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# *El setmanari L'Opinió i la fundació d'Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (1928-1931)*

(The weekly *L'Opinió* and the founding of the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya [1928-1931])

**Jaume Guillamet Lloveras**

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This book is an illustrated and annotated synthesis of the weekly that was so influential in the ranks of Catalanist republicanism in the 1930s. *L'Opinió* was both a political and a cultural tribunal of extraordinary importance, with its editorial dynamism and extremely long list of writers and contributors. This history is broken down in this monograph by Jaume Guillamet, which is a very solid contribution about Catalan journalism in the 1930s, a sweet spot and prominent period when the cultural blossoming of the *Renaixença* culminated in the *Mancomunitat* and an entire great intellectual generation made Catalan culture and journalism among the most creative and relevant of the period. The author dissects it, paying special attention to the ideological and political, and—to the extent that data is available—journalistic aspects. Particularly of note is the description of the political evolution and ideological contribution of the weekly in the role it would play in shaping the electoral victory in April 1931.

Jaume Guillamet (Figueres, 1950), a journalist and historian, is an emeritus professor at Universitat Pompeu Fabra and a member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, where he directs the project *Catàleg històric general de la premsa en català, 1641-1939*. He has specialised in cultivating the history of Catalan journalism, a topic on which he has written numerous works on the local and regional press, with monographs on the press in Figueres, Girona, Andorra, and Catalonia, as well as on press circulation and readership. At the same time, he has overseen biographies and compilations of texts by journalists and politicians like Carles Fages de Climent and Abdó Terrades. He is the author of numerous works on the history of Catalan journalism, including the trilogy made up of *Els orígens del periodisme a Catalunya. Catàleg de periòdics antics, 1640-1833* (2003), *L'arrencada del periodisme liberal. Política, mercat i llengua en la premsa catalana, 1833-1874* (2010) and *El periodisme català contemporani. Diaris, partits polítics i llengües, 1875-1939* (2022).

The *Estudis Històrics i Biogràfics* Collection of the Fundació Josep Irla presents biographies, some of them quite successful like the one on Dalmau Costa, along with compilations of texts

by journalists and politicians from Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) and monographs on important issues related to the party and its influence. Jaume Guillamet has also published *Narcís Lloveras, cronista republicà. De la Bisbal d'Empordà al Front d'Aragó, 1922-1937* (2017) as part of this collection. This book has the usual features of the collection, its traditional quadrangular shape following the patterns in the series that presents prominent leftists from the twentieth century with the maximum of both textual and iconographic data—documents, newspaper clippings, books, etc.—that characterise the collection and are one of its hallmarks.

The book opens with a prologue by Joan Manuel Tresserras. The contents, which are well organised, begin with the left's desire to be present in political life after the end of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and continues with its actions in those intense years, which closed with the *Conferència d'Esquerres* (Left-wing conference) and the electoral victory in 1931. Thus, over eight sections, Guillamet narrates the evolution of the weekly in the transition from the dictatorship to the Republic. The text is reader-friendly and cites sources in around 300 notes with the goal of peering into the interior of the periodical without ignoring its own interpretation of it.

In terms of content, Guillamet surveys the almost 30 years of the weekly's life essentially using historiographic data and information from the publication itself. Neither the archive of the weekly nor that of the newspaper still survives, so the author has focused on the periodical itself more than on searching in specialised archives, given that this is not a research thesis but a synthesis. The outcome is a very clear, orderly monograph on the periodical promoted by Joan Lluhi, Joan Casanelles, Pere Comas and Antoni Xirau, whose contributors include Josep Pla, Jaume Miravittles, Jordi Arquer, Joaquim Xirau, Josep Fontbernat, Joaquim Ventalló... and the *crème de la crème* of Catalanist leftists. We also celebrate the very interesting last section devoted to the contributors with the total number—not a list—of the articles that appeared.

The book is successful as a whole and does justice to an important, influential publication. As the author states in the epilogue:

The weekly *L'Opinió* achieved a much higher objective than what it sought. The immediate, unexpected, and resounding success of founding the party that unified the Catalanist republican left forced it to take on responsibilities for governance for which the new political party had not had time to prepare for. The story of the weekly's action over the course of the three years within its two periods—which certainly merits further study—shows the importance of the role of Lluhi and his group in formulating and promoting the new party's political project in the young Catalan democracy, although significant limitations can also be seen. We shall only cite the two main ones: the heterogeneity of the political groups that converged in it, and its subordination to the personal charisma of Francesc Macià, at the head of Estat Català, his own organisation, which was equally lacking homogeneity and membership. The political stories of each of the two periods of *L'Opinió* have significant differences. During the years 1928-1929, the weekly's main purposes were to update the federal republican legacy of Pi i Margall, to define the space of a liberal socialism whose main referent was the English labour movement and to promote the working class's participation in politics. There are even differences between the two initiatives of the leftist republican front of 1930 in terms of the participation of trade unions and the closeness with and glorification of the *l'Avi* (the Grandfather), the septuagenarian leader of Estat Català.

I am pleased with the successful, meticulous editing, which I have also seen as an author of a book on the war chronicles of Lluís Capdevila that is part of the same collection. Not all publishing houses do this painstaking work, and the result is noticeable and noteworthy. I would also like to mention the journalistic reader-friendliness and preciseness of the writing. The book closes with indexes of sources, titles, and onomastics; a detailed bibliography; notes; and an extensive, far-reaching almost exhaustive graphic section, which makes reading it a pleasure. A careful section of one dozen well-chosen articles by names like Francesc Macià, Jaume Aiguader and Lluís Companys close this attractive volume.