

## ■ article

JOURNAL OF CATALAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY,  
Issue 3, 2012 | Print ISSN 2014-1572 / Online ISSN 2014-1564  
DOI 10.2436/20.3001.02.38 | P. 29-45  
Reception date: 5/07/2011 / Admission date: 12/12/2011  
<http://revistes.iec.cat/index.php/JOCIH>

# Jaume Miravitles and Marxism: a Twentieth-Century Voyage

Enric Pujol

Grup de Recerca «Manuscrits».  
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona  
epujolc@gmail.com

### abstract

This article examines the political career of writer and journalist Jaume Miravitles i Navarra (Figueres, 1906 – Barcelona, 1988). It proposes that the importance of his contributions to intellectual thought and politics deserve reassessment, partly because Miravitles's political progress was typical of certain left-wing European intellectuals during the period in discussion: of those whose initiation in politics was full-blooded Leninism, but who then progressively distanced themselves from Soviet ideology and finally became profoundly critical of political Marxism. Miravitles played a leading role in the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939, when he headed the Generalitat's Propaganda Commissariat. After 1939, in exile, he became one of the leading narrators of human experience during this period of war and revolution, a role that he reaffirmed on his return to Catalonia in 1963.

### key words

Leninism, the *avant-garde*, Salvador Dalí, the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc (Bloc Obrer i Camperol), the Republican Left of Catalonia (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya), the Civil War, the Propaganda Commissariat (Comissariat de Propaganda), exile, cold war, historiography, political thought.

### Miravitles as a representative figure

Jaume Miravitles i Navarra (Figueres 1906 – Barcelona 1988) is one of Catalan intellectual history's most interesting thinkers but also remains, quite undeservedly, one of its least well-known. Specialist historians may identify him as the head of the Generalitat's Propaganda Commissariat during the Spanish Civil War, the work of which has been widely recognized even by its detractors; his name may also mean something to scholars of contemporary art and the Surrealist movement, given that Miravitles shared with Salvador Dalí the native town of Figueres, a close friendship and, from the 1940s onwards, an increas-

ingly important working relationship in which Miravittles was of the artist's main standard bearers; finally, he may even be familiar to researchers for his journalistic production of over 10,000 articles of different kinds, variously published in Europe and America<sup>1</sup>.

But Jaume Miravittles is rarely cited as an important intellectual or political thinker of his times, even though his writing is highly relevant and his intellectual and political progress reveal a great deal about the transformations and contradictions that characterized the twentieth century. And in the progress of his association with Marxism he was especially representative of his fellow Europeans and of Europe's experience of Marxist thought. Raised in the ideological trenches of anti-Stalinist Leninism, during the Civil War years Miravittles distanced himself from the Marxist-affiliated parties and went on to hold, in the years following the Second World War, a clearly articulated pro-NATO and anti-Soviet position. That position, not at all uncommon in postwar Europe, did however make him something of a *rara avis* when he returned to Catalonia, which had become characterized by its hegemonic Marxist and communist resistance to Franco. At the same time, however, although he changed some of his ideas and political affiliations over the years, there were basic Marxist principles that remained important to him throughout his life.

## Miravittles's initiation in Marxism-Leninism

In his youth and still in his native town of Figueres, Miravittles's attraction to Leninism had much to do with his interest in the artistic *avant-garde*, two currents which shared an intention to raise provocation to the level of an esthetic statement and which made immediate sense, each in its way, to a restless young man like Miravittles.

As for his initial political positioning, Miravittles was particularly influenced by the Empordan Martí Vilanova, who in 1921 established one of the first documented Leninist cells, itself clearly dedicated to the struggle for Catalan state sovereignty. Miravittles was just fourteen years old at the time and another important cell member, Salvador Dalí, was only seventeen. When Miravittles moved to Barcelona to study at the School of Engineers he was also able to join the independentist cells associated with Francesc Macià. In 1924,

---

1 This is the subject of a doctoral thesis by Ramon Batalla, whose research can be sampled in R. Pascuet and E. Pujol (ed.), *La revolució del bon gust. Jaume Miravittles i el comissariat de Propaganda de la Generalitat de Catalunya*, Barcelona:Viena Edicions, 2006. Further aspects of Miravittles are examined there by other writers.

he was arrested for his activities and sentenced by a council of war to two years' imprisonment, which he only avoided by fleeing to France. From there, he took part in the 1926 attempted overthrow of the Spanish army known as the *fets de Prats de Molló*, for which he was arrested, along with the other members of the group, and taken to trial. In the end, however, by pleading his student status in France, he managed to avoid deportation back to Spain.

This period of exile, spent mainly in Paris, helped to bring Miravitles much closer to the artistic *avant-garde* in general and to the Surrealists in particular. His friendship with Dalí had provided an initiation and he'd continued this in Barcelona, which was not unfamiliar with the winds of change in artistic and literary circles<sup>2</sup>; but it was Paris that intensified his experience of the movement. Paris was where Miravitles formed "a very close friendship" with the poet Robert Desnos and Paris was where he first met André Breton, Louis Aragon, Philippe Soupault, Tristan Tzara and André Cayatte. It was natural, then, that in 1928 Miravitles was one of the few to speak out in defence of the *Manifest Groc* or *Manifest Antiartístic Català* ('The Yellow Manifesto' or 'The Catalan Anti-artistic Manifesto'), a text co-authored by Dalí, Sebastià Gasch and Lluís Montanyà and described as "the Catalan *avant-garde*'s single-most important declaration in all its years of activity"<sup>3</sup>. In the same year, in *La Nova Revista*, Miravitles also published his article "Notes a l'entorn de l'art d'avantguarda. Miró, Dalí, Domingo" ('Notes on the Context of *Avant-garde* Art. Miró, Dalí, Domingo') and in 1929 he played an acting role in the famous surrealist film by Dalí and Luis Buñuel, *Un Chien Andalou*<sup>4</sup>.

In November of 1930 and upon his return to Catalonia, Miravitles was arrested and jailed, and was only released after much public campaigning, in March of 1931. Following his release he joined the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc (BOC), a Leninist party constituted in 1930 independently from the Communist Party of Spain and the Communist International, and in time became one of the party's most active publicists. The BOC's leader Joaquim Maurín became an important guiding force for Miravitles, both politically and intellectually, as Miravitles himself describes in *El ritme de la revolució* ('The Rhythm of the Revolution') (1933) —something which comes as no surprise when we consider that Maurín was one of the great Marxist theorists of the first thirty years

---

2 *Avanguardes a Catalunya 1906-1939*, Barcelona: Fundació Caixa de Catalunya, 1992.

3 Cf. J. Minguet, *El Manifest groc. Dalí, Gasch, Montanyà i l'antiart*, Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya–Galàxia Gutenberg–Fundació Joan Miró, 2004, p.17.

4 Cf. Josep Playà, "Dalí i Miravitles, profetes i empordaneses" in *La revolució del bon gust: Jaume Miravilles i el Comissariat de Propaganda de la Generalitat de Catalunya 1936-1939*, p. 225-231.

of the twentieth century. In different publications but mostly in *La revolución española: de la monarquía absoluta a la revolución socialista* ('The Spanish Revolution: From Absolute Monarchy to Socialist Revolution') (1932) and in *Las tres etapas de la cuestión nacional* ('The Three Stages of the National Question'), which was published in the BOC press tribune *La Batalla* (16-VII-1931), Maurín set out his interpretation of the revolutionary process, which comprised three, clearly-differentiated stages in history and took as its point of departure the dialectical struggle between two forces in two different camps: the class confrontation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in one camp, and the nationalist confrontation between Catalonia and Spain in the other. This concept of revolution was to have an extraordinary influence on Miravitles's writing in the field of political theory.

According to Maurín, the first stage of the bourgeois revolution had been initiated by the Catalan industrialists who attempted to subjugate a state in which large parcels of agrarian land were in the hands of a chosen few and in which capitalism had arrived comparatively late and played a subordinate role to other such systems in the international arena. But hampered by their dependence on the apparatus of repression required to keep the growing workers' movement in line, the industrialists failed to impose their will and so the monarchic order collapsed. This paved the way for a new era, the second historical stage, which began in 1931. The new social power at this stage consisted of the working class, the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie who sustained the Catalan liberation movement, which demanded freedom from the Spanish state. The chief role of the working class in this new equation was not to pilot the democratic-bourgeois revolution that the industrialists had previously failed to impose but to take the country straight to stage three: socialist revolution. Of the various objectives of this final revolutionary phase, Maurín was particularly concerned with the destiny of nationalities, which he believed must finally free themselves from the Spanish state, which had never properly acted as a nation-state because it had never seriously engaged in industrial development. As well as defending the Leninist notion of the nations' right to self-determination, Maurín advocated a separatist route as a necessary preliminary phase in the constitution of a Spanish federal union because he believed it would be impossible to transform the old order of the monarchic, united and centralized state without first changing its structure.

In this period, as well as being influenced by Maurín's ideology, Miravitles was fascinated by the man himself. Maurín was indeed charismatic, a public figure whose character was enhanced by the success of his political career. Originally trained as a school teacher, Maurín's first political allegiance was made to the National Confederation of Labour (CNT), which he represented as a delegate in Moscow in 1921 at the founding congress of the Red Inter-

national of Labour Unions. A spokesman for the Soviet experience, he became a member of the Communist Party of Spain in 1924, but then left its ranks to create the BOC, becoming its leader and its most prominent theoretician. His knowledge of Leninism was therefore not purely academic but emerged straight from his experience of the soviet revolutionary process and was closely tied to direct, everyday political activism. And Maurín's dual identity as thinker and activist was something that Miravitles sought to emulate<sup>5</sup>.

### *Per què sóc comunista?* and other revolutionary texts

The similarities between Maurín's and Miravitles's vision of the contemporary historical and political process and the points at which that vision was actually shared are seen in various texts written by Miravitles in his youth. So in the short essay *Per què sóc comunista?* ('Why I Am a Communist') (no date available), Miravitles sets out to build the theoretical groundwork for his beliefs, dividing his argument in two parts: one addressing theory, offering his account of historical materialism and of the three major stages of all human civilization, slave society, feudalism and bourgeois revolution; the other examining more strictly political issues and the history of those major stages at the level of the Spanish state and Catalonia. His introduction to the essay explains how the notion of there being successive and enduring stages in human history which evolve progressively — i.e., the Marxist proposal that a series of constants repeats until a new cycle is reached — helps him understand that history may repeat itself and that, at the same time, there might also be a pattern of constant renewal and progress. Once Miravitles had adopted this particular aspect of Marxist thought he stood by it for the rest of his life, even while he went through other ideological changes or allied himself to groups of people who actually opposed this notion of time and history. In this sense, his analysis of enduring stages of history as a means to understand the present was more than just a preoccupation of his formative years.

If in this brief Marxist disquisition Miravitles began to consider how the character of all cultures is class-related, he was to return to it at greater length in a longer and more ambitious work, *Contra la cultura burguesa* ('Against Bourgeois Culture') (1931). The premise was that in Catalonia, the bourgeois culture was the dominant one because it mirrored the society that had created it. This allowed Miravitles to criticize the anarchists' attempts to culturize the

<sup>5</sup> Miravitles offers a detailed literary description of Maurín in *Homes i dones a la meva vida*, Barcelona: Destino, 1982.

working class without ever examining or appraising the class component of the culture that they themselves promoted. On the other hand, he did defend the critical position of a figure like Dalí (who he referred to as a Marxist critic), even though he refuted the body of Daliesque Surrealist thought, proposing that “in philosophical terms, nothing can be more radically opposed to Marxism than Freudianism” (p. 55).

At this time, Miravittles was still attempting to find common ground between the axioms of the revolution and the *avant-garde*'s efforts to renew the social concept of aesthetics. In 1931, as a BOC member, he brought together Dalí and the Surrealist writer René Crevel in a debate in Barcelona. Miravittles hosted the meeting himself, going so far as to say that though the Surrealists and the Communists used different methods (the former seeking change within the individual person and the latter seeking it within the socioeconomic system), both shared a hatred of the bourgeoisie and the intention to wrest its power away from it.

Miravittles's earlier use of *avant-garde* formulations can also be seen in his book *El ritme de la revolució*. Published in 1933, as observed above, but comprising articles mainly from before that year, its texts are marked by occasionally provocative and irreverent turns of phrase and by Miravittles's use of pronounced caricature to portray his adversaries. The same feeling is enhanced by the inclusion of drawings by Dalí, completed during the 1920s and donated by the artist to the press publication *L'Hora* when he was still a full member of the BLOC<sup>6</sup>. Because it is a collection of earlier writings ordered by the author himself after a certain lapse in time, Miravittles is able systematically present the way he had thought during this period. Right in the prologue he expresses his disappointment with the Catalan nationalist republicans who had been his companions in arms during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, including Macià. He accuses them of not having defended the Catalan Republic to the end, (a position the BOC had defended practically on its own) and of having accepted the Republic's transformation to Generalitat of Catalonia following an agreement made with the Republican government in Madrid. Unlike his three great revolutionary models, Martí Vilanova, Joaquim Maurín and Giménez (a Catalan anarchist who had taken part in the *fets de Prats de Molló* and who had subsequently died in prison), the Republican leaders had not been “born for heroic action”. And when they had gone to their knees, only the working class would be able to renew the revolutionary momentum.

Miravittles's criticisms of Macià then became more thorough, right from the title of another work: the article *Ha trait, Macià?* ('Has Macià Betrayed

Us?’), which was published one year before *El ritme de la revolució* but probably written later than the texts in that other book, pursued the same subject of the defeat of the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) and Macià’s responsibility for not having defended the Catalan Republic to the last. And also in 1932, Miravitles’s published *De Jaca a Sallent* (‘From Jaca to Sallent’), this time a single and substantial piece of writing rather than a collection of essays, and an indication of the weight he was giving to historical discourse. Divided in two parts, half the book records the universal transformations that from as far back as Luther and Cromwell had led to the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the particular shape of this major but unfinished transformation in the Spanish state; the other half analyzes the events at the beginnings of the 1930s, as explained above. Even then, therefore, Miravitles had found the formulation he needed to address “immediate history”, as it might now be termed, in the context of an explanation of history’s enduring stages, an argument that would become constant in the rest of his writing.

## Notes on the impact of Leninism in the first third of the twentieth century

Miravitles’s enlistment in the Leninist movement in Catalonia was made at that movement’s height, basking in the glow of the triumph of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Indeed, throughout the 1920s the message behind the slogan “Act as in Russia!” provided a major challenge not only for those who aspired to radical social change but for those who had associated this change with a process of national liberation. Leninism gave value to what we would now refer to as struggles for state sovereignty, itself the natural result of actions that were imperative once any revolutionary process had been triggered in a plurinational empire like Russia; and by giving such movements value, Leninism distanced itself from the classical Marxist tradition of the Second International but attracted societies of people like the Catalans, who experienced both severe social divisions and a serious national dilemma.

One of the most prominent figures in the Leninist movement was Joaquim Maurín, whose direct influence on the younger Miravitles has been discussed above. But in the list of those Leninists admired by Miravitles we should also remember the cell organizer Martí Vilanova, (another key figure in the *fets de Prats de Molló*). In fact, allegiance to Leninism was not at all uncommon amongst the members of Macià’s political party Estat Català, of which Miravitles and Vilanova were both members. Estat Català Leninists included Miquel Ferrer, Josep Rovira, Abelard Tona i Nadalmai, and Josep Carner-Ribalta, author of the book of memoirs *De Balaguer a Nova-York passant per Moscou i Prats de Molló* (‘From Balaguer to New York by way of Moscow and Prats de

Molló' (1972). And it was during the struggle against Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, in the heart of the independentist factions (the advocates of armed resistance who were referred to at that time as "separatists") that there was a move towards Leninism. This was observed by analysts of the period such as Ferran Soldevila, who in 1931 and just before the declaration of the Republic observed in *La Revista de Catalunya* "the landslide towards communism of those individuals who most significantly represented Catalan nationalism".

Amongst those individuals there were other important figures and members of different groups, such as Jordi Arquer and Andreu Nin. Jordi Arquer, a founding member of the BOC, produced an anthology of Marxist classical writings on the subject of the national question in *El comunisme i la qüestió nacional i colonial* ('Communism and the National and Colonial Question') (1930), which he took as the point of departure for his work *Los comunistas ante el problema de la nacionalidades ibéricas* ('The Communists and the Problem of the Iberian Nationalities') (1932). Andreu Nin, rightly considered to be one of the most important Marxist writers and leaders of the first half of the twentieth century, was originally a school teacher and CNT-affiliated union leader who combined reflection with political activism and who was informed by his direct contact with Russia. On this last point, it can be said that in Catalonia it was Nin who knew more than anyone else about the Soviet experience, having lived in Moscow for most of the 1920s and having been a member of the full-time secretariat and assistant general secretary of the Red International of Labour Unions. In Moscow he had formed part of a group of critical thinkers who gathered strength during the emergence and rising power of Stalin and had therefore also suffered a political ostracism which in Nin's case led to his return to Barcelona in 1930. His main writings on theory of the decade of the 1930s include *Les dictadures dels nostres dies* ('The Dictatorships of our Times') (1930) and *Els moviments d'emancipació nacional* ('The National Emancipation Movements') (1935). In the second book he proposed that because the bourgeoisie formed part of the oligarchy of the absorbing state, only the working class could achieve Catalonia's national liberation and that it would achieve this by means of a democratic socialist revolution. His fusion of social revolution and national liberation and, in particular, his support for the Catalan liberation movement, were quite deliberate and reflected a deep-seated conviction, shown by his affiliation to intellectual groups of the period leading a wide-ranging movement that sought to recover and normalize Catalan culture. At a political level, in 1935 and together with Joaquim Maurín, Nin founded the Worker's Party of Marxist Unification (POUM), a result of the fusion between the Communist Left of Spain, which Nin had founded in 1932, and Maurín's BOC.

All these Marxist figures and organizations of the first third of the twentieth century were characterized by theoretical and political principles that distanced them from the Communist Party of Spain (which had only a marginal foothold in the Principality of Catalonia) and the question of Catalan national sovereignty provided clear reasons for this distancing. It was of no small significance that recognizing this national reality also meant accepting the existence of a correlation of forces that were specifically Catalan and, therefore, embracing the notion that any policy of alliances to achieve revolutionary objectives would have to come from these specific forces. For this reason, these ‘unorthodox’ or disaffected Marxists were distinguished not only by their sensibility to the national question but also by their affinity with the anarcho-syndicalist movement, in which many had occupied leading positions.

The Spanish Socialist Worker’s Party (PSOE) did not play a major role in this period, certainly in the Principality, where its reticence about questions of national reality and the party’s subsequent role in the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera led to heavy criticism and sparked the formation of socialist organizations of Catalan obedience, such as the Socialist Union of Catalonia Party (USC), founded in 1923. A number of the USC’s leading voices put forth Marxist- and Leninist-based theoretical proposals that were closely associated with Catalan national liberation, and Rafael Campalans and Manuel Serra i Moret were two of these. Serra, a staunch Marxist and advocate of Catalan state sovereignty (as demonstrated by his unqualified commitment to Macià’s declaration of the Catalan Republic in 1931), understood political democracy as a value that should be defended by the popular classes, despite his deep respect for the Soviet revolution. When Joan Comorera assumed the leadership of the USC, there began a progressive distancing between Serra and Comorera, which grew in 1936 with the unification of the USC, the Proletarian Catalan Party, the Catalan Communist Party and the Catalan Federation of the PSOE in what became the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC), allied to the Third International and associated at a constitutional level with the Communist Party of Spain, even while it maintained its independence. In 1940, Serra was expelled from the PSUC and helped, in 1946, to found the Socialist Movement of Catalonia, which he led and in which he was accompanied by younger figures such as Josep Pallach, teacher and historian who had come from the BOC and the POUM and who also produced a large body of work with a focus on political theory that has yet to be studied in any detail. For his part, Comorera also wrote various works in which his use of historical analysis was particularly notable and his defence of Leninist theses on self-determination, appearing in a variety of articles, took as its point of departure Stalin’s *Marxism and the National Question*. Finally, in 1949, Comorera was expelled from the ranks of the

PSUC for his demands, from the leadership of Communist Party of Spain, for the Catalan right to determine policies independently.

## The Popular Front and the Spanish Civil War

In 1933, the year *El ritme de la revolució* was published, Miravitles suffered a profound ideological crisis (explained much later<sup>7</sup>). Hitler's rise to power in January had forced him to reconsider his politics, and he was becoming increasingly critical of the BOC's radical distancing of its position from other parties. Miravitles favoured the idea of a union against fascism between leftwing and progressive parties but without the classical Communists, an exclusion which the BOC could not accept because it supported a revolutionary front. In the spring of 1934, this difference of opinion led to his withdrawl from the BOC and to his affiliation with the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC), in which he formed the group "Spartacus" and created the platform and publisher Acció Constructiva d'Esquerra Republicana (ACER). After the Barcelona revolt of 6 October and its subsequent repression, Miravitles went into hiding and during this time he was able to write *Critica del 6 d'octubre* ('Critique of 6 October') for ACER.

*Critica del 6 d'octubre* is therefore a work completed on a specific subject and with a certain deliberation. There, he returns to the theme of enduring stages of history but uses it this time to explain the events of the Barcelona revolt and to focus on Catalan rather than global historical development. In fact, almost half the book addresses the history of Catalonia's difficult relationship with Spain, examining its beginnings in the Middle Ages but concentrating most of all on Catalonia's nineteenth-century history and the first decades of its twentieth. The other half analyzes the events following 14 April 1931. All in all, the book must be considered one of the clearest examples of what contemporary Catalan history brought together in the first third of the twentieth century. According to Miravitles, in its simplest form what Catalonia most needed was to bridge the gap between two camps: those who advocated Catalan state sovereignty, independence and nationalism, and those others who wished to exercise Catalan authority in the business of Spanish politics. The political formula for this had been found by Lluís Companys, the leading political player in the events of 6 October who, in his speech from the balcony of the Generalitat, had effectively achieved "the fusion of nationalist and hegemonic intent in a single, ideal act of exaltation" (p. 251). In this book, then, Miravitles demonstrates a

profound political and ideological shift. The ERC, which he had criticized so severely (and which, he said, he was therefore better able to judge), was the political organization of “the coincident popular classes” (p. 123), Macià had never been a separatist (p. 106), Companys was “the sea captain who has to sail our ship into the port of victory” (p. 217) and Badia and Dencàs, the men who were really responsible for a dangerous nationalist decline, had been victims of “the mirage that determines every revolutionary situation” (p. 117). To sum up, Miravitles proposed, the events of 6 October had served to “close the book on a period of mistakes and turn a new page with dignity” (p. 216).

This new approach also altered the way Miravitles’s chose to understand political theory. While he didn’t actually abandon his Marxist and Maurí-nian model, he now followed the great stages of history as these were defined by Ferran Soldevila, who, apart from Antoni Rovira i Virgili, he considered to be “the most competent historian of our country” (p. 249). There is no doubt that with this work Miravitles became something of a historian himself—even though he could also double as a political thinker, as he admitted. Armed with the demographic thesis of Josep A. Vandellós and Carles Pi Sunyer’s *L’aptitud econòmica de Catalunya* (‘Catalonia’s Economic Aptitude’) he even attempted what today we would call future studies, imagining Catalonia as it might be in the year 2000, a country where more than half the population would be immigrants and where social cohesion would be made possible thanks to the country’s economic development.

The outbreak of the Civil War in 1936 and Miravitles’s leadership of the Generalitat’s Propaganda Commissariat spurred him to action on a number of fronts. At that time he had more resources than ever before to make a mark on the events that were happening and he used these effectively and with intelligence, even if he was unable to change the course of the war. The details of his work for the Commissariat have been discussed in other papers, but we might just remember the considerable political weight he was able to wield in that moment of armed conflict and revolution: first, that at the time of the insurrection of the Spanish nationalist military it was Miravitles who was appointed secretary of the Anti-Fascist Militia Committee, probably because the worker leaders were aware of the respect he still commanded in worker cells; second, that he must have played an equally important role in dissolving that committee and convincing its main parties and unions to integrate in the Generalitat government, given that he was subsequently entrusted with the leadership of the Propaganda Commissariat, designed as a key organism in the resistance apparatus. Finally in this period, there is also Miravitles’s writing, which was prolific but also notably public in character. The more reflective, analytic style of earlier works would not be returned to until the beginning of the 1940s, during his exile from Spain.

In 1939, the adverse result of the Civil War forced Miravittles to flee to Paris, accompanied by members of the Catalan government. There he basically continued the work he had been doing for the Commissariat, albeit with more limited means and with greater organizational responsibility. In order to act with the legal authority of a government in exile, the Generalitat created the *Layetana Office*. Working out of the *Office* with few resources not only for questions of governance but even for the basic needs of the many political refugees in Paris, Miravittles attempted to simply maintain some kind of platform for ideological resistance. He contributed regularly to the French press and played a decisive role in the publication of the newspaper *El Poble Català*. President Companys entrusted him with writing a history of the Civil War so that the exiles might preserve their own account of the events, and although the work was never completed as planned, some of that writing did appear later, during the 1960s, in publications such as *Episodis de la guerra civil espanyola* ('Episodes of the Spanish Civil War') or even *Gent que he conegit* ('People Who I Have Known'). With the Nazi occupation of Paris, Miravittles fled south, until in 1941 he was able to board a ship bound for Mexico via Alger and New York, as he himself has described<sup>8</sup>.

## The years of exile and the outbreak of the Cold War

In Casablanca in 1941, profoundly affected by the rapid collapse of France in the face of the German troops, Miravittles began a book in which he tried to analyze its reasons, finally published as *Muerte y resurrección de Francia. Causas profundas de la derrota de Francia y sus condiciones de resurgir* ('Death and Resurrection in France. The Underlying Causes of France's Defeat and the Conditions Required for its Return to Resistance') (1943). And during all the period of his exile in Mexico (1941-45), he contributed to De Gaulle's Free French movement.

His most ambitious work in this period was *Geografía contra geopolítica (El porqué de las dos Guerras Mundiales)* ('Geography against Geopolitics – the Reasons for the Two World Wars') (1945), a book of 335 pages illustrated by some forty maps providing a detailed analysis of the world powers' foreign policy during the first half of the twentieth century. His main premise was that the geographical theories the world powers had drafted as their geopolity at the beginning of the century had conditioned the results of both world wars and that the aftermath of the Second World War demonstrated "the failure of geo-

politics and the triumph of geography, pure and simple". The book is divided in seven parts, the last of which analyzes the USSR's achievement of a predominant position in the world power balance. And this last part is precisely where we find a very clear explanation for Miravitles's subsequent choices of direction. According to him, after the German defeat the USSR became the country that was most advantageously positioned for global domination, should it choose to pursue this. Miravitles found this idea particularly alarming. Having experienced the spectacular ascent of classical Communism during the Civil War and the signing of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact that preceded the Second World War, one can understand why he began to take a distinctly pro-NATO approach to certain political issues and why, in 1945, he should eventually go to live in the US.

Apart from a two-year interval spent in Brasil, Miravitles lived in the US from May 1945 to 1963, during which time he consolidated what we might be called the 'ideology of his mature years'. Preoccupied with the possibility that the USSR might become the world's largest single power and after the traumatic experience of war, he was set against violent change of all kinds and had reinforced his belief in democracy. His contact with the North American reality showed him that social reform could exist even within a capitalist-oriented society (even if this was of a kind that developed Europe would not experience in any generalized manner until the world's postwar reconstruction had gained ground). In later years he would sum up his political views with the idea that wealth and freedom were the forces which could bring about social justice and that violence had no place for achieving this<sup>9</sup>.

With this ideological baggage and throughout the Cold War period, from its beginnings just after the Second World War, Miravitles adopted a firmly pro-NATO position which in 1950 prompted him to propose the creation of an armed unit of republicans in exile that would fight alongside the North Americans in the Korean War.<sup>10</sup> The proposal fell through but both this and his general political line distanced him from many other left-wing figures and critics of US foreign policy, even some of those who were outspokenly anti-Soviet like him.

At the time of his proposal, Miravitles had separated himself from the Spanish Republican government in exile, for which he had started working in 1946 through his close associations with its Basque president, José Antonio

---

<sup>9</sup> *Episodis de la Guerra Civil espanyola*, Barcelona: Pòrtic 1972, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Jordi Guixé, "Catalans a Corea: les propostes militars d'un exiliat 'd'esquerres'", *L'Avenç* 245 (March 2000), p. 64-69.

Aguirre. He had reached a position of considerable responsibility, directing the periodical of the *Spanish Information Bureau*, representing the government in relations with the North Americans and working as a UN observer. However, the lukewarm reception of his Korean proposal reflected his increasing isolation even within the heart of the exiled republican community, given his increasingly opportunistic approach to the problems of the Franco regime. Already in *The Marshall Plan and Franco*, published by the *Spanish Information Bureau* in March of 1947, Miravittles was making a link between the possible development of the Spanish state's economy and a democratizing process, an idea he discussed in greater detail in *A report on the economic and financial situation of Franco Spain* (1950)<sup>11</sup>. In an atmosphere of Republican disenchantment brought on by the rejuvenated power of Franco's regime following its 1953 Pact of Madrid with the US and by the Spanish state's admission to the UN in 1955, in 1958 Miravittles played what many would consider a politically opportunistic card in the letter he wrote to the Infante Juan of Spain, appealing to the monarchy totally to the democratic cause.

## The return to Spain

In the year 1963, Miravittles finally returned home. Although the main reason he gives for returning is that he wished to raise his children in their own cultural context and society, we know that he had wanted to come back many years earlier so there were undoubtedly other, more deeply-rooted reasons. At one level these would have emerged from the 'desire to return' that is common amongst all exiles; in Miravittles's case, there would also have been his conviction that by returning he could contribute to the work of democratizing Spain. So, after a brief period in which he was held in Madrid, he came back to Catalonia and, following a brief stay in the coastal town of Roses, he settled in Barcelona to begin an intense period of journalism.

At the start this was characterized by an intense adaptation and work, which explains why he did not publish any book during the 1960s. But in the early 1970s, this changed. First, helped by his friend the publisher and politician Josep Fornas, Miravittles published two works that he had begun many years earlier, in a collection of pieces called "Els meus arxius" ('My Files'): *Barcelona latitud Nova York, longitud París* ('Barcelona, Latitude New York, Longitude Paris') (1971) and *Episodis de la guerra civil espanyola* (see Part 5 above) (1972).

<sup>11</sup> Published in J. Miravittles, *Informes sobre l'economia franquista de postguerra* [courtesy of Francesc Roca], Catarroja: Afers 2008.

At the time, the intention had been to publish these and other earlier writings but unfortunately, the project stopped here. As its title suggests, *Barcelona latitud Nova York, longitud París* is written in homage to the three most important cities Miravitles's life and he tries to understand them together in a wider context. The title page announces that the text is an essay on economics, but in fact it becomes much more than that. Especially in its first part of some 250 pages, the text is a personal portrayal of the Catalan historical process from its early beginnings to contemporary times, so that *Barcelona latitud Nova York, longitud París* represents the culmination of Miravitles's reflections on history, started in the 1930s and never completely interrupted. Of its precursors we have an alternative history of Catalonia that he had attempted to write during his exile and in which he had defended a manner of 'third way' between the formulations of Catalan state sovereignty and Spanish nationalism, even though he never got beyond writing some thirty pages of the general outline. It was the same opportunist approach defended at that time by Catalans who did not believe direct confrontation with the regime would lead to any productive result. And on the inside this position was most noticeably held by the Catalans' principle theorist Jaume Vicens Vives, who died suddenly at the beginning of the 1960s and who was the author of the important work *Notícia de Catalunya* ('News of Catalonia') (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1954; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. extended, 1960).

*Barcelona latitud Nova York, longitud París* is a substantially different text to the general outline Miravitles had drafted years before, during his exile. Much more detailed and robust, with hardly any political agenda, one can feel its author's satisfaction in having decided to use the experience of his years to systematically put down on paper his ideas about the history of his country rather than produce a work discussing some specific political action (which would have been difficult anyway, given the censorship that the regime was still actively applying in the 1970s). Certainly, his approach is political and economic in the sense that he reaffirms the accuracy of Marxism's historical analysis; but in the same breath he announces that the Marxist vision is subject to serious limitations and that we should therefore address the importance of demographic determinants on the collective psychology of society (which he generally describes as 'necessary' rather than 'sufficient') and focus on the human factor in the equation. The only constant Catalonia has ever been able to rely upon for its progress is the individual person who is "decisive in the formation of Catalan collectivity". The importance of the subject and of the collective mentality in which he has been formed leads him to cite substantial portions of Pi Sunyer's *L'aptitud econòmica de Catalunya* (see Part 5 above), although during the text he also cites Ferran Soldevila, Pierre Vilar and, with particularly frequency, passages from Jaume Vicens Vives's *Notícia de Catalunya* (News of Catalonia). The author who serves him best, however, is the North

American sociologist A.F.K. Organsky. Miravitles takes Organsky's historical outline as applied to all nations, composed of the three consecutive stages of political development the dynastic, the bourgeois and the modern, and he applies this to the Catalan and Spanish questions. In Miravitles's view, geographical and historical determinants and determinants of mentality are what enabled the Catalan bourgeoisie to emerge from within the Spanish dynastic state, to gather momentum as a motor of change in both Catalonia and Spain and to almost reach the point at which they would separate themselves from the Spanish dynastic state as a bourgeois modern state. Miravitles analyzes the stages of this bourgeois revolution and of the Catalans' crucial role therein (the Cádiz Cortes, the Glorious Revolution, the First Republic), but focuses on the twentieth century. His conclusion is that "from 19 July 1917 to 19 July 1936, this country generated as much history as some countries do in centuries". The words recall his thesis of the 1930s in *De Jaca a Sallent*, even though the period of time he was talking about then was actually just two years rather than twenty (1930 to 1932), and this indicates how far he had maintained his basic convictions in historical analysis, over the years. What had changed most was his understanding of possible revolutionary change, of what it might look like, how it might appear and which political responses its presence would require. For Miravitles in the 1960s, the message is that "despite our socialist hopes, the historical role of capitalism as the progeny of the bourgeoisie is only just beginning"; and furthermore, that "those regimes that have flourished in different parts of the world in its name are nothing more than 'capitalisms of the state', the issue of a feudal complex so exclusive and hermetic that it obstructs the emergence of the revolutionary bourgeoisie".

It is true that when Miravitles returned to Catalonia he published many more books than those referred to in this paper and that the most relevant to academic study tend to be those in which he recovers the historical memory of the Civil War, such as the previously-cited *Episodis de la guerra civil espanyola*. But the writings that were most widely read were his books in the series *Gent que he conegit* (see Part 5 above), beginning with the book of the same title in 1980, followed by *Més gent que he conegit* ('More People I Have Known') (1981) and *Homes i dones de la meva vida* ('Men and Women in My Life') (1983). All of them played their part in recovering memory and all are important milestones in Miravitles intellectual voyage. But none of them do quite so much as *Barcelona latitud Nova York, longitud París* to illustrate one particular aspect of Jaume Miravitles: the fact that even in his final days, when all around him others were pursuing very different political options to the past, Marxism was still a formidable influence on his intellectual progress. Even at the time of the political transition, Miravitles was giving his support to the Republican Left of Catalonia, and shortly afterwards passed to Ramon Trias Fargas's Democratic Left of

Catalonia, which subsequently joined Democratic Convergence of Catalonia (the party of the first president of the post-regime Generalitat, Jordi Pujol). To sum up, the story of Miravilles and others like him is the story of thinkers who may have gradually distanced themselves from explicitly Marxist affiliations or even actively opposed these; but they are also people whose intellect remained profoundly influenced by Marxist thought and whose past and present were permeated by its currents, both within and beyond Catalonia, at every point along the river of twentieth century.

Translation from Catalan by Barnaby Noone