

Being republican during the Second Spanish Republic. The articulation of a republican people and its limits

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Away in the French exile, Clara Campoamor, profoundly disenchanted with what the Second Spanish Republic had finally turned out to be, would write about the causes that, according to her, had triggered the bloody Spanish revolution. At the same time, she talked about the political passion of the Spaniard, experience that he feels above all the others and «whips him up into a frenzy», being the reason why, she declares, Spaniards more often than not «come out of politics badly».¹

It is this very same political passion what motivated republicanism during decades in Spain. The Republic was from the second half of the nineteenth century the longed utopia, the horizon towards which the gaze was turned by a wide sector of the Spanish society excluded from the so-called Restoration system and, therefore, the universe of politics. Republicanism served as a unifying force for those who used to live on the edge of the system and who found in the idea of the Republic a spot in which ensconce themselves and, at the same time, a space of sociability and political instruction to which they could not have had access by other means. As a whole, republicanism became the most powerful alternative to the Restoration political system since, leaving aside the numerous republican options developed during those years, it provided a common framework for action, especially at a local level, to those who advocated the construction of a different Spain.²

It was not until April 1931 that the republican myth came true with the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic, six decades after the ephemeral and failed first attempt of a republican government. The new republican experience was born not only as a consequence of the mobilisation of society, but rather because of the mismanagement under which Spain was during the last years of the Restoration system, which resulted in the deep and complete discredit of Alfonso XIII's monarchy, the king who

¹ Clara Campoamor, *La revolución española vista por una republicana* (edición de Luis Español), España, Ediciones Espuela de Plata, 2013, p. 173

² See Ángel Duarte, *El otoño de un ideal. El republicanismo histórico español y su declive en el exilio de 1939*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 2009; Ángel Duarte, *El republicanismo: una pasión política*, Madrid, Cátedra, 2013; Nigel Townson, «La historia del republicanismo desde sus inicios hasta la transición (1830-1977)», prólogo a Ángeles Egido and Mirta Núñez (eds.), *El republicanismo español. Raíces históricas y perspectivas de futuro*, Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 2001, pp. 11-33; Ángel Duarte and Pere Gabriel, «¿Una sola cultura política republicana ochocentista en España?», *Ayer*, 39 (2000), pp. 11-34; Manuel Suárez Cortina, «El republicanismo español tras la crisis de fin de siglo (1898-1914)», *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 20 (1998), pp. 165-189; M^a Pilar Salmón, «Republicanism e identidad nacional española: la República como ideal integrador y salvífico de la nación», in Carlos Forcadell, M^a Pilar Salomón and Ismael Saz (coords.), *Discursos de España en el siglo XX*, España, Universidad de Valencia, 2009, pp. 35-64

permitted the establishment of Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship in 1923.³ Therefore, the new stage in the history of Spain began because of the ineffectiveness of a regime that little by little had been digging its own grave, represented by a monarchy regarded every day with more mistrust and hostility.

The circumstances under which the Second Republic was proclaimed have led some to call it a «Republic without republicans»,⁴ or according to Nigel Townson's words, a «people rather anti-monarchical than pro republican»,⁵ given that it was proclaimed as the only way left for Spain to reorient its political and social reality after long years of crisis. For some, former monarchy advocates, the Republic's establishment supposed a moderate solution to the crisis which the country was going through; for others, socialists and anarchists, it was a bourgeois-like Republic that had to serve as an instrument for a future political and social revolution. For the intellectuality, despite of its heterogeneity, the Republic had to become the means to bring about the modernisation and education able to turn the masses into Spanish citizens. A lot of projects of different groups converged, socialists, republicans of different kinds, traditional and converted, radicals and reformists, left, centre and right-winged. The myth had become a reality, but the basic guidelines that would enable all these groups to be part of the project were still to be laid down.

The diversity that the umbrella of the Second Spanish Republic had to embrace was such that it is sometimes rather difficult to accurately define the concept of republicanism during this period. In her latest publication, Lisa Kirschenbaum describes the functions of the International Lenin School, established in Moscow in 1926, whose main objective was to train international communists in order to convert them into authentic Soviet-style revolutionaries. The role model to follow, of course, was the Bolshevik, the expert in the triumphant revolution. All those young people that, most of whom clandestinely, arrived in Moscow every year were subjected to a strict process of bolshevisation that would ideally result in the creation of «disciplined, sober, chaste» revolutionaries who mastered Bolshevik techniques.⁶

In contrast, in the Spain of the Second Republic there was not such a school, nor were there any rigid rules or qualities that could define a good republican, since within the long-standing republican tradition there had never been a republican ideology as such, but a republican ideal shared by all kinds of republicans with different political preferences. Furthermore, according to Santos Juliá's words about Madrid's republicanisation, it has to be taken into account that this republicanism had just arrived «without deep roots in society, as wide as vague, emotional, badly structured, without parties,

³ See Josep Fontana, «Com i per què va arribar la Segona República?», in Manuel Risques (coord.), *Visca la República!*, Barcelona, Proa, 2007, pp. 25-50; Javier Moreno (ed.), *Alfonso XIII. Un político en el trono*, Madrid, Marcial Pons, Ediciones de Historia, 2003

⁴ See Shlomo, pp. 415-431

⁵ Nigel Townson, «La historia del republicanismo...», p. 23

⁶ Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *International Communism and the Spanish Civil War. Solidarity and Suspicion*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 15-51.

almost without party members», but that it «had uncontainable moved forward, in spite of its lack of progress in terms of organisation or programmatic definition».⁷

As a result of this, it is not an easy task to define what being republican during the Second Spanish Republic means, given that two confronted conceptions, what the Republic's ideologues thought it would be and what it actually turned out to be, are at stake, as well the disputes over the most controversial subjects, such as social reforms, the role of the Church, women's vote or the model of territorial organisation that the new republican State should take. Besides, we also have to consider the dichotomy between the intellectual elite's imagined Republic and the popular republican culture.

In the following pages, through the analysis of secondary literature published on the Second Spanish Republic, we are going to attempt to unravel the essence of Spanish republicanism in the thirties, in order to determine the main features of the republican political culture as well as to sketch an image of what being republican signified during those years of hope and frustrations. We are fundamentally going to focus on the ideas that the intellectuality and the republican leaders held about what the Republic was meant to be, as well as how these ideas were translated into concrete political measures, especially during the first two-year period, since we consider it to be the period during which the Second Republic's essence and hence the republican political culture were best captured.

1. The Republic of the intellectuality and the building of the republican nation

A great amount of scholars agree that it was the intellectuals' job to establish the pillars upon which the Republic would be later on constructed. These people were members of those generations that had suffered from the fin-the-siècle crisis after the loss of the last American colonies and those who had witnessed how Spain's prestige was undermined as a result of Alfonso XIII's actions. These intellectuals, representatives of the Spanish well-educated middle-class, and heirs of traditions such as Krausism and the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (ILE), woke up from the lethargy that kept them away from active politics and assumed civic responsibility to modernise and democratise the country by means of the establishment of, paraphrasing Azorín's words, the «Republic of the intellectuality».⁸

⁷ Santos Juliá, «De cómo Madrid se volvió republicano», in Manuel Tuñón de Lara (dir.), *Los orígenes culturales de la Segunda República*, Madrid, Siglo XX, 1993, p. 357.

⁸ On the relation of intellectuals and the Second Spanish Republic in M^a Cruz Galindo, «El papel de los intelectuales en la gestación de la Segunda República Española. Intelectuales socialistas: trayectoria y actuación para la consecución del triunfo electoral del PSOE en el primer Bienio Republicano», *Historia Contemporánea*, 18 (2006), pp. 153-170; Edward Malefakis, «La II República española, ¿un régimen diferente?», in Nigel Townson (ed.), *¿Es España diferente? Una mirada comparativa (siglos XIX y XX)*, Madrid, Taurus, 2010, pp. 167-198; Manuel Tuñón de Lara, «Grandes corrientes culturales», in Manuel Tuñón de Lara (dir.), *Los orígenes...*, pp. 1-24, and in the same publication, Paul Aubert, «Intelectuales y cambio político», pp. 25-95, and by the same author, «Los intelectuales y la Segunda República», *Ayer*, 40 (2000), pp. 105-133; Javier Zamora, «Discursos irresponsables y retóricas intransigentes», in Fernando del Rey (dir.), *Palabras como puños. La intransigencia política en la Segunda República española*, Ma-

In 1931 Gregorio Marañón, José Ortega y Gasset and Ramón Pérez de Ayala set up an association called the *Agrupación al Servicio de la República*, whose aim was to become an organisation to channel the anti-monarchical sentiment that had been developing in places such as universities.⁹ This organisation was conceived to promote the actuation of Spaniards of «intellectual profession» over the «rest of the national body»,¹⁰ that is, it was presumed that it was the intellectual elite who had the duty to transform the country, acting in the name of the people, who had to be the main subject of change but without taking part in its execution. And this was precisely the leitmotiv that guided the republican government during its first days, the creation of a republican nation.

The controversy arose when, Republic proclaimed, it was time to determine the principles that would govern the new State. The republican government, formed by politicians of different origins and ideologies, although most of them came from the intellectual world, had as its principal objective to give legitimacy to the new form of government and, accordingly, to republicanise Spain. Hence it was necessary to define what it was understood by republican nation and how the conversion from a monarchical, corrupt and apolitical country to a republican, popular and democratic Spain would proceed.

The formulation and diffusion of Spanish nationalism was a recurrent element within Spanish republicanism from its appearance in the nineteenth century. The people became the subject of the Spanish nation and the symbol around which Spanish patriotism was to be articulated.¹¹ During the Second Republic, intellectuals and republican leaders appropriated the broad and heterogeneous symbolic body that Spanish republicanism had been developing during decades and converted this concept of people, referring to those Spaniards excluded from the political system, in the main subject of the political measures that would be carried out. As Rafael Cruz states, the republican political culture saw itself transformed by the intellectuality,¹² given that they made use of an already existing ideological body as the starting point for Spain's regeneration in the name of the people.

drid, Editorial Tecnos, 2011, pp. 523-595; Sandie Holguín, *República de ciudadanos. Cultura e identidad nacional en la España republicana*, Barcelona, Editorial Crítica, 2003; Jean Bécarud and Evelyn López, *Los intelectuales españoles durante la Segunda República*, Madrid, Siglo XXI, 1978; Eduardo Huertas, *La política cultural de la Segunda República española*, Madrid, Centro Nacional de Información del Patrimonio Histórico, 1988.

⁹ Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Los orígenes...*, p. 116.

¹⁰ José Ortega y Gasset, as cited in Ana Aguado «La experiencia republicana. Entre la cultura del reformismo político y las culturas obreras», in Ana Aguado and M^a Dolores Ramos, *La modernización de España (1917-1939). Cultura y vida cotidiana*, Madrid, Editorial Síntesis, 2002, p. 156.

¹¹ Ángel Duarte and Pere Gabriel, «¿Una sola cultura política...?», pp. 25-32; M^a Pilar Salomón, «Republicanism and identity national...», pp. 37-39.

¹² Rafael Cruz, «Cultura política republicana española en los años treinta del siglo XX», in José Luis Casas and Francisco Durán (eds.), *1931-1936: de la república democrática a la sublevación militar [IV Congreso sobre Republicanismo]*, Diputación de Córdoba, Universidad de Córdoba, Patronato «Niceto Alcalá-Zamora y Torres», 2009, p. 129.

All the same, in contrast to what Helen Graham declares,¹³ republican intellectuals considered that the republican people did not exist and, consequently, an intensive task of democratisation of the masses had to be carried out, with the objective of making the people identify themselves as Spaniards and republicans at the same time and, therefore, part of the civic nation. One of the few elements with which all the intellectuals agreed was that this project had to be realised by means of education.¹⁴ Accordingly, and among other measures, a fairly great amount of resources was invested in the promotion of a public, secular, unified and coeducational school,¹⁵ the so-called *Misiones Pedagógicas* were created to bring Spanish high culture to rural areas, regarded as one of the most important focus of resistance to the Republic, and popular cultural initiatives such as the street theatre *La Barraca* were promoted.¹⁶ It was assumed that if among Spanish people illiteracy disappeared and they were granted access to the Spanish essence contained in the culture and history of the periods of artistic and imperial glory,¹⁷ these would put up less resistance to the republicanisation process, given that the patriotic sentiment would exalt the pride of belonging to a great nation with such a magnificent past.

When it came to the religious reform,¹⁸ the element that raised more controversy was with no doubt the education reform. Conceived by the Church as a privileged and elitist space of primary sociability, school was a basic element to ensure the indoctrination of new generations. For this reason, the articulation of a secular school became one of the main objectives of the measures to build a secular State, by means of, for example, the elimination of the subject of religion in public schools, the suppression of the Society of Jesus and the nationalisation of its schools, or the prohibition for Church members to practice teaching.¹⁹ Alongside with the separation of Church and State, the legalisation of divorce or the withdrawal of the clergy subsidies, the education reform led to the Church's ideological and political crusade against the Republic.²⁰

In this sense, the project of construction of a homogenous republican identity shared by all the Spanish people clashed with the principal hegemonic culture in Spain,

¹³ Helen Graham, «Community, Nation and State in Republican Spain, 1931-1938», in Clare Mar-Molinero and Angel Smith (eds.), *Nationalism and the Nation in the Iberian Peninsula. Competing and Conflicting Identities*, Oxford, Berg, 1996, pp. 135-136.

¹⁴ Paul Aubert, «Los intelectuales y la Segunda República», 2000, p. 119.

¹⁵ On the Second Spanish Republic's education reforms in Fernando Millán, *La revolución laica de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza a la Escuela de la República*, Valencia, Fernando Torres-Editor, 1983

¹⁶ Juan Pablo Fusi, «La República de los intelectuales», in Santos Juliá, José Luis García, Juan Carlos Jiménez and Juan Pablo Fusi, *La España del siglo XX*, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2007, pp. 589-613; Eduardo González, Francisco Cobo, Ana Martínez and Francisco Sánchez, *La Segunda República española*, Barcelona, Pasado & Presente, 2015, pp. 320-356.

¹⁷ Paul Aubert, «Intelectuales y cambio político», p. 75.

¹⁸ On the religious reform in Javier de Diego, «Ciudadanía católica y ciudadanía laica (II): de la tolerancia a la libertad religiosa», in Manuel Pérez Ledesma (ed.), *De súbditos a ciudadanos. Una historia de la ciudadanía en España*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2007, pp. 251-276.

¹⁹ Mónica Moreno, «La política religiosa y la educación laica en la Segunda República», *Pasado y memoria: Revista de historia contemporánea*, 2 (2003), pp. 25-27.

²⁰ Claudio Lozano, «Un kulturkampf español: La pugna Estado-Iglesia por la enseñanza durante la Segunda República», en Javier Vergara (coord.), *Estudios sobre la secularización docente en España*, Madrid, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 1997, pp. 155-181.

the Catholic. According to Pamela Radcliff, not only did the republican symbolic universe promoted by the republican government have little acceptance at a local level, due to the deep-rooting of the religious symbology, but also its clash with the Catholic tradition, dominant in many corners of Spain, triggered the outbreak of a cultural war for the determination of the true Spanish identity.²¹ In contrast, Mónica Moreno states that, in spite of the criticism thrown at the Republic for promoting the country's dechristianisation, the secularisation process in Spain had already begun decades before, and the republican government's policies only accelerated the loss of uniformity within the Catholic world, although Catholicism remained highly influential in rural areas and among some of the wealthiest families.²²

The country's secularisation plan was nothing more than the culmination of a debate that during decades had taken place within Spanish progressive circles, which could finally materialise during the Second Republic, articulated by both republicans and socialists along with the support of anarchists, since it was indispensable to lower the influence of the Church in order to govern the new State.²³ Even though among the most eminent republicans there were profoundly Catholic personalities such as Niceto Alcalá-Zamora, the ecclesiastical hierarchy and many Catholic devotees regarded the religious reform as a direct attack against the traditional status that the Church had for long enjoyed in Spain, and instead of seriously considering a renewal to adapt itself to the new era, its intransigent attitude led the Spanish Church to overtly declare itself against the Republic.

Manuel Azaña, who conceived the Republic as the mechanism to revive «the civilising spirit of the Spanish race»,²⁴ was the one in charge of designing the military reform to create an army following the principles of the new republican civic State. The new model army should solely be active during the periods in which the State was in danger of foreign threat and work as a school of civility the rest of the time. It was urgent to terminate with the Spanish army's excessive dimensions, keep it away from politics and convert it into a truly effective instrument. The army, all in all, had to become, not a republican, but rather a neutral tool at the service of the republican nation.²⁵

Sebastián Martín argues that the democratisation process unleashed by the Second Republic led to the appearance of three new political subjects, the region, the woman and the worker,²⁶ the great beneficiaries of the establishment of a participatory and conciliatory State. The first of these political subjects, the region, became a bone of con-

²¹ Pamela Radcliff, «La representación de la nación. El conflicto en torno a la identidad nacional y las prácticas simbólicas en la Segunda República», en Rafael Cruz and Manuel Pérez Ledesma (eds.), *Cultura y movilización en la España contemporánea*, Madrid, Alianza, 1997, pp. 305-326

²² Mónica Moreno Seco, «La política religiosa... », pp. 29-30.

²³ Eduardo González et al., *La Segunda República española*, p. 252.

²⁴ Manuel Azaña, citado en Sandie Holguín, *República de ciudadanos...*, p. 62

²⁵ On Manuel Azaña's militar reform in M^a Ángeles Nadal, «El reformista: un radical en Buenavista», in Ángeles Egido and Mirta Núñez, *El republicanismo en España...*, págs. 67-88; Manuel Azaña, *Discursos políticos* (edición de Santos Juliá), Barcelona, Crítica, 2003; and Eduardo Calleja et al., *La Segunda República española*, pp. 145-161

²⁶ Sebastián Martín, «El Estado en la España de los años treinta: De la constitución republicana a la dictadura franquista», *Res publica*, 2010 (23), pp. 81-92

tention among republicans since years before the Republic's coming, given that the territorial articulation of the new State was essential to determine which political role and status quo were to be awarded to the historical nations, especially the Catalan, and thus, which role was the central government to play.²⁷ Although certain groups were willing to articulate a federal Republic in order to facilitate the integration of Catalonia into the new Spanish Republic, it was quite naïve to think, as Joan B. Culla suggests, that the territorial model of the State would be so radically modified just to please this region's demands,²⁸ especially if we take into account that the federalist option had been displaced from the dominant republican ideology of the last decades,²⁹ and it was as well rejected by the other Spanish regions.³⁰

In the debate over the territorial shape that the Second Spanish Republic should take there were two premises at stake. On one hand, the need to provide with political power the Spanish regions that demanded so appealing to their condition of historical nations, and on the other hand, the traditional unitary vision of Spain upon which the new State had been erected. As the *Pacto de San Sebastián* in August 1930 augured, the autonomist formula ended up being the ace in the hole to integrate the decentralising aspirations of the peripheral nationalisms,³¹ and the integral State the definitive shape that the Republic was to take.

Even though there were among the republicans some personalities reluctant to Spain's decentralisation such as Miguel de Unamuno, who was against any kind of division of Spain's sovereignty appealing to the country's historical tradition,³² autonomism became the formula that could both give a response to the need of maintaining the Spanish nation united and of giving some competencies, in the shape of Statutes of Autonomy, to the regions which asked for it. In general, we may consider it a quite coherent solution, since it did not contradict the principles of democracy and pluralism proclaimed by the republicans. However, not everyone, like Azaña, genuinely believed in the model of autonomous communities as the best way to integrate all the Spanish territories.³³ Certain voices, such as Ortega, did not defend the regionalisation of Spain to respond to the regions' nationalist claims, but to fight them by dint of the regeneration of the Spanish political life and the potentiation of a conciliatory Spanish nationalism.³⁴

²⁷ On the debate over territorial organisation and nationalism during the Second Spanish Republic in Justo G. Beramendi and Ramón Máiz (comps.), *Los nacionalismos en la España de la Segunda República*, Madrid, Siglo XXI, 1993; Justo G. Beramendi, «Nacionalismos, regionalismos y autonomía en la Segunda República», *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 2 (2003), pp. 53-82; Andrés de Blas, «Republicanismo, Estado integral y nacionalismos», in Javier Moreno (ed.), *Izquierdas y nacionalismos en la España contemporánea*, Madrid, Editorial Pablo Iglesias, 2011, pp. 183-202

²⁸ Joan B. Culla, «Unitarisme, autonomia i federalisme», a Manel Risques (coord.), *Visca la República!*, p. 57.

²⁹ Justo G. Beramendi, «Nacionalismos... », p. 56; Andrés Blas de Guerrero, «Republicanismo... », p. 184.

³⁰ Justo Beramendi, «Nacionalismos... », p. 66.

³¹ Paul Aubert, «Los intelectuales... », p. 114.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ Andrés de Blas, «El debate doctrinal sobre la autonomía en las Constituyentes de la II República», *Historia Contemporánea*, 6 (1991), pp. 129-134.

³⁴ Andrés de Blas, «El debate... », pp. 124-129

The second new political subject mentioned by Martín is the woman. The Republic had to ensure full political and social citizenship for women, legal equality between women and men, equal opportunities, as well as the liberalisation of private life. The Republic certainly brought about a change of life for women,³⁵ especially due to their conversion into a political subject, fact that allowed a minority of women to occupy spaces totally monopolised by men before, by means of, for example, the appearance of the first generation of intellectual women influential in the country's public life, the creation of feminine sections in political parties, or the theoretical possibility for women of equal access to a workplace.

In the private space, legislation about the new conception of school, the family, civil marriage or divorce, among others, aimed to the secularisation of private life and a change in the conception of family relationships. Nevertheless, the integration of republican values in the private sphere was even more difficult. Only a minority of republicans adopted and truly embraced these ideals in their private lives, especially in the context of the working-class culture as a protest against conservative and bourgeois ways of life, even though it was not common whatsoever that the woman's role could be considered outside the domestic sphere.³⁶ These republican women who ceased to act as was expected of them, distancing themselves from family ties, getting actively involved in politics or establishing more liberal or rather less normative intimate relationships, were still considered suspicious by much of the republican public opinion.³⁷

The heated debate over the women's right to vote turned out to be one of the scenarios where we may notice the reluctance of many republican sectors to women's suffrage and hence that the full incorporation of women in the political universe became a reality. The attitudes against women's right to vote had different origins, from biological arguments to political pragmatism. From the most misogynistic postulates, the woman was considered too irrational and passionate to take part in politics, controlled by the Church and therefore without the capacity to think autonomously.³⁸ This view was shared by many republicans, especially those from the most radical anticlerical sectors, since granting women the right to vote, believed to be «subjugated by the clergy» in M^a Pilar Salomón's words, would directly entail more votes for conservative and anti-republican options. Some distinguished republican women, such as the radical Victoria Kent or the socialist Margarita Nelken, were also in favour of postponing the introduction of women's suffrage for political pragmatism, since they believed that women

³⁵ On republican legislation and the woman in Ana Aguado, «Entre lo público y lo privado: sufragio y divorcio en la Segunda República», *Ayer*, 60 (2005), pp. 105-134; and Mary Nash, «Género y ciudadanía», *Ayer. Política en la Segunda República*, 20 (1995), pp. 241-258.

³⁶ Ana Aguado, «La experiencia republicana...», pp. 198-201.

³⁷ Ana Aguado, «Entre lo público...», p. 126-127.

³⁸ On the conception of women in the republican political culture in Ana Aguado, «Identidades de género y culturas políticas en la Segunda República», *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 7 (2008), pp. 123-141; Helen Graham, «Mujeres y cambio social en la España de los años treinta», *Historia del Presente*, 2003 (2), pp. 9-23; M^a Pilar Salomón, «Beatas sojuzgadas por el clero: la imagen de las mujeres en el discurso anticlerical en la España del primer tercio del siglo XX», *Feminismo/s*, 2 (2003), pp. 41-58, and by the same author, «Las mujeres en la cultura política republicana: religión y anticlericalismo», *Historia Social*, 53 (2005), pp. 103-118.

should first be educated in republican values before exercising their voting rights. Nevertheless, there were also some voices, such as Campoamor, who tirelessly defended the legalisation of women's suffrage without establishing any extra conditions.

De iure and ideally, women suddenly became a political and social subject with the same rights as men and the same job opportunities. This context enabled the introduction of changes in women's status quo and supposed the beginning of the long road that would ideally lead them to full political emancipation as well as to achieve equality for men and women. De facto, nonetheless, neither legal or political mechanisms nor the alleged democratising and egalitarian spirit of republicanism were powerful enough to achieve a change of mentalities and significantly modify gender roles and the conception of women's political capacities, not only among the most conservative sectors, but also among the very liberal and progressive republicans, most of whom still considered women to be backward figures, endorsed by the Church and, in general, away from the republican ideal.

The worker, the third and last new political subject established by the Republic, had been until that moment the main subject of republicanism inasmuch as it constituted a great part of the republican people, or the central element of republicanism's vindications. The republican Constitution of 1931 laid the foundations, in its first article, of a «democratic Republic of workers of all kinds», since they were supposed, like women, to take part in the country's political life and politics had to be carried out taking into account their interests. The first indicator that demonstrated the willingness to incorporate the working class to the government of the Republic was the very inclusion in it of some of the representatives of their rights, such as the socialist politicians Indalecio Prieto, Fernando de los Ríos o Francisco Largo Caballero, this last one the responsible for conducting the reforms in the field of labour relations. From a socialist point of view, these reforms both aimed to substantially improve the workers' working conditions and to reinforce the role of the socialist union, the *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT), as the conciliatory body, in order to counteract the influence of the anarchist union, the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT).³⁹

For its part, the agrarian reform⁴⁰ unleashed heated debates in the Parliament, especially due to the Radical Party's harsh opposition regarding the extent of the reform. The expropriation of poorly cultivated land and large estates, the right to occupy the lands expropriated by the *Instituto de Reforma Agraria* (IRA), the eight-hour work-day or the municipal law, are some of the planned reforms. These did not only intended to improve the efficiency of Spanish agriculture, but also to provide the peasantry with the mechanisms to manage labour relations through the unions, in addition to the rein-

³⁹ Julio Gil Pecharromás, *La Segunda República española (1931-1936)*, Madrid, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 1995, pp. 165-169

⁴⁰ On the agrarian reform of the Second Spanish Republic in Julio Artillo, «La reforma agraria en la España contemporánea», *Revista de estudios sociales y de sociología aplicada*, 32 (1978), pp. 45-78; Julio Gil Pecharromás, *La Segunda República española (1931-1936)*, pp. 169-177; Edward Malefakis, *Reforma agraria y revolución campesina en la España del siglo XX*, Barcelona, Ariel, 1971.

forcement of the role of local governments⁴¹ and hence the localism that had traditionally characterised the republican movement.

2. The Republic of the republican people and its limits

So far we have examined the fundamental traits that, with more or less consensus, configured the republican political culture disseminated by governmental organisms during the early years of the Republic. We have analysed the translation into reality of republicanism, a culture regarded as timeless,⁴² as long as it reflects the different collective demonstrations of resistance and opposition to traditional elites,⁴³ or a «political and cultural movement that aspired to resolve the people's political and social exclusion».⁴⁴ We have seen the efforts made by the highest levels of republican power, dominated to a great extent by men, and some women, from the intellectual and academic world, in order to republicanise the Spanish people and likewise ensure the Republic's legitimacy. All the same, there were some obstacles to the realisation of this project, such as the resistance of some of the people to adopt the republican identity and the legal limits that the same republican government set to control the people's acts.

First of all, and although the Constitution established a popular Republic, given that all the powers emanated from the sovereign people formed by equal and free citizens, the same constitutional document also set the limit of the republican people's freedom with the Defence of the Republic Law, conceived to prevent the Republic's enemies from impeding the prosperous development of the republican project.⁴⁵ This law annulled the rights and liberties established by the Constitution when the State considered that the Republic's integrity was in danger and led, for instance, to the suspension of meetings and newspapers, the dismantling of political groups, or the prohibition of public acts, Catholic processions and pilgrimages among them. In other words, the State ended up restricting the republican people's freedom in support of its defence and, consequently, the State was not able to guarantee the full realisation of its ideology, based to a great extent on the freedom of expression.

The compliance with the Defence of the Republic Law and the others derived from it led to the reaction of those affected by them, whether they were anarchists, socialists or Catholics, and it was probably counterproductive, given that many of these groups with their own identities were every day further away from being part of the republican identity. The Church took advantage of this situation to convert the secular i-

⁴¹ Eduardo González et al., *La Segunda República española*, pp. 109-130.

⁴² Ángel Duarte, «La esperanza republicana», in Rafael Cruz and Manuel Pérez Ledesma (eds.), *Cultura y movilización...*, pp. 169-199.

⁴³ Ángel Duarte, *El otoño de un ideal...*, p. 370.

⁴⁴ Eduardo González et al., *La Segunda República española*, p. 11.

⁴⁵ On the limits of freedom of expression during the Second Spanish Republic in Rafael Cruz, «La voz del pueblo suena como las trompetas del juicio. Identidades, control policial y derechos de ciudadanía en la Segunda República», in Manuel Pérez Ledesma (ed.), *De súbditos a ciudadanos...*, pp. 277-310; and Enrique Gómez-Reino, «La libertad de expresión en la II República», *Revista de Derecho Político*, 12 (1981-1982), pp. 159-187.

sation process into a direct attack on Catholicism and the Catholics and, as Cruz relates, it developed a populist rhetoric of persecution in order to revive the Catholic identity in opposition to the republican one.⁴⁶

Accordingly, Townson defines the religious reforms undertaken during the Republic's first two-year period as a «political error» because they were not aimed to construct a consensus framework,⁴⁷ but to strengthen republican legitimacy, a view also shared by Manuel Álvarez Tardío, who holds that the Constitution laid down «the principles of an aggressive and anti-liberal secularism that practically annulled religious freedom».⁴⁸ It is likely that some policies carried out went beyond the strict secularism and denoted the anticlerical sentiment that some republican leaders harboured.⁴⁹ Similarly, the prohibition of certain public acts which were part of the Catholic sociability did not contribute either to the attraction of the Catholic people to republicanism, since the latter prohibited the manifestation of the former's symbols. However, while the republican State failed to understand the religious sentiment held by some of its citizens, the Spanish Catholic Church played a huge role in distancing the Catholic world from the republican project.

Another element that complicated the consolidation of the republican identity and its inter-class aspirations was the existence of a labour movement with its own sociability space. The spaces of sociability such as republican centres and casinos, especially those with Lerrouxist and Blasquist origins, were characteristic of the nineteenth-century republican political culture, given that it was in these spaces where republican fraternity was built through conversation or political debates and the bonds that united the republicans under the same ideal were woven. These places constituted a widespread and consolidated reality during the thirties, but they had to share space with the socialist *casas del pueblo* and anarchist *ateneos*.⁵⁰ Even though all of them shared the rejection of bourgeois leisure, regarded as ostentatious and frivolous, and stood for the proliferation of enriching forms of leisure, each sociability space was ruled by different principles and instead of forming part of a working-class republican political culture, many times the working-class culture competed with the republican. In Gijón, for instance, a city with an important labour movement tradition, Radcliff narrates how it was attempted, through educational and cultural measures of secularisation, to make the republican culture take root, in contrast to the Catholic and the working-class cultures. This process, though, had to face some difficulties due to the influence of Catholicism and the appropriation by the labour movement of the republican symbols and spaces, such as the *Ateneo*.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Rafael Cruz, «La voz del pueblo...», pp. 292-299

⁴⁷ Nigel Townson, *La República que no pudo ser. La política de centro en España (1931-1936)*, Madrid, Santillana Ediciones Generales, 2002, p. 403

⁴⁸ Manuel Álvarez Tardío, *Anticlericalismo y libertad de conciencia. Política y religión en la Segunda República española (1931-1936)*, Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2002, p. 361

⁴⁹ Mónica Moreno, «La política religiosa...», p. 36

⁵⁰ Ana Aguado, «La experiencia republicana...», pp. 196-201

⁵¹ Pamela Radcliff, *De la movilización a la Guerra Civil. Historia política y social de Gijón (1900-1937)*, Barcelona, Debate, 2004, p. 209

The Republic was proclaimed with the intention of giving voice to the voiceless and provoke a «change of life»⁵² through the full inclusion of workers, peasants and women to the political life of the country. The expectations created were many and, although the reforms undertaken during the first years were rather far-reaching, it was actually very difficult to find a balance between what the working class expected of the Republic and the compromise required to govern a country.⁵³ The politicisation of the working class also provoked that some governmental measures were regarded as insufficient, as was the case of the agrarian reform, given that it had to satisfy the peasantry's thirst for land, but its application was slowed down by the opposition and the landowners' power.

It is probably because of this that the identification with the Republic by some groups became more difficult, as well as the fusion of the working-class identity with the republican one. While the limits of the application of the promulgated laws led to an estrangement between republicans and socialists, the same policies led from the very beginning to the opposition of the anarchists who, through the CNT, denounced the agrarian reform for perpetuating the capitalist model in rural areas,⁵⁴ did not accept the mechanisms of mediation imposed by the Caballerist model,⁵⁵ or regarded some the manifestations of republican leisure as bourgeois or unproductive.

Neither was the republican project conceived in the same way by all the alleged republicans, given that some advocated a Republic of the working people, while others wanted it to be moderate, socially conservative or, as some would say, a Republic for all the Spanish people. This last view was embodied by Alejandro Lerroux's Radical Party which, according to Townson, constituted the moderating mechanism of republicanism in the thirties, since it represented a great part of the republican public opinion placed in the political centre and, therefore, its duty was to consolidate the reforms initiated during the first years by means of moderation and consensus. Their plan was being carried out until the balance between the radicals and the right wing, says the historian, was broken after the events of October 1934.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, this political centre allegedly republican, allied with the Catholic right, had long before allowed the republican spirit to vanish due to the offensive against the first term reforms.⁵⁷ This is why in this paper we have focused, in order to analyse the republican political culture, on the first two-year republican project and not on the distortion that followed them.

⁵² Santos Juliá, «Introducción», in Santos Juliá (coord.), *República y Guerra en España (1931-1939)*, Madrid, Espasa Calpe, 2006, p. XII

⁵³ Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Los orígenes...*, p. 427

⁵⁴ Julio Gil Pecharrmán, *La Segunda República española (1931-1936)*, pp. 176-177

⁵⁵ Julio Gil Pecharrmán, *La Segunda República española (1931-1936)*, pp. 168

⁵⁶ Nigel Townson, *La República que no pudo ser...*, pp. 404-411

⁵⁷ Sebastián Martín, «El Estado...», p. 88

3. Epilogue: The Republic of exiles

At the beginning of the present article we mentioned that it is not easy to come with a definition of what being republican during the Second Spanish Republic means. After unravelling the elements that we considered the most characteristic of the republican experience, it becomes even more difficult to defend the existence of an only republican political culture, given that the Republic did not come as the result of a single project, but it was the response articulated by all the critics of the Spanish Restoration system. Republicanism was an abstract sentiment; it was symbols, ideas and anthems; it was the 14th of April, it was the Popular Front; it was the instrument that would enable the construction of a new country, a «new genesis» if we use Duarte's words,⁵⁸ or a «cultural and educative utopia», according to Manuel Tuñón de Lara,⁵⁹ because of its ambition and ingenuity.

Being republican was for some the least radical option to correct the crisis in Spain and stop the red menace. Others, driven by the political passion referred to by Campoamor, believed from the heart in the project and devoted body and soul to build it up. For some, it was reform; for others, revolution. According to the Constitution, the Republic was modernisation, education, laicism, inter-classism, civility and equal rights for every men and women, although there were individual attitudes, especially those which had to do with private morality, which contradicted the very essence of republicanism. The Republic, at least for whom had established its basis, was the ideal of a united Spanish republican people. Republicanism was the unifying force because it was a sentiment that would inevitably develop when the masses became, at last, republican citizens and proud of being so.

All the same, republicanism did not ever become a solid ideological body able to attract a majority of the Spanish population, nor was it possible to articulate a united republican political culture. The identity of a republican people did not manage to become hegemonic because there were other identities that did not eventually merge with the republican one, even though they did share most of their principles, or because they simply ended up frontally opposing it. In spite of the great expectations and the designed cultural revolution, a great amount of the population could not ever identify themselves within the symbolic republican universe because they felt that the Republic failed to represent them or acted against their interests.

Nevertheless, as it is widely known, the Republic ended up in tragedy. The civil war swept away everything erected during those years and the embers left in the air disappeared along with the consolidation of the Francoist dictatorship. What was left, then, of the republican political culture articulated during the republican experience? Not much. Most of it had died in the trenches or executed by firing squad. Another bit remained forever silent under the post-war repression. And the part that ran away was

⁵⁸ Ángel Duarte, *El otoño de un ideal...*, p. 368

⁵⁹ Manuel Tuñón de Lara, «¿Crisis de la Segunda República?», in Josep Fontana, *La II República: una esperanza frustrada*, València, Alfons el Magnànim, Institució Valenciana d'Estudis i Investigació, 1987, pp. 27-29

scattered all over the world, from France to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean in Mexico or Argentina, as well as in the United Kingdom or the Soviet Union, exiled.

The majority of these exiles tried to keep alive the political, cultural and spiritual remains left of the Second Spanish Republic, through the preservation of the republican government in the exile, the creation of associations for exiles, the writing of memoirs and autobiographies, the publication of magazines or, simply, the memory of the hope of change that the republican experience had brought about. However, exile turned into «the autumn of an ideal»,⁶⁰ since it supposed the slow demise of a political culture, republicanism, which was removed from power when it had just reached it and now, recalled far away from the land that had given shape to it, had to adapt itself to the new political cultures encountered in the countries of destination. The Republic had become, all over again, a myth, recalled from afar, with frustration, grief and longing.

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