

## Labour Education in the Balearic Islands

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### Abstract

*This article describes and documents the facts and most notable experiences in labour education on the Balearic Islands from the 1868 revolution until the end of the Civil War. We highlight the republican and socialist experiences on Mallorca and Ibiza and describe the five secular schools that were opened on the island of Menorca at different points in time. Although Ferrer i Guardia's influence on the emergence and consolidation of these labour initiatives is clear, it is also evident that the free-thinking movement, secularism and republican initiatives and all kinds of progressive communities worked to secularise society before the experience of the Modern School.*

**Key words:** labour movement, rationalist education, Balearic Islands, socialism, republicanism, secular schools, secularisation

### 1. Introduction

The presence of the labour movement on the Balearic Islands was conditioned by the distinct social, economic and cultural circumstances on each island. While on Mallorca and Menorca there were labour nuclei which were the outcome of a slow process of industrialisation and the consolidation of the petty bourgeoisie, there is no proof of any important labour initiative in the field of education on Ibiza, although we will discuss the scant data available.

The experiments of the *Escola Mercantil* (Mercantile School) and the *Escola Democràtica Republicana* (Democratic Republican School) on Mallorca, the longstanding existence of the *Casino Acadèmia del Poble* (Academic Casino of the People) on Ibiza and the *Escola Propagandística del Club Republicà Federal* (Propagandist School of the Federal Republican Club) on Menorca and the education and culture magazine *El Eco de la Juventud* were the spearheads in educational affairs during the revolutionary six years on the Balearic Islands.

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We cannot describe these initiatives as purely labour themselves; rather they fell under the umbrella of progressive and the republican groups.

The labour movement during the Bourbon Restoration, in a context of weak industrialisation, did not manage to mobilise huge masses, although its voice could be heard on Mallorca and Menorca, where the labour movement was better organised and had a stronger presence. On those islands, where labour education initiatives took root with greater or lesser success through the creation of five secular and workers' schools on the island of Menorca with divergent results, and with the experience of the socialist school in Lluçmajor on Mallorca.

The labour movement on the Balearic Islands fluctuated between the early influence of anarchists and republicans and the sway of the socialists. The struggle between socialists and anarchists over control of the labour organisations became a constant feature in the 1920s and 1930s.

The penetration of capitalist forms gradually transformed the islands' economy, which was followed by demographic and social changes, as well as by shifts in mentalities and cultural patterns. Education was supposed to be one of the fundamental cornerstones of the new state, but the state was not changing at the pace needed nor was education meeting the expectations and needs of broad swaths of the population. The working classes, labourers, craftsmen, farmers and many day labourers made up the bulk of the population, and in no way were they able to access the educational, social and healthcare systems of an advanced society. Therefore, the educational and social initiatives meant to fill the serious gaps left by the state were more than justified, although the Catholic Church was the institution which profited the most from this situation.

In one succinct paragraph, Bernat Sureda defined the status of education on the Balearic Islands:

*“The Balearic Islands entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century with huge shortcomings and deficiencies in terms of educational possibilities and services. These shortcomings were considered graver as new needs and demands emerged, including the discrediting of the public schools, the lack of appropriate buildings to house schools, insufficient teacher training, the use of rote teaching methods, the requirement to teach in Spanish to children who spoke Catalan, little attention to the cultural reality of the setting, difficulties for women to access levels of education for the working sectors that had no time to spend on entertainment and training, too many children working in conditions that were harmful to their development, a lack of playgrounds in the cities...”* (Sureda, 2006: 6).

While the revolutionary six years paved the way for the emergence of progressive groups of all kinds, during the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were diverse initiatives that tried to respond to the educational shortcomings on the Balearic Islands. The first was the republican or regionalist bourgeois reform movement which basically drew inspiration from the ideas of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (Free Education Institution) famous back in

the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Alexandre Roselló, Mateu Obrador and Guillem Cifre de Colonya). The second was the influence of a widespread movement of educational revamping in Europe which proposed an in-depth reform of teaching concept and methods (Miquel Porcel, Gabriel Comas, Joan Benejam, Joan Capó, etc.), and the third were the labour initiatives, with a socialist or anarchist bent, primarily on Menorca. Still, at no time did Catholicism lose its initiative.

Catholicism on the Balearic Islands, which was deeply rooted among broad swaths of society, demonstrated its desire and capacity to keep sway over such an important sphere of influence as elementary education, taking advantage of the shortcomings in the public school system.

The educational efforts of the Church, which, as we have seen, were very important in the field of women's education, also spread among working-class sectors and adult and young labourers through a series of institutions, many created the century before, such as the Sant Josep night schools, which came to have nine centres and around 1,000 students, along with the Sunday schools and the elementary classes taught at Catholic workers' centres (Sureda, 2000: 10-12).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as Antoni Colom noted, the Catholic Church dictated the events and main avenues of education on the islands: "The Mallorcan church became the main force in the pedagogical events on the island" (Colom Cañellas, 1991: 41).

All the legal provisions fostered the development of the Catholic educational and social initiatives, and the moral supervision of the public schools was also in the hands of the vicarages. Menorca was the island where this overwhelming power was the most hotly questioned by a weak yet conscious societal majority that tended towards progressive ideas (centre republicans, leftist republicans, anarchists and socialists).

The creation and consolidation of a rationalist school in the Church capital, Ciutadella, heralded one of the greatest challenges to the Church's power, which logically countered with the creation and consolidation of two large religious centres with vast societal outreach. Around them, a far-reaching social network was organised which ended up controlling all the cultural, educational, religious and social initiatives in the town.

## **2. The revolution of September 1868. The Revolutionary Six Years**

The triumph of the 1868 revolution, despite its pitfalls, consolidated a new model of state, a liberal state with contradictions, backsliding and hiatuses which was constantly subjected to harsh tests by the more conservative or, conversely, revolutionary sectors. Nonetheless, a return to the monarchical absolutism perennially upheld by some swaths of society seemed impossible.

On Mallorca, the clash was understandably between the bourgeoisie and the more reactionary and conservative core of society, which, as is logical, shared a common cause with the Church's positions, because at that time the bourgeoisie was the biggest enemy. Only the bourgeoisie had the economic might that enabled it to compete for secular power with the old dominant classes, which were themselves threatened by the pushiness that social

education was showing around the state. In this way, the efforts of the Church and Mallorcan conservatism were channelled at making the educational project and preponderance of the island's bourgeoisie fail, which it obviously achieved in no time (Colom Cañellas, 1991: 257).

A similar situation arose on the island of Menorca, although a greater plurality of social collectives and a quite prominent presence of prestigious republican intellectuals opposed the conservative initiatives. Though they did not reap major successes, they did gradually consolidate a new more secular, democratic and open mentality. One of the most important consequences of the revolutionary movement was the creation and consolidation of a broad and extensive network of associations and collectives which tried to supply the basic needs that the state was unable to meet. This associative movement was one of the reasons behind the gradual secularisation of society, the gradual democratisation of access to knowledge and the success of the labour movement.

We should note the important role played by the widespread associative movement that took shape on the Balearic Islands, just as it did in the rest of Spain, and which was particularly important on Menorca and Mallorca, in the dissemination of instruction and culture, particularly after the 1868 revolution. On Menorca, the second half of the century was a period of vast societal dynamism with the appearance of numerous political, culture, religious and free-time groups and associations which engendered new forms of socialisation. This dynamism was also reflected in a surge in written media, especially newspapers, which played a major role in the dissemination of culture, science and political ideas (Sureda, 1998: 43-44).

On Menorca, many progressive groups gradually coalesced during the revolutionary years; although their numbers were not so great, they were active enough and had a strong enough presence to generate a huge reaction from the more conservative sectors:

*“The republican press waged virulent attacks against the Catholic movements and against the Church hierarchy. However, the Church had other problems, primarily on Menorca, where an evangelical community led by Francesc Tudurí de la Torre opened for worship. Tudurí, who was also a Mason and was politically aligned with the federal republican party on Menorca (which applauded all his initiatives), also opened an elementary school and spread propaganda in all the towns on Menorca, and even on Mallorca. The secular schools or those linked to other religious denominations and the Masonic lodges were the other concerns of Bishop Mateu Jaume” (Casasnovas Camps, 1998b: 33).*

Even though it never really took root, this movement signalled a pivotal point in the struggle over the control of education and the secularisation and democratisation of society.

Capital could only be accumulated by transforming the old ways and means of production; factory work, which had become consolidated during this

period through the demographic upswing on the island, led to the appearance of the urban worker and the proletariat. Aware that they were being exploited, the proletariat organised itself to defend its class rights. That is, the appearance of the bourgeoisie on Mallorca in the 1860s was corroborated by the parallel appearance of the first labour organisations. If, on the other hand, we bear in mind the liberality of the 1869 constitution, we shall see how on Mallorca, from this date onward, the labour movement was gradually organised, although, as is logical, its importance would be in line with the economic and social power that the bourgeoisie would amass, since it is a direct consequence of its ability to create jobs and, therefore, its possibilities for investment (Colom Cañellas, 1991: 258).

Parallel to the educational initiatives of the bourgeoisie, such as the Mercantile School (Colom Cañellas and Díaz, 1977), limited workers' initiatives began to appear that were guided by the republican groups which exercised a certain paternalistic stewardship over the frail workers' collectives:

*“Since the start of the revolution, the republican party tried to attract workers and other popular classes and presented itself as the defender of the fourth state, just as it did in the rest of Spain. This tactic bore fruit, and many workers, craftsmen and day labourers joined a party that was basically led by the petty bourgeoisie and supported it until the end of the Republic. [...] Apparently, in around March 1871, there was at least one AIT cell on Menorca which published releases in the republican newspaper. In the month of October, workers' centres were created in Mahon and Ciutadella. [...] The internationalist movement took off on Menorca that year, since in December the II Congr s de Societats de Sabaters (2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of Shoemakers Societies) was held in Mahon, which organised the Spanish chapter of the Federaci  de Sabaters i Enfranquidors (Federation of Shoemakers)”* (Casasnovas Camps, 2001: 46-47).

The process of industrialisation had begun to shape a minority working class that was demobilised and lacking class consciousness.

The *Sociedad Escuela Democr tica Republicana* (Democratic Republican School Society) was founded on Mallorca with an exclusively educational mission. It was the first organised experiment in leftist labour education on the islands, although we have no further references to it:

*“I think that the reports of these schools fill an important gap in the history of education here, which had been lacking radical educational models until then despite the efforts and questions of many researchers to uncover influences from labour schools in mainland Spain on our local schools. Until now, no labour schools had been found on Mallorca – the case of Menorca is different – and therefore we had no knowledge about Ferrer i Gu rdia’s hypothetical influence on the island, an influence which we can now deny, at least on a practical level”* (Colom Cañellas, 1991: 263).

The same holds true with the creation of the Propagandist School of the Federal Republican Club and the free school of the *Societat Evangèlica* (Evangelical Society), which was also opened to the working class, just as the majority of Masonic lodges were.

On Ibiza, in late 1864 there was a single free-time organisation which was called the *Casino Acadèmia del Pueblo* (Academic Casino of the People). This organisation, located in the Marina neighbourhood, was created in January 1856 and was the headquarters of the Progressive Party. It was closed in 1866 and once again opened in May of the same year with the name of the *Casino del Comercio* (Casino of Trade).

The Casino housed a reading room and a music academy for the members, and it hosted plays and public dances (Garcia Ferrer, 1998). The Casino operated with virtually no interruptions from 1856 until 1890, and its results were clearly positive judging from the high number of members, around 100, if we compare it, for example, with the *Liceu Ebusità* (Ebusitan Lycaenum), the headquarters of the moderate party, which only had 60 members:

*“In consequence, more than a fully labour experience, this is a situation closer to cultural paternalism, with hints of propaganda and political dissemination. The progressives opened a school in the village, and in addition to the regenerative function common to educational and cultural expansion they very likely also sought to plant their ideology in the more working class echelons of the population”* (Garcia Ferrer, 1998: 97).

On Ibiza, as well, the *Centre Republicà Federal* (Republican Federal Centre) was also set up which operated until November 1874, and some of its members ran a republican-leaning weekly, *Les Pitiüses*, which was issued for a little over a year, which they used to defend secular education and the secondary school:

*“In short, we can state that on educational matters, Ibiza’s republicans were characterised by their defence of secular education, in particular the Secondary School, and by ferocious criticism of the Royal Decree issued the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 1885, which granted immense privileges to the schools run by religious orders”* (Garcia Ferrer, 1998: 100).

This royal decree was truly negative for all the secular, republican, unionist or anarchist educational initiatives. The fight to launch and consolidate small initiatives stumbled upon all possible obstacles, and only cohesive, conscious and large organisations managed to break through the enormous facilities available to create Catholic schools. We shall analyse several cases with these characteristics on the island of Menorca.

However, the labour experiences ended on Mallorca and Ibiza since at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century conservatism and the Church had regained ideological

control of the society that had been questioned during the revolutionary six years. Therefore, we can conclude that the failure of the Mallorcan bourgeoisie and the virtually nonexistent Ibiza bourgeoisie to consolidate an innovative educational project during the 1870s led to a dead-end for the incipient working class, which was lacking leadership and sought refuge in the different republican sensibilities. On Menorca, the presence of important anarchist cells served to mark differences with an also consolidated but small and mainly republican bourgeoisie.

### 3. The Bourbon Restoration

In 1875, the liberal bourgeoisie was replaced by a conservative bourgeoisie, and any possibility of an in-depth bourgeois revolution capable of turning around traditional society and the influence of the Catholic Church on life and everyday morals was truncated. The system was convenient for the ruling classes on the Balearic Islands (which were corrupt and practised caciquism), which controlled a population in which illiteracy and a lack of education were endemic.

The Republican Party was the home to many of the regime's detractors. It waved the banner of anti-clericalism along with education as a tool for regeneration, it advocated the abolition of the military service and certain taxes and it combated the practices of caciquism and *cunerisme* (a practice consisting of placing candidates to be elected in an electoral district other than their own). Soon local committees emerged in Palma, Manacor, Andratx, Santanyí, Montuïri, Sóller and Felanitx. Menorca's republicans organised around the *Círculo Industrial de Maó* (Industrial Circle of Mahon) and won the race for mayoralty of Mahon in 1883, an unprecedented feat on the Balearic Islands. Mahon may have been one of the few cities where the republicans always had an absolute majority, even though they did not always hold the mayor's office, as it was often appointed by the current government by royal decree.

In 1881, the labour movement was reorganised; a group of federal republicans set out to initiate the task of education and mutual assistance among the workers, creating the *Unió Obrera Balear* (Balearic Labour Union), which mixed anarchism and republicanism. In 1890, the *Ateneu Obrer Mallorquí* (Mallorcan Labour Athenaeum) was founded, and shortly thereafter the socialist group was founded in Palma, even though socialism never had a major impact on society there. The world of labour and republicanism wove a fiercely united front on the Balearic Islands during the early stage of the Bourbon Restoration.

To many people, the Bourbon Restoration meant the resumption of order after the chaos of the revolutionary six years. In this context, the economy stabilised, despite the logical cyclical crises inherent in the capitalist system, and major milestones were achieved:

*“The Balearic economy in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was largely characterised by the advance of industrialisation, agricultural transformations, the promotion of communications, the impetus of capitalism and the proliferation of banks”* (Casasnovas Camps, 1998b: 340).

Vineyards and foreign demand had a multiplying effect on the economy of Mallorca, with repercussions on the infrastructure, income and retail and financial sectors. The same held true with the cultivation of almonds on Mallorca and Ibiza.

On Ibiza, there was also a rapid rise in salt production, where mechanisation had been introduced, turning it into a capitalist industry that hired salaried workers. On Menorca, the shoe industry laid down deep roots, and the secondary sector showed extraordinary dynamism, as exemplified by the electrification of the city of Mahon in 1892. Mallorcan industry did not achieve the same proportional importance as its Menorcan counterpart, yet it should not be downplayed. Yet despite the advance of industrialisation and improvements in agriculture, heavy emigration continued:

*“The causes of the emigration were the frequent cycles of industrial crises which led to workshop and factory closures and the failure of agricultural sectors like the vineyards”* (Casasnovas Camps, 1998b: 345).

The Menorcan emigrants played an important role in creating, maintaining and consolidating innovative secular school initiatives. Generally speaking, there were many who *“van fer les Amèriques”* (“did the Americas”), as they used to say, and they amassed capital that was reinvested not in the industrial sector but in property. In any event, the role of emigrants in the spread of welfare to more social echelons is clear, and many initiatives were sustained thanks to their constant contributions.

The bourgeois society of early capitalism, the slow but steady education of the population, the spread of the press and other factors meant that people from all strata of society could access different levels of culture. Associations played a key role in this. During the Bourbon Restoration, associations of all sorts sprang up, political, unionist, mutual aid, denominational and recreational, including casinos, which also served an important cultural and educational function (organising talks, plays, lyric evenings, musicals, night schools for workers and schools for the children of their members).

The labour movement received a decisive impetus over the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even though the process of industrialisation was different on each of the islands: Menorca and Mallorca experienced processes of industrialisation while on Ibiza and Formentera these processes practically did not take place. As a result, we cannot find workers’ initiatives on Ibiza during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while we can find them on Menorca and Mallorca.

The Mallorcan workers’ movement was led by the socialists (through the weekly *El Obrero Balear*), while on Menorca the anarchist element predominated. The leading ideologue of the Menorcan anarchists was Joan Mir i Mir, the director of *El Porvenir del Obrero*, a newspaper with an anarchist bent. Joan Mir participated either directly or indirectly in the creation, consolidation and success of all the labour schools on the island of Menorca during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, along with the republican collectives:



*“The common interest in disseminating instruction shared by the republicans and anarchists on Menorca made it possible for progressive sectors of the bourgeoisie to cooperate in creating rationalist and secular schools in a variety of towns” (González-Agápito, Marquès, Mayordomo and Sureda, 2002: 114).*

Even though the republicans’ participation in numerous associative initiatives is clear, we should still delve further into the role of the republican majority in cities like Mahon. We are lacking a study which analyses the role of the republicans in the institutions that they controlled, such as the town halls, especially the Mahon Town Hall, apart from the decisive influence they had on the cultural and educational associations of the day, such as the *Ateneu Científic* (Scientific Athenaeum), the *Ateneu Popular* (Popular Athenaeum) and even the *Casa del Poble* (People’s House), a meeting place and site of action for all the progressive forces on the island:

*“We should delve further into the political and educational approaches of Menorcan republicanism beyond the task of cultural development undertaken by the Athenaeum. Studying the influence of reformist bourgeois thinking on municipal policy and the training and educational actions of the web of associations could provide important information on these positions” (González-Agápito, Marquès, Mayordomo and Sureda, 2002: 114).*

The educational efforts promoted by the Mahon Town Hall, in the case of the school camps (Motilla, 2004: 33-56), and the organised campaign against illiteracy in the public schools of Mahon (Alzina Seguí, 2005: 175-190) give us some idea of the fact that the republicans set a clear educational policy in the institutions they controlled.

The Church, in turn, watched the social and economic transformations with a great deal of trepidation as they were *making it lose parcels of influence*:

*“Protestant denominations were tolerated, and they had followers in Mahon and Es Castell on Menorca and a series of towns on Mallorca (Palma, Inca, Lluçmajor, Pollença, Capdepera). On Ibiza, there seemed to be no organised churches, but there is evidence of Protestants. The Masonic lodges were also able to operate freely, and in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century they achieved their maximum expansion on Menorca (mainly in Mahon, but also in Es Castell and Ciutadella) and on Mallorca (Palma, Lluçmajor, Manacor). On Ibiza, the first lodge began operating in 1899, although it must have had a short lifespan, while on Formentera Masonry was not organised until the days of the Republic, in 1933” (Casasnovas Camps, 1998b: 353).*

The Catholic Church shifted to the counter-offensive and set up new religious orders devoted to education; it established numerous associations, and unions of Catholic workers (the so-called ‘yellow unions’) appeared:

*“Protestants, Masons, free schools and the labour movement – which tended to profess the faith of atheism and anti-clericalism – were regarded as the enemies of the Church” (Casasnovas Camps, 1998b: 353).*

Each labour or republican initiative was met with multiple religious initiatives. The fight for control of education became bitter, even though the end results are known to everyone:

*“The denominational adult training institutions had a great deal of leeway in those years. These institutions include the Patronat Obrer de Palma (Workers’ Board of Palma). [...] The Catholic labour circles founded in most towns on Mallorca were also devoted to offering free-time activities, such as plays, films, literary and musical evenings, libraries, etc. On Mallorca, numerous associations were created with close ties to the Catholic centres which were conservative and pro-Mallorcan and offered training or cultural activities, such as Saba Marinenca in Lluçmajor, Minerva in Artà and the Joventut Mallorquinista (Mallorcanist Youth) branch in Sóller” (Sureda, 2000: 17-18).*

The creation of the Modern School of Barcelona by Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia and his subsequent death by shooting prompted a broad social support movement and had a huge impact in all the national and international press, phenomena which together magnified his pedagogical efforts and turned him into a martyr on behalf of education.

Likewise, the Catholic Church’s intense campaigns against secular school initiatives brought together thousands of people who regarded secularism as the expression of all evil. According to the conservative and clerical sectors of society, the free-thinkers and secularists were responsible for all the evils besieging society.

Ferrer i Guàrdia’s influence on the creation, consolidation and growth of secular schools is clear, even though the majority of educational experiments were grounded upon the theoretical corpus of institutionalism. In fact, the majority of rationalist school initiatives were the successors of other schools and other groups – all of them secular – created by the republicans or influenced by free thinking and Masonry, until they came to be founded upon the initiative of labour organisations.

On the Balearic Islands, anarchist educational thinking only had a moderate influence on Menorca; the poor organisation of the workers’ movement and the enormous importance of conservative thinking hindered the spread of labour education ideas. The minority anarchism on Mallorca was

limited to theoretical conceptions with no link to everyday life; anarchism spread its ideas via its periodical publications such as *El Rayo* (1912-1914) and *Cultura Obrera* (1919-1936) on Mallorca and *El Porvenir del Obrero* on Menorca (González-Agápito, Marquès, Mayordomo and Sureda, 2002: 63).

The labour press stressed the role of education and culture in workers' emancipation. The working class needed education that was not controlled by the bourgeoisie or the Church: a rational, comprehensive and secular education. Anti-clericalism was one of the most prominent features of the labour collectives on the islands, one of the common denominators among republicans, socialists and anarchists:

*“One of the most salient features of anarchist thinking is its anti-clericalism, which in education translates into a harsh criticism of teaching catechism and Catholic morality at schools at a time when the Catholic sectors were expressing their rejection of secular schools through rallies and other multitudinous events”* (González-Agápito, Marquès, Mayordomo and Sureda, 2002: 69).

The socialists also presented alternatives to labour education; socialist thinking affirmed the value of education as an instrument of consciousness in the labour movement. We could therefore say that the socialist school model was built upon secularism and rationalism.

The socialist movement had little importance on the islands: on Menorca, anarchosindicalist thinking predominated until the late 1920s, and after the 1930s the socialist movement also gained ground. On Mallorca, socialism was not organised until 1909-1913, and it had a presence in the capital, Palma de Mallorca, and in the towns of Manacor, Lluçmajor and Marratxí, where the socialists had labour associations. The vehicle where the socialists expressed their ideas was the *El Obrero Balear*, created by the *Grup Socialista* (Socialist Group) in Palma in 1900.

The magazine published many texts to show their interest in training workers, which the Balearic socialists regarded as an important key to improve the living conditions of the lower classes. At the same time, it called for more education for women (González-Agápito, Marquès, Mayordomo and Sureda, 2002: 71).

One of the socialist educational experiments took place in Lluçmajor, where Joan Montserrat i Parets created a school for the children of the workers of his town, which was called the *Escola dels Socialistes* (Socialists' School). Montserrat upheld a kind of education that was capable of eradicating the ignorance of the working classes, one that was not influenced by Catholic morality and could become an instrument of social progress and the emancipation of the working classes:

*“Montserrat i Parets defended a neutral school not governed by the Church (even the state school had to be neutral), with purely civic objectives. This stance dates from many years back, became more acute*

*in the days of the Second Republic and has never stopped being valid all around Spain, even today” (Oliver, 1977: 141-186).*

Also worth special mention is the educational efforts of another public school teacher from Lluçmajor, Rufino Carpena, who even managed to publish a school newspaper far before the Freinet methodology:

*“Of all these educators, one who stood out was Rufino Carpena. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1909 he took possession of his school in Lluçmajor – he was a state teacher – and he left it on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 1916. It seems that teaching factors did not play a role precisely rather than his job among the humblest children was not properly interpreted” (Oliver, 1977: 151).*

Rufino Carpena was in favour of active pedagogy that departed from the prevailing rote memorisation. He used outings as a means of education and instruction, and he was concerned with children’s moral education and with shaping reflective, aware people with the ability to think for themselves. He also delivered lectures to adults. In 1911, he founded the *Mutualitat Escolar* (School Mutual Aid Society) in Lluçmajor, whose mission was to foster savings among youth. In 1912, he founded the bimonthly illustrated magazine *Educacionista*, to which his students contributed.

Menorca was the island where workers’ educational initiatives attained the most success, despite the obvious obstacles and problems involved in consolidating them. The struggle among the working class, republicans and anarchists for the secularisation of society had been a constant feature of the last two centuries of history. Many people fought for secularisation, democratisation, freedom of thought and quality education for the most disadvantaged sectors of society through highly diverse and heterogeneous collectives. Anti-clericalism and free thinking were constants during the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and generated multiple cultural, sporting, aid and educational initiatives, including the creation and spread of secular schools around Spain.

The island of Menorca was not foreign to this entire movement, and despite its small territorial and social dimensions it was the home to a variety of groups, collectives and associations that constituted a dense, diverse and heterogeneous network which resulted in the creation of multiple formal and informal educational initiatives whose goal was to get rid of the moral control of the Catholic Church and democratise society, fight against caciquism and foster the welfare of the most disadvantaged classes, especially the workers’ collectives, sometimes from paternalistic perspectives and other times through more conscious and organised workers’ collectives.

There were five educational initiatives that were founded and grew on Menorca as part of this secularist movement. Joan Mir i Mir and Gabriel Comas i Ribas were the theoreticians and main driving forces behind them. Guided by republicans, anarchists and liberals, a free-thinking and anti-clerical movement gained ground which included individuals and collectives from a broad

ideological spectrum. The movement's extraordinary heterogeneity was simultaneously proof of both its ideological richness and the weakness of each strain separately. This would explain the brief duration of some of these experiences. Masons, moderate republicans, leftists and federalists, socialists, anarchists and anarchosyndicalists, the Germinalist movement, the spiritualist movement and the job of the athenaeums<sup>1</sup> and casinos rounded out a scene of great richness and ideological plurality.<sup>2</sup> Recently, the author of this article defended his doctoral thesis which describes and interprets the labour education movement on the island of Menorca, and this is therefore material that has never before been published.<sup>3</sup>

In 1902, the *Escola Laica de la Societat Progressiva Femenina* (Secular School of the Progressive Female Society) was created, which over time became the *Escola Lliure del Barri 15* (Free School of District 15). It was notably successful among the public even though it was closed after anarchist Mateo Morral's attack against the king. The driving force behind this school was Joan Mir i Mir and its director was the Catalan educator Esteve Guarro. It was built in a working-class neighbourhood, District 15, characterised by the existence of prostitution, which was also the target of harsh criticism from the more conservative elements of society. Despite the difficulties, around a year after it opened more than 200 day students were registered while more than 100 attended the adult classes offered at night.

In 1906, a night school for workers was created at the *Cercle Democràtic i Republicà d'Alaior* (Democratic and Republican Circle of Alaior) under the auspices of Joan Mir, and it soon thereafter became the *Escola Laica d'Alaior* (Secular School of Alaior), the most important and lasting experiment of all the labour schools. The teacher Joan Duran directed the school and achieved major successes in terms of registration numbers and the impressive education of its students. School outings, coeducation of the sexes, reflection on everyday facts and intuition as a teaching method, with a notable presence of mathematical, scientific and manual contents, were the keys to the success and consolidation of Alaior as a private secular educational option using economic and human means to offer quality education. The Secular School of Alaior was sustained jointly by republicans and anarchists until 1930, when this alliance ruptured. Quite a few emigrants to Argentina made major contributions to its financing, and it registered an average of sixty students in the three grades into which it was divided. It was characterised by its duration, its coherent educational projects, its unique methodology and its sound management by the association

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<sup>1</sup> About the cultural and educational tasks in Mahon's athenaeums, we should emphasize the unpublished doctoral thesis "Projecció cultural i educativa dels ateneus a Menorca (1905-1939)", by Xavier Motilla Salas. It was submitted in October 2008 at the UIB and it is a magnificent study which allows us to understand the implications of progressive educational and cultural initiatives in Menorca during the first 40 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>2</sup> See the magnificent work by Xavier Motilla Salas (2000), winner of the Francesc Hernández Sanz Prize. See, too, Pere Ballester Pons (2005), introductory study by Xavier Motilla Salas and Bernat Sureda Garcia. Edited by Emília Suárez Faner.

<sup>3</sup> We are referring to the doctoral thesis submitted on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 2009, at the UIB on Menorca, entitled: "Teoria i pràctica educativa obrerista a Menorca. Joan Mir i Mir i les escoles laiques".

that governed it, the *Societat Instrucció Popular* (Popular Instruction Society), which had over 400 members.

In 1908, the *Escola Laica de Sant Lluís* (Sant Lluís Secular School) opened in the quarters of the association *Tertúlia Republicana* under the direction of shoemaker and musician Pere Gornés, a multifaceted person, town councillor and member of the Town Hall and correspondent for the republican newspaper *La Voz de Menorca* who fought to bring literacy to the working-class sectors of the town, first through the secular school and later by creating municipal public schools. The secular school was closed after the events of the Tragic Week in Barcelona, even though Pere Gornés' educational and informational endeavours continued until his death.

*Casino 17 de Gener* (17<sup>th</sup> of January Casino) in Ciutadella had opened one of the first literacy schools for its members since 1906; in 1912 this school became known as the *Escola Racionalista de Ciutadella* (Rationalist School of Ciutadella), located on Passeig de Sant Nicolau. It remained open until 1919. In 1930, it reopened its doors under a new director, Àngel Muerza, a militant socialist, and under the patronage of the shoe manufacturer Pons-Menéndez, who offered free registration to his factory workers. The Rationalist School of Ciutadella could be described as one of the most remarkable success stories of Menorca's progressives, who proved that they were capable of building and opening an emblematic building in the Church seat of Menorca. It is difficult to imagine just how counter-current their undertaking was: a collective of anonymous, republican and working-class individuals working against the entire weight of the law and the Catholic hierarchy. We believe that the mere fact that the school was opened made it a huge success. Its subsequent closure and reopening by the entrepreneur Pons-Menéndez along with its new socialist orientation should be regarded as historical milestones on the road towards democratisation, secularisation and the spread of education to all social strata.

Finally, in 1922 the doors to the *Escola Laica des Castell* (Secular School of Es Castell) opened under the auspices of an anarchosyndicalist group in a venue owned by the town athenaeum. The initiative was warmly welcomed, but soon thereafter it was closed by the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. The Athenaeum of Es Castell is a model of a pluralistic, democratic association open to all sectors which carried out progressive policies and divulged culture, education and universalistic moral values. The Athenaeum of Es Castell welcomed different social collectives, including theatre troupes and football teams, choirs, and reading and discussion groups. It also hosted lectures and cultural, political, educational and sporting events of all sorts. A study of the internal dynamic of the Athenaeum would shed light on how a social institution managed to bring cohesiveness to the town and build a town identity, which is popularly known by the expression *fer poble* (to build a community).

Even though not all the initiatives managed to become consolidated, nor did they necessarily achieve coherence between theory and practice, they did manage to mobilise major citizen collectives in favour of secular, free and high-quality education and made a decisive contribution to entrenching free thinking and the democratisation of society. The anonymous individuals who contributed to and cooperated with these initiatives believed in education as a means of social regeneration and trusted that a change in the rote methods currently in force would improve the working classes' perceptions of official education and

would boost literacy and access to the world of knowledge by huge swaths of society which were much more concerned with earning more money than with learning how to read and write.

We have been able to analyse a wide range of books, notebooks and school activities from the Secular School of Alaior which enable us to draw conclusions regarding the day-to-day methodology, the kind that avoided sweeping statements of principles. First, we can note that not all the practices were as innovative as the discourse seems to paint them; here we find the always delicate confluence between theory and practice, in which practice comes with patterns and inertias which are difficult to change.

The feature for which the Secular School of Alaior stood out was the importance it attached to mathematics and sciences, and especially to their practical applications: household economics, proportionality, currency exchange, plenty of bookkeeping, equations with problems that resembled everyday life, principles of physics and chemistry that were applicable to the inventions of the day (electricity, radio, communications, etc.). Finally, it preached a universalistic morality with concepts very close to and even resembling the prevailing Catholic morality, yet with no references to God, saints or liturgies. Tolerance was practiced, and students from different walks of life attended the school: children of moderate republican leaders; children of socially-aware workers; children from the most disadvantaged sectors of society whose fees were paid by the association that governed the school, the Popular Instruction Society; children from progressive families whose beliefs were moderate and Christian-based. Perhaps this was the secular and inter-class school that Ferrer i Guàrdia preached yet never managed to bring to fruition. In any event, there was always a distance between the labour experiences on the island of Menorca and the more radical Ferrerist discourse, even though many people admired him after his unfair and absurd death by shooting.

From this perspective, Ferrer i Guàrdia's contribution and that of hundreds of people who believed in education as a tool of social regeneration was decisive for the future of the country.

The system of the Bourbon Restoration was finally broken, driven by three parallel crises: the ailing military in the war with Morocco, the malaise and ongoing political and social crisis, characterised by constant strikes, and the impact of the Russian Revolution:

*“With the political atmosphere rarefied by the partisan struggles and the failure of successive governments, the economy had not managed to recover after the crisis at the end of the World War. Nor did the central government make things easier, and the Cañal Decree raised the levies for exporting leather and footwear, harming the shoe industry. On the other hand, the demand for silver coin dropped drastically. The workers' malaise became more acute between 1919 and 1923, and this discontent helped their affirmation as a class. Union membership rose swiftly on Mallorca, from 1,648 members in 1916 to almost 7,000 members by 1919. The class struggle reached unprecedented heights in those years, and Mallorca had a total of 93 strikes in 1919 alone” (Casasnovas Camps, 1998b: 354-355).*

In the meantime, on Menorca the Republican Party remained strong, and in 1918 the *Federació Obrera de Menorca* (Workers' Federation of Menorca, FOM) was set up, presided over by Lluç Pons Castell, a socialist and former anarchosyndicalist militant. The FOM eventually forged ties with the UGT, which led to the unit's rupture with the republicans. The socialists spread around Mahon, Ciutadella and Es Castell and were engaged in constant clashes with the anarchosyndicalists and republicans.

General Primo de Rivera's coup d'état calmed the worker upheaval and led to urban growth in the large Balearic cities (Ibiza, Palma, Manacor and Inca), while Mahon stagnated and Ciutadella grew quickly.

During the dictatorship, the socialists and the UGT were generally tolerated, while the anarchists were persecuted. In 1930, the Workers' Federation of Menorca joined the UGT, and this decision motivated a rupture, as the anarchists split off and founded the *Sindicat Únic de Treballadors* (Single Workers' Union), which was allied with the CNT. The educational experiments associated with both factions suffered from the same effects and forged ahead along similar pathways.

Finally, the world economic crisis of 1929 and the ineffectiveness of the governments of the dictatorship triggered a wave of discontent which led to the proclamation of the Second Republic.

#### **4. The Second Republic**

The Republic ended in 1931 with a new constitutional text which led to high expectations yet which ultimately did not satisfy the clashing, radicalised factions:

*“However, while the rightists were in disagreement with a regime that advocated agrarian reform, the separation of Church and State and military reform, among other controversial issues, the more left-leaning parties and unions (mainly communists and anarchists) viewed the Republic as a bourgeois state that ran counter to class interests”* (Casasnovas Camps, 1998b: 371).

In its early years, the Second Republic stressed educational policy; more schools were built in two years than in the previous decades, although problems unrelated to education thwarted the enormous efforts to turn around the educational and cultural system that the state had been dragging along for centuries. The Republic promoted innovation, the construction of schools and the massive literacy of all of society:

*“The Republic also created a climate favourable to the application of the New School methods. Now the methods that attached greater importance to the social dimension received stauncher support, such as the methods of Belgian Ovide Decroly, Frenchman Célestin Freinet and*



*the project methods developed by W. Kilpatrick inspired by the ideas of American John Dewey, even though others were also present, such as the method devised by M. Montessori, which was quite widespread in the previous period and which focused on the more individual dimensions of education” (Sureda, 2000: 20).*

There was also a significant surge in actions in favour of children, especially for the most disadvantaged strata of society, as well as an incipient consideration of a design for cities that was more appropriate for children.

The associative movement also gained momentum, even though it gradually became radicalised:

*“In those years, the associative movement, which was already important, along with People’s Houses and the like grew even further on the islands. Casinos, athenaeums, instruction centres, music, sports and theatre societies of all kinds and with all purposes proliferated in the towns on the islands and neighbourhoods of the cities, and they offered a wide range of free-time activities: recreational, entertainment, athletic, cultural and educational” (Sureda, 2000: 22).*

However, we already know that this explosion of cultural initiatives ended with the Civil War and the radicalisation of broad swaths of society. The workers’ movements also radicalised:

*“The country had given up on peaceful coexistence, the positions polarised and the atmosphere of tension led to even dimmer prognostications. The clashes between groups of radicals of one stripe or another and the attacks reached the Balearic Islands, too” (Casasnovas Camps, 1998b: 373).*

The Civil War changed the shape of the country’s history and ended with a dictatorship that systematically tried to erase any memory of educational innovation, regardless of whether or not it had anything to do with the labour movement or with the progressive movement in general.

## **5. The Civil War**

Mallorca and Ibiza remained under the control of the rebel soldiers who occupied the key points and detained the most prominent political and union leaders who were deemed to be unaffiliated with the uprising. The situation in Menorca was different, and after several uprisings it remained under the control of the republican government.

In educational matters, during the Civil War there were attempts to launch a project dreamt of for many years: a single, unified school, even though the practical expression of this ideal was quite far from the theoretical model.

The single school aimed to achieve education for everyone under equal opportunities, an education that was free of charge and secular and offered all students the chance to enter the university regardless of their social background. In practice, the model consisted of shuttering all the private schools and concentrating all the students in the (free and secular) public school under the tutelage of career teachers, yet with the hiring of helpers affiliated with the government. Children from families regarded as unsympathetic with the Republic were prevented from accessing higher education. In any event, the education of the entire school-aged population was ensured throughout the entire war in highly precarious yet effective conditions.

The Civil War did not put an end to educational initiatives; there were plans to build new school groups, and school camps were organised for a large number of children, yet the war conditioned all events. Menorca under republican control was under constant attacks by the national forces that controlled the other islands. Soon, the blockade began to wreak havoc among the population. Towards the end of the war, the newspapers could not be published because of a lack of paper. The country was destroyed, and years of famine and penury ensued.

In 1936, the *Consell de Cultura de Escola Nova Unificada de l'Illa de Menorca* (Culture Council of the New Unified School of the Island of Menorca)<sup>4</sup> was set up following the model of the Generalitat de Catalunya's *Consell de l'Escola Nova Unificada* (Council of the New Unified School, CENU). This involved the closure of all the private and religious schools.<sup>5</sup> All the students were brought together in public schools, and coeducation was imposed.

The experiments with school camps were expanded around the island,<sup>6</sup> and some country estates were decommissioned to bring the school camp experience there.

In 1937, the Mahon Town Hall drew up blueprints to build three large new graduate schools, one rural school on Fornells Road and free classes for all illiterate people, and in 1938 the *Campañas de Difusión Cultural* (Cultural Dissemination Campaigns) were implemented under the control of the *Milicias de la Cultura* (Cultural Militias) in the towns on the island, with few practical manifestations.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See bundle 1936 60 E/3 on the formation of the *Consell de Cultura de l'Escola Nova Unificada* in the Archive of the Public Library and *Casa de Cultura* of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of the government of the Balearic Islands and the Historical Archive of Mahon.

<sup>5</sup> See bundle 1936 60 E/3 on the creation of the new schools to replace the private religious schools in the Archive of the Public Library and *Casa de Cultura* of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of the government of the Balearic Islands and the Historical Archive of Mahon.

<sup>6</sup> See bundle 1937 60 E/16 referring to the *Patronat Escola de Colònies Escolars* (School Board of School Camps) in the Archive of the Public Library and *Casa de Cultura* of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of the government of the Balearic Islands and the Historical Archive of Mahon.

<sup>7</sup> See bundle 1937 60 E/16 referring to the creation of the graduate schools on Nicolás Salmeron Street, on Cos de Gràcia Street and on Vicente Barrios Street; the creation of the rural school on Fornells Road and the creation of classes for the illiterate in the Archive of the Public Library and *Casa de Cultura* of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of the government of the Balearic Islands and the Historical Archive of Mahon.

Despite its scant means, the republican zone was involved in intense educational activity: it fought a steadfast struggle against illiteracy, even on the war front itself, it created an abbreviated baccalaureate for workers and it opened a special school for disabled children.<sup>8</sup> In turn, the libertarian athenaeums led mainly by anarchists from the CNT undertook ambitious cultural dissemination efforts. Indeed, we could aver that, despite all the possible difficulties and obstacles, education on Menorca during the Civil War was controlled by the most radicalised workers' collectives made up of the anarchosyndicalists and socialists.

## **6. The ideological underpinnings of labour education thinking: Republican thinking and Labour thinking**

Republican thinking was one of the kinds of thinking that had the strongest influence on the island, since the majority of educators and prominent intellectuals campaigned in favour of republicanism and felt closely allied with it, including the republicans Joan Benejam, Ferrer Aledo, Francesc Hernández Sanz, Gabriel Comas i Ribas, Joan Mir i Mir and others.

The educational notions of the different republican groups show coherent common denominators that fuelled many of the innovative initiatives, including the following:

- Respect for children's consciousness: The republican notion of education falls within the line of thinking that places the concepts of personality, education and culture at the core of human history. Education sets out to achieve the development of the pupil individually and freely. Children become responsible, active members of the school community.
- Ideological neutrality: Ideological doctrine should be removed from the educational process, since only scholarly subjects have a place at schools. The teacher should adopt a neutral position on political, religious or secular matters and should devote him- or herself to conveying the universal ideas that are the inheritance of all humanity.
- The ideological shift proposed by the republicans attempted to introduce the educational traditions of positivism and advocated the freedom of the teacher grounded upon the democratic values of freedom, tolerance, mutual respect and solidarity.
- Changes in the forms of family education and the defence of coeducation to guarantee women's political and social rights, facilitate their entry into the workplace, create nursery schools and take an interest in sex education. They tried to summon and facilitate families' cooperation with the school, which was entrusted with the civic and moral education of future adults.

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<sup>8</sup> See bundles 1938 61 A/4 and 1939 61 A/15 on the educational capacity of Mahon, the documentation on school camps, school statistics and the detailed school census in the Archive of the Public Library and *Casa de Cultura* of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of the government of the Balearic Islands and the Historical Archive of Mahon.

—The republicans upheld the dignity of the teaching profession: Teachers were regarded as a kind of spokesperson for republican secular morality, individuals with a strict sense of duty.

The educational policy of the Mahon Town Hall, with a republican majority, stood out for spearheading – to greater or lesser success – the aforementioned educational policy and achieving notable literacy rates and important educational innovations.

The different workers' groups, which were increasingly aware of their importance within society, contributed to the educational debate by supplying a vision more oriented towards the education of the working class, which had traditionally been marginalised from the educational structure. The workers' ideological thinking was characterised by:

—Militant secularism: The social revolution and social change required a revolution of consciousness which would be attained through the propagation of ideas; with this goal in mind, it was necessary to diminish the powers that be and the power of the dominant classes.

—A belief in science: Contrary to religious thinking, the workers were imbued with an almost blind faith in scientific postulates. They wanted to inculcate all their followers and the entire working class with a love of science.

—The anarchist thinkers, followers of the mainstream current of the labour movement, pointed to a new morality, rational morality, which could be summarised in the practice of good for its own sake, that is, for the very pleasure of being good people; in a word: solidarity. Respect for women and the equality of the sexes at home and in society, a love of nature and culture, and the struggle against alcoholism, smoking and gambling were all constant themes in articles and campaigns.

—Anti-authoritarianism and egalitarianism: Human freedom is sacred and cannot be supplanted by any force outside of human life; neither the state nor any kind of social organisation may curtail freedom. In parallel, the idea gained ground of schools with no discrimination on the basis of class or sex.

—Reason, science and culture take on the guise of a new religion.

—Student self-teaching was fostered in order to make lifelong learning possible.

## 7. Conclusions

Even though it is true that the assassination of Ferrer i Guàrdia triggered a vast movement of almost worldwide support among progressive collectives, some of the most conservative sectors also took advantage of it to blame him and the Modern School for all the evils which were shaking up Spanish society. From that time on, the entire extensive, plural, anti-clerical movement was called Ferrerist and was blamed for causing serious disturbances that led to anarchy,

that is, total societal chaos. There were many experiments with secular and innovative schools prior to the Modern School; many people fought to secularise society and make schools a place that would tolerate all beliefs where students could learn reflectively. The Catholic Church's harsh campaigns against any attempt at secularisation only served to radicalise the positions.

The secularising movement was quite widespread both before and after Ferrer i Guàrdia and served to raise much of society's awareness that education was the key to accessing better welfare and that the leaders of the Catholic Church were essentially a hindrance to all progressive initiatives. Therefore, we can state that secularism, free thinking and the vast plurality of labour and secularist initiatives which were both progressive and innovative had a positive influence on the collective consciousness to build a fairer and more tolerant society, even though years and years may have been needed for it to take root. In the case studied on the island of Menorca, the imprint left on the mindsets of the people was quite evident; many feel like the heirs to those who struggled in situations of disadvantage to achieve the objective that many of us enjoy today.

Perhaps on Menorca, at some point there was a progressive majority yearning for change, yet there were also many collectives, albeit never in the majority, on Mallorca and Ibiza, which trusted in the regenerative ideals of education, in the gradual secularisation of society and in progressive democratisation. This is what was called for by the secular movement: nothing more. And we could still keep calling for the same ideals, which even today could unquestionably still be deepened and reoriented. Ultimately, what the progressive sectors wanted was for religion not to be compulsory and for it not to condition politics and everyday life, for boys and girls to be able to attend school together, for science to be the cornerstone of education and for a tolerant, respectful morality to be practised. Have we not achieved this, to some degree, despite the times and obstacles? This, therefore, was the most important contribution of all the people who struggled anonymously to achieve these ideas at quite different times in history. This is the most important lesson and contribution of everyone who believed that all this was possible.

The thick web of associations on the islands was crucial to the democratisation and secularisation of society, including the more clerical associations. Membership in and a diversity of associations enriches society as a whole and makes it more cohesive.

However, one important fact cannot go unnoticed: very few people, if not no one, got rich creating or maintaining these labour-leaning schools. The economic hardships entailed in maintaining or opening labour schools with progressive leanings were more than evident, and the legal obstacles to maintaining and consolidating them were virtually impossible to overcome. This is the polar opposite of the situation of the Catholic schools, which profited from the incomes of the wealthy classes along with the facilities provided by the legislation in the Bourbon Restoration, with the exception of brief hiatuses from the progressive republican government.

Even though there was no manifest economic interest, we can note how the labour initiatives (educational, cultural and sports centres) tried to convince their most proximate public of the advantages of their ideological proposals. In fact, they acted as recruitment centres. The fight to control education was not motivated by enlisting supporters of the cause, a legitimate activity yet one that

is not bereft of its own pitfalls, since the educational system in a democratic country should ensure freedom of thought and a reflective education capable of educating autonomous individuals with the ability to take decisions using sound judgement.

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