his job at the Provincial Hospital of Madrid. From that point on, he initiated a series of administrative procedures to be officially sent on a cultural mission to Valencia. For this purpose, he made a proposal to the Ministry of Public Instruction to carry out a series of cultural conferences and organize a psychology and child psychopathology course. These contributions would form part of a cycle of brief conferences and courses organized by the University of Valencia, where other evacuated intellectuals also participated, such as Tomás Navarro, Antonio Machado, Juan de la Encina, or Manuel Márquez, among others (Marrast, 1974). Lafora proposed three conferences where he demonstrated his interest in the study of the personality, which he considered a psychophysical unit composed of biological and social tendencies that determine behavior. Later on, exiled in Mexico, he would extend this conception of the personality and again presented his contributions in a series of conferences that were never published by the author. (Carpintero, Mestre & Del Barrio 1989; Lafuente & Carpintero 1994; Rodríguez Lafora, 1937a).

In the case at hand, his proposal was finally accepted by the Ministry, and Lafora was able to return to Valencia. Preparing and giving these conferences allowed Lafora to regain interest in working and writing, and he seemed to abandon, at least temporarily, his project to leave Spain. During this time, he was invited to live in the House of Culture in Valencia (Figure 1), and he initiated his relationship with this institution.

Intellectuals and scientists evacuated from Madrid by the *Quinto Regimiento* [Fifth Regiment] arrived in groups to the House of Culture



Figure 1. The Hotel Palace in Valencia (currently the Hotel Vinci Palace) functioned as a residence for intellectuals and housed the institution of the House of Culture from December 1936 until its dissolution at the end of 1937, when it would come to house the Ministry of Public Instruction. Today, it still contains a plaque that commemorates these events: "This building housed the most prestigious Spanish intellectuals and artists, when they were evacuated to Valencia from the besieged city of Madrid. It was called the House of Culture, whose Patronage was presided over by Antonio Machado. In testimony of homage Exc. City of Valencia, 1984" (reproduced with the authorization of the Private Collection of the Hotel Vinci Valencia).

of Valencia from November 1936 on. Among the first to arrive were writers, painters, artists, and academics, such as Antonio Machado, but also physicians and psychiatrists, such as Sacristán, who until that time had been head of the Mental Hygiene section of the Healthcare Direction and director of the Ciempozuelos Psychiatric Facility (Province of Madrid). Thanks to his friendship with Sacristán, Lafora was also invited to the House of Culture from January 6th 1937 (Moya, 1986). For eight months, this hotel functioned as a residence for intellectuals, as well as a Cultural Center, organizing cycles of conferences and expositions by those housed there. The Republican government thus granted their support and provided material to non-rebel intellectuals in exchange, one would assume, for political and moral support, which would be extremely important in the eyes of the outside world. Thus, from the House of Culture, important initiatives with international impact were supported, such as the celebration of the *Second International Congress of Anti-fascist Writers* at the beginning of July 1937. However, and in spite of all this, in that same month, given the developing political events, the House of Culture was relieved of its functions as a residence for intellectuals by order of the Minister of Public Instruction at the time, Jesús Hernández (Marrast, 1974).

This event provoked strong protests and gave rise to important controversies that were reflected in the press of the time, and in which Lafora became involved. The trigger was an article by Lucia Sánchez Saornil in the newspaper *Fragua Social*, wondering about the reason for closing the House of Culture, and stating that "(...) hemos hecho conjeturas a veces disparatadas, como que puedan ser considerados

facciosos aquellos sabios y aquellos artistas allí alojados [...] we have sometimes made wild guesses about how the sages and artists housed there can be considered rebellious]" (Sánchez Saornil, 1937, 15 July, p. 8). Two days later, in the same newspaper, an open letter was reproduced that Lafora sent to the Secretary of the Communist Party with the intention of denouncing the serious harm that, according to him, Wenceslao Roces –Secretary of Public Instruction and the person he blamed for the decision– had inflicted by removing the intellectuals from the House of Culture. Thus, although he did not express his opposition to the party, he left evidence of his protest in this matter, attributing the closing to the unfortunate management of Wenceslao Roces, whom he criticized for his "(...) métodos de venganza personal, de opresión política y de vejámenes sobre los que no siguen dócilmente sus indicaciones, no atendiendo ni respetando nombres ni largas historias de actuación democráticas [methods of personal revenge, political oppression, and satires about those who do not meekly follow his indications, without regard or respect for names or long histories of democratic activity]" (Rodríguez Lafora, 1937, 17 July, p. 8). This public accusation marked the beginning of his feud with Wenceslao Roces, to whom, in addition, he would attribute the suspension of the publication of the journal *Archivos de Neurobiología* in 1936 "due to lack of paper". This suspension lasted throughout the war and until 1954, when Lafora himself returned from exile and relaunched the journal (Valenciano, 1977, p. 140).

The controversy about the dissolution of the residence was also mentioned by the newspaper *Frente Rojo* [Red Front], in which the day after the article by Lucia Sánchez Saornil, the Ministry of Public Instruction published a news release defending the ministerial reasons for closing the residence, referring to the lack of economic funding and to the new dimension the institution would be given: "lo que hasta hoy era una simple residencia, se convierta en un hogar fecundo de cultura para el pueblo, con cuyo dinero y con cuya sangre se sostienen hoy todos nuestros centros [what until now has been a simple residence becomes a fertile home of culture for the people, whose money and blood support all of our centers]" (Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, 1937, 16 July, p. 6). In addition, alluding to possible party policies about the residents of the House of Culture, the news release indicated that:

Ni un solo de los residentes en la Casa de la Cultura podrá decir sin faltar a la verdad, que el Ministerio haya desarrollado en esta Institución una política de partido, ni puesto en juego presiones o sugerencias partidistas de ningún género [Not one of the residents of the House of Culture can truthfully say that the Ministry has developed a party policy in this Institution or used partisan pressure or suggestions of any kind]. (op. cit).

The next day, also in *Frente Rojo*, in an open letter on the same topic, Antonio Machado would publicly express his unconditional support for the Republican government, thus addressing the criticisms of the government's actions in this area:

De ningún modo puedo simpatizar con campañas políticas que pretendan mermar el prestigio del gobierno de la república, porque como he dicho más de una vez, vivimos en días de guerra y de tormenta, y en estos días, los capitanes y los pilotos cuando están en sus puestos, deben ser sagrados [I cannot at all sympathize with political campaigns that try to

lessen the prestige of the government of the Republic because, as I have said more than once, we are living in days of war and torment, and in these days, the captains and pilots, when at their posts, must be sacred] (Machado, 1937, 17 July, p. 6).

This controversy reached its final point in a strong letter published days later, on July 25th 1937, from a group of intellectuals from the league of antifascist writers to the newspaper *el Mono Azul* [The Blue Monkey] and titled *Nuestra alianza sale al paso del Doctor Rodríguez Lafora* [Our alliance responds to Doctor Rodríguez Lafora]. In this letter, they would criticize Lafora's love for intrigue and his lack of loyalty and gratitude toward the Republic due to his criticism of the dissolution of the residence of the House of Culture. Thus, they stated that "(...) algunos pretenden revolverse contra esta disposición utilizándola demagógicamente contra el Gobierno de la República [...] some try to rebel against this disposition by using it demagogically against the Government of the Republic]" (Anonymous, July 1937, p. 131), openly backing and supporting Machado's position.

Amid all of this, in September 1937, the House of Culture, no longer a residence for intellectuals renewed its academic and intellectual activities. It began a new phase as Cultural Patron and initiated the publication of the journal *Madrid: Cuadernos de la Casa de la Cultura*, of which three issues would be published: two in Valencia under the direction of Enrique Díez Canedo and the third in Barcelona under the supervision of María Zambrano. The review of the first issue of *Madrid: Cuadernos de la Casa de la Cultura*, written by Antonio Sánchez Barbudo (April 1937) in the journal *Hora de España*, [Spain's Hour] clearly reflects the spirit with which the publication was born:

Es natural que surgiese luego, como consecuencia del contacto mutuo y la convivencia a que profesores, investigadores y artistas se vieron forzados, la idea de crear una publicación en la que pudieran, accidentalmente, expresarse todos ellos y continuar así en cierto modo su interrumpida labor [It is natural that, as a result of the mutual contact and co-living that professors, researchers, and artists were forced into, the idea of creating a publication would later emerge, so that they could, accidentally, all express themselves and thus continue their interrupted work to a certain degree]. (Sánchez, 1937 April, pp. 57-58).

These words denoted the unique nature of the publication, which would include, with careful illustrations in many cases, articles on diverse topics and by various authors, highlighting publications on experimental sciences, medicine, and psychiatry, as well as literary criticism, poetry, history, education, or music.

Among all these articles, we should emphasize those published by authors close to psychiatry and psychology, such as Sacristán, Miguel Prados-Such, or Lafora himself, who wrote two articles. One appeared in the first issue and addressed the critical moment in the Spanish university (Rodríguez Lafora, 1937b), and the other (Rodríguez Lafora, 1937c) appeared in the second issue and included a specifically psychological contribution on *Ereuthophobia* or fear of blushing. The two articles highlight and reflect the author's scientific commitment at that time.

With regard to the first article, although Lafora was never especially interested in entering the university world –it was not, for example, among his priorities to achieve a tenured psychiatry or psychology position–, one of his concerns was the cultural and scientific mission

the University should have and its role in the course of social evolution and the progression of the relations between society and politics (Hernández 1987). His ideas are clearly expressed in the article *Crisis y futuro de la universidad* [*Crisis and future of the university*] (Rodríguez Lafora, 1937b), which acquires special value due to the fact that it was written in the midst of a war situation. The article transfers the external confrontation to the moment experienced by the University, immersed in the debate about the need for reform or for revolution. Lafora recognized the value of this institution, which, according to him, had new tasks in society's cultural transformation process, and he included the arguments proposed years before by Ortega y Gasset (1930) about the University's mission in society, which would take on more importance and urgency in the new scenario of 1937. In the article, we also find signs of the pragmatism inherent to an experimental scientist, in that it reveals his interest in practical and social applications of psychology, highlighting that the future of a public university that is accessible to most of society lies in the psycho-technical and characterological selection of the students. Thus, he wrote:

El futuro, pues, de la Universidad sea cualquiera el régimen político que se implante, es dar acceso a la enseñanza superior, no como hasta ahora a los individuos procedentes de una clase suficientemente acomodada, sino a aquellos individuos de cualquier clase, que por sus dotes intelectuales y caracteriológicas, reveladas en la escuela primaria y secundaria, puedan adquirir esa cultura y utilizarla después en beneficio de la nación [The future of the University, then, regardless of the political regime that implements it, is to provide access to higher education, not just for individuals from a sufficiently comfortable class, but for individuals from any class who, due to their intellectual and characterological gifts, revealed in primary and secondary school, can acquire this culture and then use it to benefit the nation] (Rodríguez Lafora 1937b, p. 98).

He gave examples of actions in this area in the United States and Russia, or studies on psycho-technical assessment by Emilio Mira in Barcelona, who highlighted the value of psychological tests in elaborating the student's file, based on the exploration of his/her intelligence coefficient and personality profile. He also pointed out the importance of the selection of university professors, introducing some key questions in this debate that are valid even today, such as the separation between the teaching and research functions of the university professor. Addressing the relevance of the former, he stated "(...) que en verdad el profesor universitario no precisa ser un investigador, sino ante todo, un buen pedagogo de la ciencia y la cultura, que sepa bien su ciencia y la manera de transmitirla a sus discípulos [(...) that in reality the university professor does not have to be an investigator, but rather more than anything, a good teacher of science and culture who knows his/her science well and how to transmit it to his/her disciples]" (Rodríguez Lafora, 1937b, p. 103). Therefore, it seems coherent to state that, based on the author's own experience, having conducted all his research outside university professorships; it was not possible to support another model. Finally, he referred to the professor's responsibility toward the student in terms of education for citizenship, arguing that university instruction should include "(...) enseñanzas como los problemas modernos del

estado que les capaciten intelectualmente para influir en la política nacional, ya de una manera ejecutiva, ya de una manera difusa [(...) lessons such as the modern problems of the state that intellectually enable them to influence national policy, in an executive manner and a diffuse way]" (Rodríguez Lafora, 1937b, p. 103).

A reflection on the political opportunism of this article leads us to consider that, at that moment, Lafora tried to offer his proposal for university changes to the Republican government, which, as he foresaw, could fit these changes into its educational policy. He did so based on the erroneous premise that the dispute would not last long, and that, in the end, with the Republican victory, there would be improvements in the educational system (Monteagudo & Chisvert, 2013).

In the second article, Lafora regained his research interest in the clinic and psychiatry, developing, in almost thirty pages, a broad review study and presenting the experiences from 17 clinical cases on an obsessive social neurosis, the so-called *Ereuthophobia*. In this article, despite being directed toward a non-specialized general public, Lafora described the disease in great detail, highlighting the causal and pre-disposing factors, as well as the psychogenic antecedents (embarrassing experiences). He also described the symptomatology and emotional symptoms of the Ereuthophobic, describing him/her as "(...) es un psicópata tímido que sufre, pues, temor y vergüenza a la vez, vergüenza de sí mismo y temor de los demás. [(...) a timid psychopath who suffers fear and embarrassment at the same time, embarrassment about him/herself and fear of others.]" (Rodríguez Lafora, 1937c, p. 63). Years later, after the war, with the re-edition of the journal *Archivos de Neurobiología* the author again addressed the topic in this journal in a more detailed study (Rodríguez Lafora, 1950).

Lafora in Godella Hospital: Psychiatry at the Service of War.

Various studies have addressed the topic of war psychiatry during the Spanish Civil War, both in the fighting population and in the context of the non-combatant civil population (e.g. Bandrés & Llavona, 1996, 2007; Carreras, 1986; González, 2008; Huertas 2006; Mülberger, 2010; Pérez, 1992). These studies show that, even before the beginning of the war, Spanish Military Healthcare had a well-organized psychiatric service, highlighting the Military Psychiatric Clinic in Ciempozuelos (province of Madrid) and the psychiatric care in the Military Health Academy, under the psychiatrist Antonio Vallejo-Nájera. The division in the army when the Civil War began was transferred to psychiatry, which was situated politically on one side or the other of the conflict. Thus, for example, Juan José López Ibor and Vallejo-Nájera took the side of the rebel soldiers, with the latter being named chief of psychiatric services of the national army. Meanwhile, Emilio Mira was named chief of psychiatric services of the Republican army. Thus, the birth of a war psychiatry that was clearly at the service of the war conflict was observed. Other psychiatrists such as Sacristán and Lafora showed greater closeness to the Republican army because it allowed greater liberalization than other political regimes in various areas, including science. However, as military psychiatrists in the territorial zone where they were located, they developed a caregiving labor, rather than one based on doctrine or ideology (Carreras, 1986; Hernández, 2006).

During the first year of the war, the psychiatric service of the Republican zone was set up in an almost spontaneous and loosely coordinated way. As Emilio Mira would state years later, there was, in his own words, a “autogobierno de los enfermos mentales [self-government of the mentally ill]” (Mira, 1944, p 37) because the patients had to take care of each other while waiting for auxiliary staff to arrive at the established hospitals. Starting with the second year of the war, the psychiatric services of the Republican side began to have a structured organization. In this endeavor, Mira’s efforts were quite important because he worked intensively on the selection of recruits, and he formed a group of 32 psychiatrists distributed on the five existing fronts: Center, Extremadura, South, Levante, and East (Estarlich, 1996; Pérez, 1992). As Mira (1944) described, in each of the combat zones of the Republican army, a psychiatric unit was organized that was composed, first, of a psychiatric hospital installed in the rear and, second, some psychiatric centers at the pre-front. Today these centers would be called *emergency mobile services*, located in the evacuation stations of each army corps alongside campaign hospitals. This system of psychiatric attention, close to the front and with the soldier’s rapid return to his/her post, was replicated by the North American army during the Second World War, and even today it is a referent in military psychiatric care (Ibáñez, 2003).

Mira and Lafora maintained a close relationship during the Civil War. In fact, and as Valenciano describes, Lafora doubted between accepting the management of the hospital for deficient children, which Mira had proposed, or taking charge of the organization of the neurology section of the *Godella Hospital* in Valencia, ordered by the Government of the Republic, which he eventually accepted (Valenciano, 1977, p 138). Thus, in August 1937, Lafora took charge of the neurology section of Military war Hospital number 4 in the network of Military Hospitals in the province of Valencia¹. It was located in the *Colegio Sagrado Corazón de Godella* [Sacred Heart School of Godella] (Figure 2), where Lafora coincided with Sacristán and *Justo Gonzalo* (Monteagudo & Chisvert, 2015). Although Lafora was named director, he soon delegated this responsibility to Sacristán because, at that time, he did not want to have any administrative responsibility that could keep him in Spain (Moya, 1986). As mentioned earlier, his main objective was to leave the country as soon as possible.

This hospital mainly provided care for the soldiers participating in the campaigns of Teruel and Aragón. It was one of the few hospitals with a clinical section for neurosis, thus receiving the name of the *Neurological Hospital*. There were two other known clinical sections for neurosis, one that functioned in Hospital number 6 of Chamartín (Madrid), run by the Argentine psychiatrist *Gregorio Bermann*, and another one proposed in Murcia, although the war practically impeded its functioning (Rodríguez Lafora, 1937d, 127). In our documental review of historical archives, we were able to verify that very little documentation had been conserved from the Godella Hospital. It was



Figure 2. The *Colegio Sagrado Corazón* in Godella before the Civil War, which later housed Military Health Hospital number 4 from the network of Military Hospitals in Valencia. Reproduced with the permission of the *Fondo gráfico del Taller de Historia Local de Godella* [Graphic Fund of the Local History Workshop of Godella].

mainly limited to information about its establishment (figure 3) and the medical symptoms in November 1936, as well as some isolated data on numbers of beds and supplies.

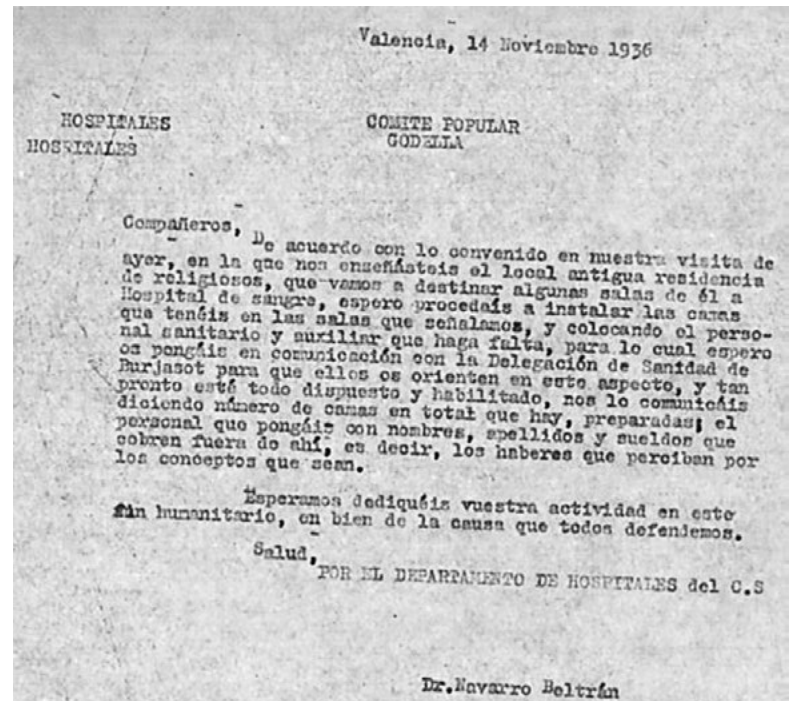


Figure 3. Communication from the department of War Health for the Establishment of the Military War Hospital in Godella in November 1936, where Lafora was incorporated. Source: *Archivos de la Diputación Provincial de Valencia*. ADPV Sig. D.6.1. caja 24.

¹ Due to its geostrategic situation, Valencia was a neuralgic center of the Republican rearguard. Therefore, in the capital and other nearby populations, different relevant buildings were occupied both civil and religious (schools, convents, palaces, and others), converted into military hospitals or the so-called *blood hospitals* where war injuries were treated (García, 2011). Many of these buildings were also used as places to take in refugees or evacuees from the conflict.

This lack of primary archived documents makes some publications (Gonzalo, 1945, 1950; Sacristán 1937, 1938; Rodríguez Lafora 1937d) even more valuable. They reflect part of the work of Lafora and Sacristán during these months in the Hospital and are probably the only testimony found to date about the work done there.

Both Lafora and Sacristán, on the one hand, but also Vallejo-Nájera, on the other, considered that the war did not create new forms of psychic disease. Following the *Kraepelinian nosography*, they would affirm that the war neuroses were included within the psychogenic reactions, in the same group as the hysterical reactions (Sacristán, 1937; Rodríguez Lafora 1937d).

The first publication by Lafora directly related to his work as a war psychiatrist in Godella was his article *La Psiquiatría y neurología de guerra y de la revolución. Sus problemas y soluciones [Neurological Psychiatry of War and Revolution. Problems and Solutions]* (Rodríguez Lafora, 1937d), published in the journal *Revista de Sanidad de Guerra* [War Health Journal]. In this study he would point out that it is in the first phases of war and in the “momentos en que se está en inminencia de ruptura de las hostilidades [moments in which the outbreak of the hostilities is imminent]” (op. cit., p.123) when the largest number of reactive psychoses are produced, which he had already stated based on his observations of cases in the clinic of the Provincial Hospital of Madrid in the months before the Civil War. He stated that “Las formas de psicosis más frecuentes observadas por nosotros en hombres son: estados crepusculares, delirios alcohólicos, (...) estados confusionales de corta duración, reacciones depresivas con colorido delirante, y además las psicosis endógenas y exógenas comunes [The most frequent forms of psychosis we observed in men are: crepuscular states, alcoholic deliriums, (...) short-term states of confusion, depressive reactions with shades of delirium, and also the common exogenous and endogenous psychoses]” (Rodríguez Lafora, 1937d, p. 123). He also pointed out that the neurological problems were much more important than the psychiatric ones, due to their volume and consequences (e.g. uselessness, neurosis, demands for *renta de invalidez* [disability income]). However, without a doubt, the most important reflection in this article was his position about the need to organize the unstructured military psychiatric care at the beginning of the war. For this purpose, he outlined a series of guidelines that he proposed to the Civil and Military Healthcare Direction, and that should lead to evacuating the patients with neurological lesions to the specialized rearguard centers, where explicit mention is already made to the Godella Hospital. These centers would also be responsible for administratively managing disability reports and following up on future rehabilitation (Rodríguez Lafora, 1937d, p. 128).

Sacristán, in his article *La guerra como causa de las alteraciones psíquicas* [War as the cause of psychic alterations] (Sacristán, 1937), published in the first issue of the journal *Madrid*, also defended the premise that war did not create new forms of psychic illness, arguing that the predominant psychic alterations in war would be psychogenic and psychopathic reactions. He also highlighted the presence, associated with the war situation, of phenomena typical of the psychopathology of masses, which implies a loss of will of the individual. However, the author ended with a positive note about the effect of war on the mental health of the general population, by stating that:

(...) la experiencia de la guerra europea nos enseñó que el sistema nervioso central se halla dotado de una capacidad de resistencia enorme para toda clase de estímulos físicos y emocionales. La antigua creencia de que el cerebro responde en estos casos con la enfermedad, con la locura, no ha sido confirmada en la última guerra ni podía serlo en modo alguno. [...] the experience of the European war taught us that the central nervous system has an enormous capacity for resistance to all kinds of physical and emotional stimuli. The old belief that the brain responds in these cases with disease, with craziness, was not confirmed in the last war, nor could it be in any way] (Sacristán, 1937, p 96).

Among the problems that Lafora and his collaborators had to face in Godella Hospital, the most important was the difficulty of carrying out an exhaustive analysis of the mentally ill person that would allow his/her complete reincorporation into active service, which was the ultimate objective of these psychiatric units. Lafora expressed this by trying to differentiate the distinct causes of war neuroses from neurasthenia, nervousness, hysteria, or thyroid-based nervous disorders (Lafora 1937d, p 123). He also paid special attention to the so-called *neurosis de renta* [income neurosis], which would appear in some psychiatric patients as a delirium of demanding a military pension, as observed in Germany in the Great War and referred to as *Rentensucht*. In summary, adequate care for the war neurotic became a critical topic in military healthcare because it would allow the affected individuals, if treated adequately, to be reintegrated into the war within a short period of time.

Along the same lines, Sacristán, already the chief of the neurosis unit at Godella Hospital, published an article in the *Revista Sanidad de Guerra*. In it (Sacristán, 1938), following the guidelines established by Lange based on his experience as a psychiatrist in the Great War in Germany, he described the characteristics that the war neurosis clinic should have. First, he described which patients should receive care: “(...) todo aquel paciente cuyos síntomas neuróticos no hubieran remitido en cuatro días en un hospital de segunda línea del frente, debería ser objeto de atención en una clínica de neurosis de guerra bajo la supervisión directa de un psiquiatra [...] all those patients whose neurotic symptoms had not remitted in four days in hospital in the second line behind the front should receive care in the war neurosis clinic under the direct supervision of a psychiatrist]” (Sacristán, 1938, p. 70). He also highlighted that, with a rapid, energetic, and active therapy, the so-called *Nonne* or *suggestive atmosphere of the clinic* would positively affect the success of the war neurotic's recovery. Likewise, he established what the main phases of the work in the clinic should be: “Primero la preparación del neurótico para el momento de la cura, seguido del momento mismo o acto de la cura y el tratamiento posterior a ella [First, the preparation of the neurotic for the moment of the cure, followed by the actual moment or act of the cure and the treatment after it]” (op. cit. p.71). In that first moment of *preparation*, an adequate selection would be made of the patients who were truly war neurotics. The next step would be the choice of the psychotherapeutic method, which could be, for example, hypnosis, suggestive narcosis, ergotherapy, or suggestive treatment. In any case (op. cit. p. 73), “(...) fuera cual fuera el método de su elección el psiquiatra debe afirmar con energía en

todo momento y con fuerza convictiva ante el enfermo su curación [regardless of the method chosen, the psychiatrist had to energetically state at all times and with conviction in front of the patient that he would be cured]". Thus, he explicitly referred to avoiding the ethical prejudice of treating the war neurotic like a simulant. In fact, in his first months of work alongside Lafora in Godella, Sacristán highlighted that few cases of faking were observed, even stating that "constituye una falta grave tratar al neurótico de guerra sin más como un simulante, (...) la simulación pura es una rareza [it is a serious offense to merely treat the war neurotic as a simulant, (...) pure simulation is quite rare]" (op. cit. p 73). Finally, referring to later treatment, once the neurotic had been cured of his symptoms, Sacristán recommended bed rest for 1 or 2 days with mild sedatives, followed by trying to achieve the individual's physical and psychic reintegration, which would culminate, in the best case scenario, in his reincorporation into his unit.

These statements by Sacristán show his preference for the psychotherapeutic method, his concern for the patient, and a less expeditious attitude than the one shown by Emilio Mira, who sometimes injected *cardiazole* to provoke shock and, thus, with this feared therapy, dissuade those who would fake their illness (Mira, 1944).

In the summer of 1938 the neurologist Justo Gonzalo joined the Godella Hospital at the request of Lafora and remained there until the war ended (García-Molina, 2015). In addition to treating war neurosis alongside Lafora, he also carried out a study on cerebral localizations in this hospital. To do so, he selected and studied in detail more than one hundred war injured, following some of them for various years. For example, there was a noteworthy study on patients called *cases M and T*. After suffering cranial traumatism, their symptoms, such as almost inverted vision, would allow him to use strictly physiological criteria to study the problem of cerebral localizations from a completely novel perspective. He would make this study known in his work *Dinámica cerebral* [Cerebral dynamics], recently recovered and re-edited (Gonzalo, 2011).

In summary, despite the brief period of time they were active in Godella Hospital, the work carried out there by Lafora, Sacristán, and Gonzalo, reflected in the publications mentioned, provides a valuable example and testimony to the psychiatric care for war neurosis offered by the Republican army services during the Spanish Civil War. Finally, it should be pointed out that, after the war ended, studies like those by López Ibor (1942) would point to the low incidence of neurosis during the war, although they highlighted that there was a higher rate on the Republican side.

The End of a Stage and the Perspective of Exile.

Although Lafora left evidence of his anti-nationalist position while in Valencia during the Civil War, he never came to identify with the Republic of the Popular Front. He recognized the political and organizational efficiency of the communist party, and he admitted this in an open letter to the secretariat of the party, but without identifying with its ideology (Rodríguez Lafora, 1937, July). In summary, and as Valenciano (1977) pointed out, during this time Lafora emphasized

his research ambitions and his commitment to the Republic from the scientific and medical arena, enclosing his collaboration almost exclusively in his work as a war psychiatrist.

His personality and concerns, both political and scientific, were reflected in his different actions during this time, from his pronouncement on the closing of the House of Culture to his public defense of the Journal *Archivos de Neurología* and his work as a war psychiatrist, or his research interests, demonstrated in various publications in journals that emerged during the war years. All of this took place even though he was sure of the perspective of exile practically from the beginning of the dispute. Because he was notoriously public about his harmonious relationship with the president of the Republic, Manuel Azaña, Lafora always had the fear of being a victim of repression if captured by the national front. This harmony with Azaña was, however, what would make his exit from Spain possible in September 1938, when he left the Godella Hospital and, after a brief stay in Barcelona and Paris, accepted an invitation from the Academy of Medicine in Mexico with the blessing of the Government of the Republic (Rodríguez Lafora, 2005).

After the war, the varied fortune of the members of the generation of the *Archivos de Neurología* is well known. The most fortunate were headed for exile, as in the case of Lafora or Miguel Prados-Such; an even larger group, such as Sacristán or Nicolás Ramón López Aydillo, suffered the purge by the new regime, and others did not survive or last until the end of the war, which is the case of Villaverde or José Sanchis Banús, respectively (Armas, Gonzáles & Boscá 2008; López, Molina, Pablo & Álamo, 2007). The indictment of this generation was especially illustrative. During the war, in an attempt to elevate the psychiatrist Villaverde, executed by the Republican side, to the category of martyr, the physician Carlos Cortezo would make serious allegations about Lafora, Sacristán and the deceased Sanchis Banús:

Aquel Sanchis Banús! ¡Buen pájaro! Ahora podríamos hablar despacito de sus méritos y virtudes. (...) ¡Aquel Gonzalo Rodríguez Lafora, modelo de villano y ejemplo de farsante científico. Ya hablaremos, porque este aún no ha muerto (...) ¡Aquel Sacristán! ¡Cuánta miseria, cuánta mentira...! (...) todos ellos no pueden, ni deben quedar sin la sanción merecida [That Sanchis Banús! What an element! Now we can speak slowly about his merits and virtues. (...) That Gonzalo Rodríguez Lafora, villainous model and example of scientific fraud. We'll talk later, but he is not dead yet (...) That Sacristán! What misery, how many lies...! (...) all of them cannot and must not escape their deserved punishment] (Cortezo, 1938, p. 125).

Conclusion

In this study, we examine a unique episode in Lafora's extensive biography: his trajectory during the Spanish Civil War in Valencia. The almost two years the author spent in Valencia left evidence of his anti-nationalist position and his collaboration with the Republic, but limited to his own sphere, science and medicine, as well as his tenacity in trying to preserve psychiatric and psychological investigation in our country, which would become, after the war, divided between those who were exiled and those who survived the repression of

science in Spain. Years later, from the United States, in an article published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* (Rodríguez Lafora, 1949), Lafora would recognize the great effort of a generation of Spanish psychiatrists whose intense trajectory began in the previous century with the school of Ramón y Cajal, and whose achievements after the war and post-war with the new order installed in Spain would be largely set aside. From that moment, a *psychiatry close to the regime of Francisco Franco* would have preference, represented by the figures of Vallejo-Nájera and López Ibor, with a clear influence of the German psychiatry of authors such as Heidelberg, Kraepelin, Jaspers, or Schneider (González de Pablo, 1987; Simón & Ferrer, 1999). Thus, on returning to Spain in 1947, Lafora would find a psychiatry fairly unrelated to neurological and psychological perspectives, with little interest in psychiatric care, and considerable abandonment of the public psychiatric establishments that had been the cornerstone of the beginning of the institutional psychiatric tradition in Spain.

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