POLITICAL AGENDAS THROUGH POPULAR EDUCATION: MEXICO AND SPAIN IN THE THIRTIES

Agendas políticas detrás de la escolarización: México y España en los años treinta

CHARLES L. GLENN
Boston University

During the 1930s many voices called for using popular education to remake societies in crisis, through reshaping popular culture and loyalties. International influences played a major part in shaping these agendas. This paper discusses the efforts of the Spanish Second Republic to achieve social transformation through education, and how this process had already been under way in Mexico for a decade, with mixed results. In both cases, invoking the authority of the State against the Catholic Church's traditional role in education led to popular resistance to government schooling, including widespread violence and the ultimate frustration of the program. State monopoly of schooling, the paper suggests, is always a threat to freedom, especially when a powerful regime seeks to impose its ideological perspective.

Key words: *State control, Indoctrination, Popular schooling, Anti-clericalism, Popular resistance.*

In Spain, for several years in the 1930s, there was a nationally-directed effort to use popular schooling for social transformation, an effort which fell somewhere between the extremes represented by the ineffectual rhetoric of some Progressive educators in the United States, and the totalitarian ruthlessness with which German and Soviet schools were made instruments of State power and popular mobilization. These efforts under the Spanish Second Republic echoed in significant ways what had already been occurring in Mexico for the previous decade.

The government which took office in 1931 represented a coalition of forces whose actual interests were quite divergent and for which demand for change and strong anticlericalism were the basis of cooperation. Its focus on fundamental social change made popular education a primary concern of the new regime, since *«la República no quería ser solamente una forma de Estado, sino un programa de vida social. Se trataba de forjar una nueva conciencia social, una nueva clase de ciudadanos. Es fácil advertir, en este planteamiento, la importancia de la política educativa. Lo que se discutía era la orientación de la juventud»* (Meer, 1978: 13).

As historian Stanley Payne points out, the Center-Left coalition in control during the initial phase of the Second Republic «recognized the need for social reform but placed uppermost the cultural

revolution of republicanism, which would require creation of a strong modern state completely separated from religion, a series of fundamental institutional changes and reforms, and the construction of a modern secular educational system, to which Catholic education would be completely subordinated […] the democratic Republic was not intended to be a democracy tolerant of equal rights for all but a radical reform project enjoying total hegemony over Spanish life» (Payne, 2006: 12). Focus on issues which in some cases were largely symbolic yet led to violent opposition by important sectors of the Spanish population diverted the Left from implementing concrete measures to improve economic and social conditions and helped to bring on the Civil War.

Education was a primary focus of the efforts of the Left to bring about fundamental changes in Spanish society, changes which many believed required also a profound reorientation of Spanish culture. Much — indeed, everything — seemed to be at stake in the struggle over schooling. *«No podemos olvidar»,* Samaniego Boneu points out, *«el carácter polémico que rodea el tema de la enseñanza, mirado desde el ángulo de la distintas ideologías. La enseñanza significaba, realmente, la batalla del hombre. El término "confesionalidad de enseñanza" en torno al cual se suscitaron duras polémicas, entrañaba el ser futuro de España. De ahí la importancia de la cuestión en debate por razón de la realidad que la educación significaba»* (Samaniego Boneu, 1977: 37). The school was to be *«única, laica, igual, neutral y monopolizada por el Estado»* (Salguero, 1997: 34).

This would require reforms «from above», since insufficient awareness existed among the still largely-rural masses to press for such changes «from below»; government would have to infuse the right spirit into what occurred at the local level. *«El Estado era el árbitro de la nueva situación, el único garante para una acción educadora extensa y complicada. El socialismo interpretará esta dialéctica como parte de un proceso irreversible, y aunque negará a veces el carácter monopolizador que le confiere para que éste organice y patrocine la enseñanza, los hechos no confirmarán sus palabras. En este terreno, al decir de sus fiadores más notables, aquél no puede admitir rivales […] Para completar su obra, el Estado se cubre con el velo de la neutralidad y declara laica la enseñanza.»* Inevitably, this brought the new government into conflict with private schooling, which was largely in the hands of Catholic orders and thus by no means available to be reshaped in secular form; *«la conclusión era manifiesta: la República debería nacionalizar la cultura, nacionalizando de paso las instituciones docentes»* (Molero Pintado, 1977: 17, 35 y 55).

The Second Republic was by no means an economically-revolutionary regime, at least until its last, radical phase during the Civil War which began in 1936. It seems very likely that the militant anti-Catholic tone of many of the Second Republic's actions and pronouncements were an effort to find a common ground among «radicals» with strongly divergent positions on matters of economic and social policy, as had been the case in France a generation before.

The first director of elementary education under the Second Republic, Rodolfo Llopis, was one of those who denied that the State could be religiously neutral; the success of the Revolution made it necessary to reject the liberal view that religion was a private matter and that the Catholic Church could simply be left alone. *«Cada día son más los que creen»,* he wrote in 1935, *«que hay que acabar con la doctrina que sostiene que la religión es asunto privado. Los hechos demuestran lo contrario. Y para nosotros, socialistas, no cabe opción. El problema se plantea con toda claridad. La Iglesia hace tiempo que tomó partido en la lucha que hay entablada. Se puso al lado del capitalismo y de la burguesía. Se puso de frente a la clase trabajadora. Y como nosotros queremos acabar con ese régimen social, tendremos que acabar también con las instituciones y las fuerzas que le sirven de sostén, expresión y defensa. A ello hay que ir fatalmente, como imperativo de vida»* (Samaniego Boneu, 1977: 185 y 190). As we will

see, the leaders of the «revolutionary» party in power in Mexico had proclaimed the same rejection of religious neutrality several years earlier. Llopis promised that *«haciendo conciencias libres, hacemos socialistas»*. Consciences free, that is, of religion.

While all political parties in the new Republic supported a continuation and intensification of the recent efforts to extend popular schooling, there was a fundamental difference between the coalition of parties on the Left and those on the Right which supported the alternative of Catholic schooling. Fernando de Meer asks:

> *«¿Era posible la existencia de un sistema escolar surgido de una iniciativa distinta de la estatal? El sistema de escuela unificada podía expresar el deseo de garantizar el máximo control sobre la organización de la enseñanza como medida preventiva ante la influencia social que tenía la enseñanza de orientación católica. ¿Hasta qué punto podía compaginarse una libertad de orientación en los planes educativos de los centros que surgiesen de iniciativas distintas de la estatal con el hecho de una "escuela unificada"? Parece que lo que se pretendía era imponer un solo sistema escolar. Aunque, en los primeros momentos de la República no fuera posible llegar a ello. El laicismo ¿era algo que debía mantenerse en todo centro educativo? Para los socialistas, radicales-socialistas, partidos de la izquierda republicana, radicales, etc., el laicismo en la enseñanza era una consecuencia lógica de los principios de la "pedagogía moderna". El núcleo básico de su pensamiento era la aceptación de una visión radicalmente antropocéntrica. Por este motivo el encuentro de las distintas opciones políticas que gobernaban la República con los diputados de orientación católica era imposible. Los católicos entendían que el laicismo no respetaba la libertad de las conciencias. De hecho, no la respetaba»* (Meer, 1978: 191).

Article 26 of the December 1931 Constitution prohibited religious orders from educating; in May 1933 the Law of Congregations applied the prohibition of teaching orders in statutory form. A decree the next month directed provincial and local authorities to find replacements for the thousands of schools, serving 350,000 primary pupils and 20,000 secondary pupils, operated by teaching congregations. *This aggressive program «estuvo alentado por violentas campañas de prensa que crearon un* pathos *colectivo, señalándose a la Iglesia como el enemigo que era preciso abatir»*. The herculean effort was justified by the need to eliminate the *«dictadura clerical»* exercised through an *«injusto y abusivo dominio de las conciencias»* in Catholic schools. *El Socialista* promised that *«la abundancia de las escuelas nacionales y públicas traerá consigo la disminución y total decadencia de las escuelas privadas»* (García Regidor, 1994: 821; Molero Pintado, 1977: 295).

As a result of the priority given, by the Left Republicans and their allies, to their ideological agenda over the practicalities of Spain's needs during this difficult economic period, «unnecessary amounts of money were consigned to replace the entire Catholic educational system, leaving all the less for stimulating employment, building necessary infrastructure, and encouraging economic expansion, not to speak of land reform» (Payne, 2006: 347).

During the more conservative middle phase of the Republic, the administration did not enfirce the law of Congregations and allowed Catholic schools to continue to function. After this period of conservative rule, Marcelino Domingo became Minister of Public Instruction in the Popular Front government and issued a circular at the end of March 1936 which stressed that *«[h]a de procurar que el laicismo de la enseñanza sea efectivo y que las prácticas de la misma respondan al espíritu de nuestro tiempo. Donde aún no se entienda o no se cumpla así, la Inspección lo impondrá inflexiblemente, denunciando al Ministerio las resistencias obstinadas»*. Teachers in public and private schools *«habrán de evidenciar al otorgar el certificado de escolaridad no sólo la disposición de sus alumnos, sino también su propia*

disposición, y en todo momento su identificación con el sentido laico de la República y su propósito de servirla» (Capitán Díaz, 2002: 283). As we will see, this echoed the pledges of hostility to religion imposed upon Mexican teachers at the same period.

Domingo «issued another decree authorizing district education inspectors to make temporary arrangements in areas where new classrooms were badly needed but for various reasons could not be constructed». This in effect authorized what became a series of takeovers or confiscations of private schools and other facilities.

One educational effort of the Second Republic which has become surrounded by a halo in historical memory is the so-called *misiones pedagógicas*. Efforts had been made by Catholic movements to bring culture to remote rural areas, and a few weeks before the establishment of the Second Republic a royal decree established a commission to organize pedagogical missions to improve the quality of teaching. The new government in May 1931 confirmed the *misiones pedagógicas, «encargado de difundir la cultura general, la moderna orientación docente y la educación ciudadana en aldeas, villas y lugares, con especial atención a los intereses espirituales de la población rural»* (Samaniego Boneu, 1977: 99-100).

The emphasis shifted to the general provision of cultural as well as political enlightenment, especially as the government became concerned about mobilizing popular support. The «missionaries» would not only work to improve the local school, but would organize events for children and adults, concerts, and films. As the leadership of the *misiones pedagógicas* admitted, the title was ambiguous and did not make clear that their purposes were political and cultural as well as pedagogical:

> *«Nacía así —escribía Millán Sánchez— una de las más bellas realizaciones de la Escuela de la República. Su misión esencial consistía, según afirmaba el preámbulo de su decreto de creación, en trasladar a cada uno de los rincones de nuestra geografía, aun a aquéllos más apartados, el aliento de la civilización. Se pretendía que todos y cada uno de nuestros conciudadanos participasen en los goces espirituales y técnicos que hasta el momento habían estado reservados con exclusividad a los grandes núcleos urbanos y a las clases dirigentes»* (Millán Sánchez, 1983: 299).

Between September 1931 and the end of 1933, it is reported, there were seventy «missions» which visited three hundred communities. As described by Millán Sánchez: *«Al anochecer […] se produce entonces la exposición a través de la charla de aquellos temas que pueden resultar de un máximo interés para los concurrentes, y muy especialmente se dedica un tiempo a la discusión de la nueva Constitución republicana y al análisis de los derechos y deberes de todos los ciudadanos en el contexto de la nueva situación política»* (Millán Sánchez, 1983: 295).

It is not clear whether anyone asked the peasants whether they would have been more grateful for some help that changed the difficult circumstances of their lives. There were critics from both Left and Right who pointed this out at the time. Coming out of the intellectual tradition of the Institucion Libre de Enseñanza, many of the *misioneros* believed that the backwardness of rural Spain was a cultural problem that could be addressed in part at least by concerts and the distribution of books to rural libraries; we may ask whether the *misiones pedagógicas* were as innocently unpolitical as a recent commemorative volume suggests.

As we have seen, the «radical» agenda of the Spanish Second Republic was directed more against the influence and institutions of the Catholic Church than it was against the existing economic system. *«A lo largo de la existencia de la Segunda República* —Millán Sánchez reports— *no encontramos un solo momento en el que la pervivencia de las clases sociales sea puesta en duda. En ningún momento entre 1931 y 1936 la estructura*

económica capitalista es puesta en tela de juicio por el nuevo régimen. En ningún momento se ponen en práctica nacionalizaciones que hagan peligrar los privilegios de los grupos financieros. Por el contrario, los republicanos de izquierda impiden el acceso al poder de los socialistas de modo directo, como una garantía frente a los grupos financieros. El propio Azaña, representante de una república burguesa, se enfrentará con las tensiones anarco-sindicalistas. No hay intento de transformación social» (Millán Sánchez, 1983: 332).

In the final phase of the Republic, the agenda of the government in education underwent an evolution, from a focus on making the system more equitable for bright and ambitious youth from worker and peasant backgrounds to using it as an instrument of political mobilization. Increasingly, the goal of the government, according to García Regidor, was to *«articular todos los niveles de la enseñanza en la "enseñanza del Estado" y, por otro, lograr, de acuerdo con la ideología de clase que representaba el socialismo, la "igualdad absoluta" para la instrucción pública y la igualdad de oportunidades para todas las clases sociales. Para ello era necesaria una modificación de la realidad educativa existente y favorecer así el acceso de las clases populares a la segunda enseñanza y aun a la enseñanza superior, tradicionalmente accesibles tan sólo a las clases acomodadas»* (García Regidor, 1994: 820).

The Socialists, In their parliamentary program adopted in July 1931, had promised they would *«cuidará primordialmente de defender la escuela única y laica, con sus órganos sociales y económicos complementarios, defendiendo asimismo que la aptitud sea la condición decisiva para participar en las enseñanzas que la vocación demande»* (Meer, 1978: 208). Article 48 of the Constitution adopted a few months later called explicitly for common or unified (*única* or *unificada*) schools to serve all Spanish schoolchildren without divisions on the basis of social class or, by implication, of religion.

This phrase had come to play an important role in education debates in Spain, echoing those in France (*l'école unique*) and Germany (*Einheitsschule*), in the 1920s and, as in the other countries, was subject to several interpretations. It could mean the only school allowed (thus the monopolistic state school) or it could mean the school which all children, whatever their social class origin or academic aptitude, would attend together; often the two meanings were conflated with little concern for logic. Marcelino Domingo wrote, in 1932, *«[l]a escuela única […] equivale a abrir paso al talento. A borrar la desigualdad más irritante, más injusta y más perturbadora que existe, la desigualdad ante la cultura»*. Several years later, articles in *Izquierda Republicana* insisted *«que la enseñanza sea función única y exclusiva del Estado»*, and that *«[a]l niño y a la sociedad actual les es necesaria la escuela laica y única»* (Palmero Cámara, 1980: 45 y 73-74). This emphasis on monopoly and universality was the basis of criticism of the government's inadequate efforts, since, as Samaniego Boneu points out, *«escuela única supone en principio: primero, una gran exclusión, la de todo otro tipo de institución educativa; ella no admite rivales, ni competencias, ni ayudas, y en segundo lugar, una total extensión: abarcar todos los niños y jóvenes de la comunidad entera y a través del pleno periodo de su formación general y profesional»* (Samaniego Boneu, 1977: 383).

Unfortunately, the effort to turn popular schooling into an instrument of political mobilization took priority, in the last, radical period of the Second Republic, over simply improving its extent and coverage as an instrument of equal opportunity. «The moment has come», proclaimed a Republican newspaper in 1931, «to redeem Spain through the school». In Samaniego Boneu's words: *«El significado último de escuela única, o unificada, era el de una escuela no clasista, abierta de modo especial a los trabajadores. Pero se convertía en un movimiento socioeducativo que hacía de la escuela "el arma ideológica de la revolución española", en frase del propio director general, y que chocaba con la concepción institucionista opuesta a cualquier tipo de dogmatismos, de rigidez, basada en la solidaridad, la libertad, la unidad entre los*

hombres… Así, pues, el tema de la educación y de la cultura se presentó en la España republicana como un tema conflictivo, como una "batalla" en la que se debatían posturas no sólo culturales, sino mentales, religiosas, sociopolíticas; enfrentamiento que perduró a lo largo del quinquenio republicano y que afectó a la obra llevada a término por los distintos responsables de la instrucción nacional» (Samaniego Boneu, 1994: 808).

Teachers were expected to be enthusiastic supporters of the political agenda of the government. «Professional formation in the normal schools was significantly politicized, and the pressures to join a political party were, in some cases, suffocating.» The first director of elementary education, Rodolfo Llopis, had published in 1929 an admiring book on how the Soviets were using schools to transform the Russian people (*Cómo se forja un pueblo: la Rusia que yo he visto*). Llopis and others were determined to make schools «the ideological weapon of the Spanish revolution» (Capitán Díaz, 2002: 292; García Hoz, 1980: 269; Samaniego Boneu, 1994: 807-810). In *La revolución en la escuela* (1933) he wrote that: *«La revolución que aspira a perdurar acaba refugiándose en la pedagogía. Una revolución es auténtica, perdurable, cuando realiza plenamente su ciclo. Y ese ciclo termina... cuando se revolucionan las conciencias, cuando en cada conciencia y en cada espíritu se hace la revolución. ¿Quién ha de hacer esa revolución en las conciencias y en los espíritus? Para nosotros no hay duda. Esa revolución ha de ser obra de los educadores, de la escuela: ¡hay que apoderarse del alma de los niños! Ése es el grito, el lenguaje pedagógico de la revolución»* (Samaniego Boneu, 1977: 189-190).

During the last phase of the Republic, in particular, when an «Antifascist School Book» (150,000 printed), an «Antifascist Arithmetic», and other texts were published for schools, the intention of using schooling as an instrument of propaganda was manifest.

In July 1936, of course, the revolt of much of the leadership of the army — in an old Spanish (and Spanish-American) tradition of *pronunciamentos* by military leaders exasperated by the actions of civilian leadership — led to the devastating Civil War which caused more than 500,000 deaths over the next three years. Both sides resorted to massacres of perceived enemies within their areas of control; of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, for example, 165 were killed.

In August of the same year, as reported by Fernández Soria, the insurgent leadership, *«consciente de que la instrucción primaria es la "piedra fundamental del Estado", encomienda a los alcaldes el cuidado de que la enseñanza "responda a las conveniencias nacionales" y "a las orientaciones del nuevo Estado"»* (Fernández Soria, 1994: 843). Over the next few years, they «purified» the teaching force, regarded by them as permeated with Socialists and Communists. One quarter of all teachers were fired or otherwise sanctioned, often by posting to remote villages where they suffered in quasi-exile for many years.

Unlike its allies Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, however, the official party of the regime which would complete its victory in March 1939, the Falange, did not use schooling as an instrument of ideological transformation. The alliance of the Franco regime with the Catholic Church was too important to be risked by a confrontation with the Church over schooling. As early as August 1936, the Nationalist regime ordered teachers to use Catholic religious and moral principles as the basis of their teaching and by late September had banned secular schools completely, proclaiming that *«la escuela nacional ha dejado de ser laica, las enseñanzas de la Religión e Historia Sagrada son obligatorias y forman parte de la labor escolar»* (Navarro Sandalinas, 1990: 47).

Although the Falangist victory could theoretically have *«significado la exaltación del papel del Estado como rector único y absoluto de la educación y la transmisión a la infancia de unos contenidos racistas y belicistas, en plena conformidad con los regímenes totalitario-fascistas al modo*

italo-alemán, en los que siempre quedó bien clara la separación entre Iglesia y Estado», this would have led to a fundamental conflict with the Catholic Church, a conflict which, as Navarro Sandalinas points out, the Franco regime could not afford and did not want. As a result, Franco was content to allow the Church to reclaim its traditional influence over public as well as private schools, and *«[n]o apreciamos diferencias de fondo entre lo que se enseñaba en la España de Franco y lo que se enseñaba en la España de siempre»* (Navarro Sandalinas, 1990: 40-42, 63 y 92).

In contrast with the total mobilization of youth in Italian Fascist and German Nazi (and Soviet Communist) organizations, the *Frente de Juventudes* in Spain enrolled fewer than 30 percent of Spanish youth between 1943 and 1956.

One of the great contradictions of the Falange, in fact, was that its desire to promote a devotion to the State — as in Germany and France — through schooling while also promoting Catholicism, was that it was a long-standing Catholic principle to oppose any definition by the State of the purposes of education, any «stratification» of schooling. When an official commission from the new government's primary education administration visited schools in Italy and Germany, it was very negatively impressed by the racism and antichristianism of the Nazis and recommended strongly against imitating their schools. *«El fascismo, en España —concluded Navarro Sandalinas— eran himnos, retratos, liturgias y fraseología vacía. Muy poco enemigo para la Iglesia... a menos que Hitler ganara la guerra»* (Navarro Sandalinas, 1990: 94-95 y 98).

It is curious that, while historical accounts of the Second Republic make frequent and appropriate reference to the influence of developments in the Soviet Union on the Left Republican and Socialist politicians and education reformers in Spain, they seldom mention the parallels in Mexico. It seems unlikely that the Spanish Left was unaware of the Mexican *misiones culturales* when planning their own *misiones* to rural communities across Spain. García Alonso reports that:

> *«[E]n septiembre de 1931, Enrique Celaya fue enviado a México con un encargo concreto: el estudio de su ordenación pedagógica, "fijando primordialmente la atención en aquellos ramos de la instrucción pública que más interés pueden tener para nosotros". Se trataba de acumular información sobre aspectos que pudieran ayudar a resolver los acuciantes problemas estructurales que tenía la educación rural española, buscándola en aquellos países que se habían propuesto anteriormente una empresa semejante. Celaya se encontró con un modelo útil en su organización, pero inaplicable en la práctica. El principal objetivo, por ejemplo, de las misiones culturales mexicanas era crear una identidad compartida en un Estado con enormes desequilibrios étnicos y sociales, explorar in situ el alma auténtica de la raza, para así poden exaltar sus valores positivos, desterrando los negativos»* (García Alonso, 2006: 193).

One would like to know more about this report, and other efforts to follow the developments in Mexico. It seems unlikely, for example, that the intensely anti-clerical activists who dominated the Spanish government in the first and third phases of the Republic were not interested in the even more intense anti-clericalism of the Mexican regime throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Certainly the developments in Mexico were reported in the Catholic press in Spain, as in December 1932 when the Madrid daily *El Debate* criticized the Spanish government's assault on Catholic schools by warning that *«[h]acerse cargo de toda la enseñanza es una aventura de la que México, Rusia y Francia ofrecen ya resultados lamentables»* (Molero Pintado, 1977: 330). Two years later, Pope Pius XI warned Spain not to follow the examples of Mexico and Russia. But it is not our purpose here to show specific historical influences, but, by considering the parallels between the cases of Mexico and Spain, to understand better the use of government schooling as an instrument of cultural and ideological transformation.

Just as the Spanish Second Republic came under attack, a sympathetic Mexican-American observer of the educational system in Mexico noted that: «[T]he complete acceptance of indoctrination is the most striking note in present-day educational thought in Mexico. The schools are not merely educational plants where children and adults learn the fundamentals of literature and mathematics. The schools are organs of propaganda. They are active agents in a plan to change the social and economic order [...] the schools attempt to develop the people's ways of thinking and modes of activity along channels which are in keeping with the ideology of the party in power» (Sánchez, 1936: 93).

George Sánchez was describing a process which had begun nearly twenty years earlier, with the 1917 Constitution, which declared education to be a function of the central government and made religious elementary schools illegal. While the direct control and funding of schools remained in the hands of state and local governments, this was modified in the early 1920s as the federal government, impatient with the lack of revolutionary fervor shown by subordinate officials, began to create its own schools. As Sanchez wrote in 1936, these «schools first sought to become community-centred organizations as contrasted with child-centred schools or institutions whose activities revolved around traditional subject matter. Having achieved this through "The House of the People", "The School of Action", "The School of Work", and through the aggressive activity of the *misioneros* and Cultural Missions [see below], the federal government was ready to take the next step in its educational plan. Within the past two years schools have been given an additional function, represented by the name by which the federal school is now known, "The Socialistic School". The schools are no longer to be satisfied with an intensive campaign to raise the social and economic level of the communities in which they operate; they are to become active forces in moulding public opinion towards a better understanding and an acceptance of the ideals of socialistic government» (Sánchez, 1936: 101).

The complicated developments in Mexican popular schooling in the 1920s and 1930s — and the strong reactions to them — can be considered from at least three perspectives, though these were very much inter-twined: determination to extend the authority of the State and the «Revolutionary» political party; determination to reshape the Mexican people, including especially the «backward» Indian and *mestizo* peasants; and hostility to the Catholic Church and, though to a lesser extent, to the influence of religion in general.

One reason that the post-revolutionary Federal Government devoted so much attention to popular education with a focus on cultural change, Mary Kay Vaughan suggests, was because «it was one mandate of the Revolution upon which most agreed and one which did not challenge existing property relationships. It was also an important means of securing loyalty to the new state» (Vaughan, 1982: 134). As we have seen, the factions which made up the governing coalition in Republican Spain found a similar emphasis on cultural change a useful point of agreement which did not require difficult decisions about land reform and industrial relations.

Plutarco Elías Calles, who dominated Mexican government between 1920 and 1934, had an obsession with confronting the Catholic Church, even after it had been greatly weakened by a series of hostile measures and did not pose any sort of threat to the regime; he and other members of the revolutionary elite sought to achieve an unchallenged spiritual as well as political dominance, to *«redimir al pueblo»* through creating *«hombres nuevos»* believing as fervently in the Revolution as the unredeemed Mexican people had believed in Christianity.

The rhetoric of the dominant party was all about social justice, redistribution of land, and the interests of the proletariat, and by the mid-thirties there was much talk about promoting socialism through popular education. In fact, however, even the radical turn which the government

took in the mid-thirties «somewhat ironically contributed to a consolidation of state bureaucracies and greater state control over peasant and worker organizations». For all the talk about community-level engagement, *«la educación socialista fue promovida por algunos grupos de personas, estudiantes, maestros y líderes políticos, aunque la iniciativa partió probablemente de algunas camarillas políticas interesadas en implantada. En el México postrevolucionario así han funcionado las cosas: de arriba hacia abajo»* (Lerner, 1979: 67).

The claims of the central State were by no means welcome in many regions which had always enjoyed considerable autonomy, and there was often resistance at the village level as well. In the 1930s, a pamphlet distributed by the *Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia* called upon parents to «Defend your children! Stop the state from possessing everything […] Industry, agriculture, commerce…, the entire life of our Patria!» (Vaughan, 1997: 91).

As in France between the wars, and as in Mussolini's Italy, a symbolic change was made in the name of the agency of the national government responsible for promoting popular schooling, from *«Instrucción Pública»* to *«Educación Pública»*. Going well beyond «instruction» in reading and geography and other skills and knowledge, the broader meaning of «education» referred to the shaping of attitudes and loyalties; the change of name was at the same time a statement of intention. In its effort to achieve total control over its population, a well-informed North American observer noted: «[L]ike both Fascist and Communistic States of Europe, the Mexican Government sees the importance of the youth of the nation. Less than a year ago General Calles said, "We must now enter and take possession of the consciences of the children and the consciousness of the young, because they do belong and should belong to the community. They belong to the collectivity". True enough if it means what it ought to mean. But as far as we can judge the "collectivity" seems to be little more than a political party […] There are a good many analogies to what has been going on in Germany» (MacFarland, 1935: 20).

MacFarland was referring to the July 1934 *«Grito de Guadalajara»*, in which Calles proclaimed that:

> *«La Revolución dijo, no ha terminado. Sus eternos enemigos la acechan y tratan de hacer nugatorios sus triunfos. Es necesario que entremos al nuevo periodo de la Revolución, al que yo llamaría el periodo de la revolución psicológica o de conquista espiritual; debemos entrar en ese periodo y apoderarnos de las conciencias de la niñez y de la juventud, porque la juventud y la niñez son y deben pertenecer a la Revolución. Es absolutamente necesario desalojar al enemigo de esa trinchera y debemos asaltarla con decisión, porque allí está la clerecía, me refiero a la educación, me refiero a la escuela. Sería una torpeza muy grave, sería delictuoso para los hombres de la Revolución que no supiéramos arrancar a la juventud de las garras de la clerecía, de las garras de los conservadores»* (Larroyo, 1970: 490).

To achieve these ends, the school could not continue to be «neutral», the meaning assigned by liberals to the requirement, in the 1917 Constitution, that education be «*laica*». For the uneasy coalition which had drafted the 1917 language, *«el laicismo es un concepto "cómodo" por ambiguo»* (Lerner, 1979: 13); for the «Revolutionary» leadership, it was essential that this ambiguity be rejected.

Lázaro Cárdenas (President 1934-1940), who took advantage of the controversies caused by Calles's radical turn to end his influence over national policy, was at least equally radical in his assertion of the State's right to gain control of the minds of children. In 1932 he declared: *«El laicismo, que deja en libertad a los padres para inculcar a sus hijos las modalidades espirituales que mayor arraigo tienen en su hogar, prácticamente produce resultados negativos en la escuela, porque quita a ésta la posibilidad de*

unificar las conciencias hacia el fin por el cual viene luchando la Revolución, consistente en impartir a los hombres y pueblos nociones claras de los conceptos racionales en que se mueve la vida…».

Similarly, in 1934, Cárdenas objected to the liberal interpretation of «*laica*» as neutrality, insisting that it represented: «*La subsistencia del texto* [of the 1917 Constitution] *y la superviviencia anacrónica de su interpretación liberalista, [que] mantienen al Estado como neutral en contra de la función activa que le señala el moderno Derecho Público y obligan al Gobierno de la Revolución a reformarlo para continuar inquebrantable su compromiso de emancipación espiritual y material de la población mexicana*» (Larroyo, 1970: 489).

The rejection of neutrality in education lad to amendment of article 3 of the Constitution, prescribing the goals of education, with the new language mandating that «education which the State imparts will be socialist and in addition to excluding any religious doctrine, will combat fanaticism and prejudices», another way of saying «religion», especially as represented by the Catholic Church.

In a memorandum to Cárdenas, Calles pointed out that «the state has a perfect right to decide the orientation of education, in accordance with the doctrine and principles which it upholds, "and this is what is being done at present in Russia, Germany and Italy"» (Meyer, 1976: 204).

Undoubtedly, as this association of ideas suggests, the efforts by the self-described «Revolutionary» party and its leaders were influenced by the example set by the young Soviet Union. There can be no doubt that a very similar ambition animated the educational efforts of the leadership of «Revolutionary» Mexico at its most radical phase in the 1920s and 1930s. As one of their apologists from the United States wrote, «if Mexico had to await the slow and tedious process of education of children only and of a standard programme of teacher-training, with the resultant delay in popular enlightenment and community development, the reforms of the revolution would be delayed for at least one or two generations». All rhetoric about grass-roots initiatives aside, «the federal administration is the voice of the victorious revolutionaries and, therefore, the proper agency in which to vest the responsibility for waging a nationalistic cultural revolution» (Sánchez, 1936: 94 y 100), intended to bring about fundamental changes in the perspectives, beliefs, and ways of life of the great majority of the Mexican people. Despite a great deal of rhetoric about the glories of the pre-Columbian past and the beauties of *indio* and *campesino* culture, it has been well said that «Modern Mexico has been formed by men who despised ancient Mexico» (Meyer, 1976: 31).

In support of its mission to transform the Mexican people through education, the federal authorities sent teams of educators referred to as «missionaries» into selected villages, just as would occur under the Spanish Second Republic a decade later. Sanchez described them as urban idealists knowing little about the actual conditions under which peasants — many of them indigenous peoples speaking little or no Spanish, «the *misioneros* had only the revolutionary spirit to guide them […] In a strange region and among strange people, they "sold" education to the *indios* and *campesinos*» (Sánchez, 1936: 68-69).

One of the curious features of this effort at cultural transformation is that the urban «progressives» who promoted it often insisted that the goal was to replace individualism with cooperation and a willingness to sacrifice for collective interests, virtues that were in fact much more characteristic of traditional village life than of the intensely competitive «Revolutionary Vanguard». There are indications, in fact, that the zeal of some of the missionary educators went well beyond that of the national leaders, for many of whom words like «socialism» served a largely symbolic purpose. A well-informed North American visitor in the early 1930s reported

that he had «met a brilliant and clever woman who is employed by the Department of Education to visit the communities in its interest. She declared that the government is really capitalistic. The only way out is to educate the people to the ideal of Communism and to ignore both the Church and the government» (MacFarland, 1935: 196-197). It was, in fact, because in general the national policymakers were not willing to undertake widespread and fundamental structural reforms that aimed at producing the rural sector of small-landowners and cooperative farmers that they claimed to seek, that they acted as if schools alone could solve the problems of poverty and inequality. In support of these grassroots efforts, Marxist historians produced new textbooks that «portrayed Mexican history as a constant struggle of the oppressed masses against the capitalist classes, imperialist interlopers, and the Roman Catholic Church» (González, 2002: 241).

The federal teachers found it difficult to distinguish, in the local communities, between what were cultural practices best left alone and what were forms of economic oppression to be challenged. This would become a source of major conflict with respect to religious practices.

The «cultural missions» were short-term interventions at the village level by a team that sought to provide training to the poorly-educated village teachers, as well as to engage the villagers on many different levels, precisely as would occur in Spain starting a decade later. José Vasconcelos, the intellectual who was appointed as the first Minister of Education in October 1921, described them as imitating the Catholic friars who went to the indigenous peoples in the 16th century, though he expressed regret that, because of their families and their lack of a spiritual vision, they could not be as whole-heartedly committed as the friars had been. Because of the demanding qualities that he sought in his *misioneros*, he arranged to pay them more than other teachers, and he advertised for artists, poets, musicians to join this elite cadre (Vasconcelos, 1982: 20 y 124-125), very much as would occur in Spain in the early 1930s.

A primary target of these missions was the traditional rural schoolteacher, with the goal of converting him into an agent of social change and a representative of the government. The cultural mission became an «agency for inspiring the teachers with their socializing responsibilities and with a true conception of the part which they are to play in changing the social order. This function involves training teachers in the theory of education, in socialistic philosophy, and in practices for the social and economic rehabilitation of the masses». Thus the cultural mission was explicitly a «source of propaganda in behalf of socialistic methods and ideals» (Sánchez, 1936: 74). Through this transformed and expanded role of the school, Vasconcelos and others believed, the Catholic Church would be displaced as «the principal ideological institution of society» (Vaughan, 1982: 141).

In order to prepare the staff of the cultural missions for this task, the federal education authority offered a series of courses through its Institute of Socialistic Orientation, including «Socialistic Philosophy», «History of Labour Movements», «Proletarian Art and Literature», «History of Religion», and «Social Sciences in the Socialistic Elementary School».

The development of the *Teatro de Muñecos*, inspired by Bolshevik examples, was stimulated by the Department of Fine Arts. Open-air theaters were a widespread and popular cultural tool. Each rural school was supposed to construct one to «enlighten the masses so as to banish their fanatic and superstitious notions». Throughout the country students and teachers performed anticlerical comedies to audiences of children and adults. Touring companies like the *Compañía Fronteriza* traveled from village to village, offering works which featured depraved priests during confession. Anticlerical works were performed during cultural festivals and school fairs (Bantjes, 1997: 113).

As a North American sympathizer pointed out, «[o]ne important work of the Cultural Mission

is to serve as an agency to spread the ideas of Socialism and to explain it and to gain friends for the government's program» (Booth, 1941: 148).

But, as we have seen, the effort to promote socialism within an essentially-unchanged economic system was in some respects an elaborate game. The North American observer was assured that «[t]he Mission proposes to give the instructor a proletarian consciousness and a feeling of personal responsibility in the creation of a new order» (Booth, 1941: 146-147). At the national level, too, there were convinced advocates for a «socialist education» that would prepare youth to work and fight for economic transformation. Labor leader Lombarda Toledano told the Sixth Convention of the *Confederación Regional de Obreros Mexicanos* in 1924 that: *«[L]a escuela del proletariado no puede ser, por tanto, ni laica, ni católica, ni "racionalista", ni de acción. Debe ser dogmática, en el sentido de afirmativa, imperativa; enseñará al hombre a producir y a defender su producto; no puede dejar al libre examen ni a la inspiración que a veces ilumina la conciencia de los hombres, su preparación adecuada para la vida […] Preconiza, en suma, una escuela proletaria, socialista, combativa, que oriente y destruya prejuicios»* (Lerner, 1979: 18-19).

Similarly, the Confederación General de Trabajadores demanded that education — including at the university level — be *«antifanática»,* and called for a purge of teachers who were not in agreement with this ideological perspective (Lerner, 1979: 31). In practice, though, it was hard to translate these demands into concrete classroom practices. The concept of «socialist education» remained poorly-defined; as late as 1936, a spokesman for the national education secretariat admitted that: *«La escuela socialista que andamos buscando ahora, con tanto anhelo, y para la cual no hemos podido formular la doctrina todavía, ni hemos encontrado aún las prácticas que deben integrarla. No la hemos podido encontrar, pero estén seguros, señores maestros, de que ella existe y de que debe llamarse sin duda escuela proletaria»* (Lerner, 1979: 83).

In the general confusion over the meaning of «socialist education», a correspondent for the New York Times identified 33 different definitions! For rural schoolteachers, the goal of transforming the *campesinos* and *indios* through «socialist education» was pursued with less and less conviction. *«En los primeros años del cardenismo, entre 1933 y 1935, se sentía cierto entusiasmo, pero ya en 1936 había desilusión y se aconsejaba moderación. Varios maestros entrevistados por De la Rosa en 1937 insistían en que era conveniente alejarse del radicalismo político y religioso porque únicamente causaba confusión y daño»* (Lerner, 1979: 83, 93 y 109).

Calles and other leaders of «revolutionary» Mexico were convinced that the disappointing results of their efforts to reshape the *campesinos* and *indios* who formed the great majority of the Mexican population were the fault of the machinations of the Catholic Church. In fact, the hostility toward the Catholic Church among the governing elite was very little different from that which had existed a hundred years earlier. Many of the group were Freemasons, as was also the case in similar circles in France and Spain, and repeated traditional charges that had been used many times before.

A well-informed North American suggested a more tactical reason for the constant attacks on the Catholic Church as, «at least in part, in order to unify the government forces. It is constantly charged that the unifying of nationalistic with anti-church appeals is to divert the mind of the people and cover up the failure of the government to live up to its promises» (MacFarland, 1935: 44).

There was a third reason to attack the Church: the growing influence, in the early years of the 20th century, of Catholic social movements inspired by the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* and by similar movements in France and elsewhere, including Spain. «Catholic Worker Circles» were organized and by 1911 «there were more than twenty-five locals with a total membership

of between eight and nine thousand, and that year the movement was strengthened by the formation of the Confederation of Catholic Workers of the Mexican Republic». These developments — just as in Spain — were perceived by the Left as profoundly threatening. The *Confederación Regional de Obreros Mexicanos*, a close ally of the revolutionary government, was unwilling to tolerate a rival claiming to organize and to speak for workers. By some accounts, it was this rivalry which provided the spark, in the mid-1920s, for confrontation with the Catholic Church, including bombings of churches and assassinations of priests (Bailey, 1974: 17; González, 2002: 210-211 y 269).

Whatever the motivations, the official position of the government was made clear by Emilio Portes Gil, who served at various times not only as interim President but as Interior Minister, Attorney General, and in other important capacities over a period of twenty years. As Foreign Minister in 1935, Portes Gil published an official report to «set forth the criminal interference of the Catholic clergy in the Republic of Mexico, in past times and at this day», asserting that «the Church was an institution fundamentally devoted to the exploitation of everybody: Spaniards and Indians, rich and poor». This had placed a responsibility on «the Revolutionary Government in its open and resolute campaign against religious fanaticism and the all-absorbent power of the Church» (MacFarland, 1935: 115, 117 y 119).

Something very similar to the anti-Catholic government policies which were pursued in France several decades before, and would be employed in Spain in the early 1930s, occurred in «Revolutionary» Mexico as well, including adoption of legal restrictions on schooling associated in any way with religious groups, and also the outlawing of the religious teaching orders which had provided much Catholic schooling in Mexico as in France and Spain. What was enacted into law in France in 1905 was echoed in Mexico in 1917, when the new Constitution provided, in Article 3, that:

> *«La enseñanza es libre; pero será laica la que se dé en los establecimientos oficiales de educación, lo mismo que la enseñanza primaria, elemental y superior que se imparta en los establecimientos particulares.*
> *Ninguna corporación religiosa ni ministro de ningún culto podrá establecer o dirigir escuelas de instrucción primaria»* (Larroyo, 1970: 478).

President Plutarco Elías Calles declared that the Catholic church was «a perpetual menace to the Mexican state and a permanent obstacle to social progress».

The promulgation of the so-called Calles Law on 14 June [1926] codified the anticlerical articles of the constitution, legalized the seizures and expulsions that had already occurred, and gave the government the right to appoint and dismiss clergy and regulate the number of priests in a region. Furthermore, the Calles Law prohibited the reaching of religion in primary schools, forbade clergy or members of religious orders from teaching in primary schools, prohibited foreigners from acting in a religious capacity, banned religious orders, instituted penalties for political action by clergy, and confiscated all church property in the Federal District and territories (Schell, 2003: 180).

In reaction to these measures, again as had occurred in France, the Catholic hierarchy condemned the state schools in July 1926 and urged parents, under threat of excommunication, not to send their children to «schools without God». In a virtually unprecedented measure, the Vatican and the Mexican bishops agreed to close churches and cease celebrating public masses, though priests continued to offer the sacraments privately. In the words of their pastoral letter, «As the law does not recognize the right of Catholic primary schools to impart the religious education to which they are obligated [to] by their nature, we charge the consciences of the heads of families that they prevent their children from attending those educational plants where they will endanger their faith and good customs

and where the texts violate the religious neutrality recognized by the Constitution itself» (Sánchez, 1936: 175; Schell, 2003: 180).

The opposition of the Catholic hierarchy was deeply resented by the governing elite, and their determination to use the schools to root out the lingering religious beliefs and practices of millions of Mexicans was exacerbated by the *«Cristero»* rebellion which broke out in a number of provinces. In a judgment no doubt reflecting what he was being told by government officials, the North American sympathizer George Sánchez conceded that: «[T]here are communities that are antagonistic to the educational programme and particularly to the socialistic ideals of the new education. In such cases the villagers, largely because of a fanatical confidence in the political views and activities of the Church, will take every means to thwart the efforts of the missioners […] Mob violence, arising from religious fanaticism and oftentimes incited by outlawed priests, is one of the things which is taken as a matter of course in the daily work of rural education in Mexico» (Sánchez, 1936: 85).

In its concern to ensure that schools fulfill their «defanaticizing» mission, the federal Secretariat of Education developed a pledge for teachers to sign, which included:

> «III. I declare that I am ready to spread without reservation the postulates and principles of Socialism which the National Government stands for.
> IV. I declare *categorically* that I do not profess the Catholic religion nor any other.
> V. I declare *categorically* that I will combat with every means the schemes of the Catholic clergy and other religions.
> VI. I declare *categorically* that I will not practice any religious observance, either internal or external, of the Roman Catholic or any other religion» (MacFarland, 1935: 101).

As in France, Spain, and other countries where the government took measures against Catholic schooling, the effect on the provision of schooling was very damaging, since the public schools were not able to provide an adequate replacement. Many Mexican parents and teachers did not supinely accept the secularization of schooling. It was reported that «in Guadalajara 900 primary-school teachers were fired for being Catholic and 22,000 of the 25,000 school-age children ceased attending public school. One report estimated that 2,000,000 students nationally were without a school because of closures, while the government estimated the number at 1,211,937» (Schell, 2003: 185-186).

In 1932, the newly-appointed Minister, Narciso Bassols, undertook to press the campaign more vigorously, plunging ahead to radicalize popular schooling in a manner which provoked a strong reaction, and not only among *campesinos*:

> *«La agitación en torno de la laicitud de la enseñanza tuvo caracteres alarmantes. Los bloques de la Cámara del Congreso de la Unión interpelaron al ministro Bassols. En esa memorable interpelación, la secretaria de Estado señaló un nuevo camino en tan debatido problema, anunciando ya una orientación más radical: "La muerte del prejuicio religioso es, por fortuna, una consecuencia de la educación de las masas. Basta mostrarles con los rudimentos de la cultura el absurdo del prejuicio religioso para que vuelvan sus espaldas a sus antiguos explotadores. Convencida la secretaria de que el opio religioso es un instrumento de sometimiento de las masas trabajadoras, cree también que la liberación económica de campesinos y trabajadores es el otro factor decisivo para limpiar la conciencia de los hombres […] En cuanto a la Escuela secundaria, su incorporación al régimen oficial habra de ser laica, como lo es este regimen"»* (Larroyo, 1970: 487).

In 1935, the *Plan de Acción de la Escuela Socialista* was announced. Although it honored principles of class struggle, suggesting that the curriculum nurture in the child «a sentiment of revulsion against the unjust and ignoble in

systems of exploitation», its major thrust was «defanaticization». There were purges of teachers considered insufficiently enthusiastic, and the government called for the establishment of Social Action Committees at the school level to «carry out defanaticizing campaigns, prepare for land distribution, form cooperatives, and raise class consciousness through conferences, art, and festival». The Ministry issued a school calendar to replace the religious calendar, with sixty days dedicated to the heroes and representations of the nation and of modernity» (Vaughan, 1997: 35).

It was, of course, at the village and town level that the campaign against religion played itself out. Calles proclaimed that «"[t]he rural teachers are the soldiers that the Revolution uses to conduct a de-fanaticization campaign among the peasant masses" […] In many towns and villages school-teachers and inspectors founded "de-fanaticization committees"» (Bantjes, 1997: 112). We read about a village where the federal schoolteacher «instructed her students to "fight fanaticism". After their daily chores of sweeping the street and burning the garbage, they would go into the homes to search for wooden crosses» to confiscate (Vaughan, 1997: 35).

As might have been expected, many ordinary Mexicans did not welcome this attempt to sweep all vestiges of religion out of their lives. The rebellion of the *cristeros,* a national tragedy comparable to the Civil War in Spain, though less well-known, spread to many parts of the country and tied up the Mexican army and much of the national budget from 1926 to 1929; pacified in 1929 through negotiations with the Catholic hierarchy; these negotiations left many of the rebels feeling betrayed, especially when hundreds of them were hunted down and shot.

Although the government accused the Catholic Church of fomenting the *Cristiada*, in fact the Mexican bishops and especially the Vatican were very uncomfortable with its popular and violent character. Even with the end of the *Cristiada* as an open civil war — after at least 100,000 deaths — there continued to be much resistance to the educational program of the federal authorities. With the drive for «socialist education», school attendance dropped dramatically in the fall of 1934. «In most parts of Puebla, school attendance plummeted in 1935-36.» In 1935, a local official in Zamora reported that only 391 of five thousand children remained in school (González, 2002: 243). President Cárdenas commented on the school boycott in a number of speeches, deploring what he considered the ignorance of *campesinos* which led them to reject what the government was seeking to do for their children. Even the threat of confiscating the land which had recently been distributed was often unavailing. One school inspector reported «it is not possible to come to an understanding because they won't listen to reason and they see the teacher as something noxious. They claim that they are prepared to renounce their agrarian rights, to abandon their plots, but under no circumstances will they enroll their children in the schools» (Becker, 1995: 127-128).

Nor was avoidance of federal schools the only response. «In the south, Mayo rebels assaulted schools, demanded an end to socialist education and local unions, and barred the teachers from communities.» In the Puebla area between 1934 and 1939, at least seventeen teachers were killed (Vaughan, 1979: 62 y 72). Nationwide about a hundred teachers were killed, and several hundred mutilated.

Educational progress could begin again only when the attacks on religion were abandoned. In many communities teachers found it necessary to temper their socialist and antireligious rhetoric in order to get on with their work of instruction — or even to avoid violent attacks. «Community action ensured that the state would incorporate a popular demand it had ignored: respect for local culture and customs.» As a result, by 1939 the project of «socialist education» had been abandoned in the interest of effective political control and educational progress (Vaughan, 1997: 75, 132 y 192).

Conclusions

Government efforts to promote popular schooling in Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s, as we have seen, took place in a context in which schools in many countries were being challenged to play a crucial role in transforming their societies. Now, there is no question that expanded schooling often *does* lead to profound social changes, and that measures to make schools more effective and teachers more competent are an important investment for social justice as well as for economic progress. There was certainly no lack of concern and effort about popular schooling in this period in Mexico; it is curious, however, that the attention given to popular schooling during the «Revolutionary» period of 20th century Mexico did not produce significant positive results; according to Vaughan, «contrary to the hopes of its apologists, education has not offered a significant exodus from poverty in the post-revolutionary period. Despite continuous expansion of state schooling since 1920, poverty in Mexico was more pervasive in 1970 than it was in 1950, and social stratification increased in the same period. In 1960, Mexico's coefficient of income inequality was higher than that of any other major Latin American country […] In 1970, the average level of schooling was only 1.6 years; of 100 children entering primary schools, 65 could not complete their studies. Figures such as these have led one scholar to observe that no major Latin American government has done more for its economic elites and less for the poorest sectors of its population, despite Mexico's being the only Latin American country to undergo a social revolution in the first half of this century» (Vaughan, 1982: 2-3).

During the period of the «school of the people» and the «socialist school», so lauded by North American observers like John Dewey in 1926, George Sánchez in 1936, and George Booth in 1941, the national literacy rate actually fell, according to the government's own statistics, between 1930 and 1940, from 30 to 26 percent for boys between the ages of ten and fourteen and from 25 to 22 percent for girls (Vaughan, 1997: 77). What went wrong? The most likely explanation is that this campaign was a classic instance of the attempt to impose from above on an unwilling people a set of fundamental changes that they were unwilling to accept for themselves, much less for their children. It was based upon a profound misjudging of how cultural change occurs, and of the role of religion in giving meaning and structure to people's lives. Arguably, the most notable effect of the whole campaign was to stir up a bitter civil war, the *Cristiada*, in which countless villages were devastated, a hundred thousand men killed in battle, and numberless women and children slaughtered.

Schools can indeed contribute greatly to all sorts of positive social outcomes, but only if they work *with* and not *against* families, with and not against their deepest convictions about what matters in life, for themselves and for their children. In both Spain and Mexico, the social justice goals proclaimed by the Left produced meagre results, in part because the leadership was diverted from taking the concrete measures that would have made a real difference by an unnecessary and ideologically-driven assault on the Catholic Church and on Catholic schools. This assault, in turn, led to both passive and violent resistance which, in the Spanish case, brought down the Second Republic in a brutal civil war accompanied by atrocities on both sides. In Mexico, the *Cristiada* in the late 1920s led to a stalemate resolved by an agreement between the government and the Catholic hierarchy; when it threatened to break out again in the mid-1930s, the astute President Cárdenas, though personally strongly-anticlerical, called off the measures directed against Catholics and their beliefs.

As Vaughan points out, the efforts of the «Revolutionary» leadership in Mexico to associate their efforts to address economic and social issues with an anti-religious agenda was substantially fatal for the former.

The primacy of culture over material issues was evident all over Mexico when the association of socialist education with anti-religiosity provoked

pervasive, active, and fervent protest. The entire project foundered on its attack on religion, which sullied and obfuscated the SEP'S other messages, diminished its mobilizing capacity, and invited conservative non-peasant elites both within and outside the state to reassert control. Religion was not the abstraction envisioned by the SEP. It could not be surgically removed and replaced with a scientific, secular implant. Religion was most often part of a local configuration of power entrenched in the practices of daily life. When it was attacked, its power was reconfirmed, often at the expense of progressive change (Vaughan, 1997: 194).

The attack on Catholic schools and, through state schools, on religious belief in Mexico and in Spain was not simply a serious political mis-calculation; it was required by the nature of the ambition of the Left, the ambition to convert an entire people to a new system of all-encompassing belief. In Spain, as Daniel Payne has written recently, «the political introduction and style of the reforms was badly handled from the beginning, because of the sectarian rhetoric and procedures of the left Republican-Socialist coalition. On some issues an originally nonexistent opposition was stimulated gratuitously, because of the absence of any spirit of conciliation or desire for consensus among the reformers […] Worst of all, of course, were both the style and substance of the religious reforms, conceived as vengeance against religious interests — even though more Spaniards believed in Catholicism than in any other doctrine or political creed — instituting not merely separation of church and state but infringement of civil rights and persecution of religion. There seemed to be a determination to follow the extremist policies of Portugal and Mexico, though the former had already ended in failure and the latter was evolving into an uneasy truce (Payne, 2006: 347).

Schools always seek to affect their pupils, of course, to give them not only new knowledge and skills but also — at least when educators are purposeful about their mission — to develop in them attitudes and perspectives on the world which correspond to some concept of human flourishing. There is nothing sinister about such an intention. The threat to freedom arises when the State seeks to monopolize the possibilities of education, both through schools and through the other ways in which ideas are communicated and beliefs formed. Such efforts were not invented by those in power in Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s, and in Spain in the 1930s, nor even by their contemporaries in Russia and Germany. Plato lays out a blueprint for them in his *Republic*, and the Jacobins under the French Revolution sought unsuccessfully to achieve it.

The nation-building elites who made popular education a priority in the United States and other industrializing nations throughout the nineteenth century had something rather similar in mind. Without intending to suggest a «moral equivalence» between the educational goals of totalitarian regimes and those of liberal democracies, it is appropriate to recognize that few political leaders in times of rapid social change can resist the temptation to seek to promote their own agenda for the future through the instrumentality of schooling — whatever parents want for their children.

Above all, this goal of changing human nature defines totalitarian rule, which is not satisfied with external obedience, with passive acquiescence in absolute rule, but seeks to gain willing inner adherence as well. For a totalitarian regime, control of popular education is a fundamental means of seeking to impose uniformity and adherence to the regime. The child belongs to the State rather than to the family. That parents seek to nurture in their children commitment to a religious tradition, to distinctive values, or indeed to any entity in the civil society that could be a source of competing values is seen as a direct threat to the State's authority.

While an authoritarian regime, like that of Franco, may be satisfied with obedience, a totalitarian

regime seeks *devotion* that will be self-perpetuating. «Anyone seizing power wishes to keep it for a certain length of time; it is however a special feature of people's revolutions to set their goals on the prospect of a boundless future» through «cultivating revolutionary successors» (Bastid, 1970: 16).

But freedom is essential to full human development. Only as individuals exercise their freedom actively in responsible decision-making do they (and thus the societies in which they are participants) grow morally into full humanity. Responsible freedom is thus unavoidably a concern of education, not in the form of indifference to what pupils do and will do, to the choices that they make and will make, but precisely in recognition of the heavy moral significance of such choices.

For those who are parents, the desire to raise children capable of exercising freedom within a context of responsibility exists in tension with the natural desire to pass on an inheritance of convictions and loyalties. All parents, it is safe to say, hope that their children will come to value and live by the convictions by which they themselves have directed and given meaning to their own lives. Thus it is a fundamental anomaly and injustice when the State sets itself up as a rival to parents in shaping the beliefs and loyalties of children. Responsible decision-making by individuals is, in these societies, not permitted in the sphere that parents themselves perceive as being of the greatest moral weight — how their children are educated, what sort of people they will become.

There is no liberal democracy that has not experienced the tension between its educational mission and that of the family, and it has often been the source of major conflict, as in the early 1980s in France and Spain, and since 2006 again in Spain with the controversy over *Educación para la Ciudadanía y los Derechos Humanos*. An educational program by and for the State poses an almost irresistible temptation, for the State's educators, to see themselves as knowing better than parents what is good for their children. Sooner or later, such a *pédagogie d'état* posessevere problems for a democratic society that, through the process of modernization, has become increasingly diverse in values. «Even the well-intentioned state», writes legal philosopher John Robinson, «tends to homogenize its citizens, delegitimizing all loyalties except those that bind the individual to the state […] The family is a natural antidote to the state's totalitarian tendencies […] it generates loyalties that rival in intensity those that the state evokes, and it conveys beliefs that can undermine the ideology that the state is purveying» (Robinson, 1988).

It is characteristic of totalitarian regimes to dismiss dissent as a relic of the «prejudices and ignorance» associated with the older generation. But opposition does not fade away; the instinct of parents to pass on what has shaped and given meaning to their own lives to their children cannot be eradicated so easily. As totalitarian political control slipped in Central and Eastern Europe, one of the focal points of dissatisfaction in each nation was the educational system. Alternative schools were established or revived, proposals to end the government monopoly of schooling were advanced as part of the agenda of political reform, and parents were drawn into the educational process in ways fundamentally different from the «mobilizations» that were a basic tactic of Marxist/Leninist regimes. Through this grass-roots process, the deliberately-suppressed civil society began to reassert itself, just as happened in Mexico and in Spain and will always happen when people have the freedom to make decisions about what is in the best interest of their children.

Referencias bibliográficas

ÁLVAREZ JUNCO, J. y SHUBERT, A. (eds.) (2000). *Spanish History since 1808*, Londres, Arnold.

ÁLVAREZ LÁZARO, P. (1994). Corriente anarquista: Ferrer y la Escuela Moderna, en DELGADO CRIADO, *Historia de le educación en España y América*, Fundación Santa María.

BAILEY, D. C. (1974). *¡Viva Cristo Rey! The Cristero Rebellion and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico,* Austin, University of Texas Press.

BANTJES, A. A. (1997). Idolatry and Iconoclasm in Revolutionary Mexico: The De-Christianization Campaigns, 1929-1940, *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, vol. 13, nº 1, 87-120.

BECKER, M. (1995). *Setting the Virgin on Fire: Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán Peasants, and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

BEREDAY, G. Z. F. (1960). William W. Brickman and Gerald H. Read, *The Changing Soviet School*, Cambridge, Riverside Press.

BOOTH, G. (1941). *Mexico's School-Made Society*, Nueva York, Greenwood Press.

BUKHARIN, N. y PREOBRAZHENSKY, E. (1969). *The ABC of Communism*, traducido por Eden y Cedar Paul, Harmondsworth (UK), Penguin Books.

CAPITÁN DÍAZ, A. (1997). *La educación en la Primera República Española (1873)*, Valencia, NAU Llibres.

CAPITÁN DÍAZ, A. (2002). *Republicanismo y educación en España (1873-1951)*, Madrid, Dykinson.

CARR, R. (1980). *Modern Spain, 1875-1980*, Oxford University Press.

CURTIS, S. A. (2000). *Educating the Faithful: Religion, Schooling, and Society in Nineteenth-Century France*, Dekalb, Northern Illinois University Press.

DELGADO CRIADO, B. (1994a). *Historia de la educación en España y América, volumen 3: La educación en la España contemporánea (1789-1975)*, Madrid, Ediciones Morata.

DELGADO CRIADO, B. (1994b). *La Junta para Ampliación de Estudios.*

EMA FERNÁNDEZ, F. J. (1999). *Educación y sociedad en Pamplona durante la segunda mitad del siglo XIX*, Pamplona, Gobierno de Navarra.

ESTEBAN MATEO, L. y SERRA PONS, I. (1994). Las Misiones Pedagógicas (1931-1936), en DELGADO CRIADO.

FAUBELL ZAPATA, V. Escolapios, en DELGADO CRIADO.

FERNÁNDEZ, H. (2006). Un proyecto colectivo: Misiones Pedagógicas, en OTERO URTAZA.

FERNÁNDEZ SORIA, J. M. (1994). La educación durante la guerra, en DELGADO CRIADO.

GARCÍA ALONSO, Mª (2006). Reflexión sobre los fines v los medios. Las Misiones Pedagógicas en el marco internacional, en OTERO URTAZA.

GARCÍA HOZ, V. (1980). *La educación en la España del siglo XX*, Madrid, Rialp.

GARCÍA REGIDOR, T. (1994). Iglesia y Estado ante la educación, en DELGADO CRIADO.

GIL, P. (1994). Los Hermanos de las Escuelas Cristianas, en DELGADO CRIADO.

GLENN, C. L. (1988). *The Myth of the Common School*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press [también publicado como *El mito de la escuela pública* (con introducción de Javier Restán, Madrid, Editorial Encuentro, 2006].

GONZÁLEZ, M. J. (2002). *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*, University of New Mexico Press.

JACOBSON, S. y MORENO LUZÓN, J. (2000). The political system of the Restoration, 1875-1914: political and social elites, en ÁLVAREZ JUNCO y SHUBERT.

LARROYO, F. (1970). *Historia comparada de la Educación en México*, México D.F., Editorial Porrúa.

LECLERC, G. (1985). *La bataille d'école: 15 siècles d'histoire, 3 ans de combat*, París, Denoël.

LERNER, V. (1979). *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana, Periodo 1934-1940. La Educación Socialista*, México, El Colegio de México.

LINDSAY, M. (1969). Contradictions in a Totalitarian Society, *The China Quarterly,* 39, Julio-septiembre.

LOZANO SEIJAS, C. (1980). *La educación republicana, 1931-1939*, Universidad de Barcelona.

MACFARLAND, C. S. (1935). *Chaos in Mexico: The Conflict of Church and State*, Nueva York, Harper and Brothers.

MARCO, J. Mª (2002). *Francisco Giner de los Ríos: pedagogía y poder*, Barcelona, Ediciones Península.

MARTÍ GILABERT, F. (1991). *Política religiosa de la Restauración 1875-1931*, Madrid, Rialp.

MAYORDOMO, A. (1994). La escuela pública, en DELGADO CRIADO.

MEER, F. de (1978). *La Constitución de la II República: autonomías, propiedad, Iglesia, enseñanza*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra (EUNSA).

MEYER, J. A. (1976). *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People Between Church and State, 1926-1929*, traducido por Richard Southern, Cambridge University Press.

MILLAN, V. C. (1939). *Mexico Reborn*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin.

MILLAN SÁNCHEZ, F. (1983). *La revolución laica. De la Institución Libre de Enseñanza a la Escuela de la República*, Valencia, Fernando Torres.

MOLERO PINTADO, A. (1977). *La reforma educativa de la Segunda República Española, Primer bienio*, Madrid, Santillana.

NAVARRO SANDALINAS, R. (1990). *La enseñanza primaria durante el Franquismo (1936-1975)*, Barcelona, PPU.

NICOLET, C. (1982). *L'idée républicaine en France (1789-1924)*, París, Gallimard.

OTERO URTAZA, E. y GARCÍA ALONSO, Mª (eds.) (2006). *Las Misiones Pedagógicas, 1931-1936*, Madrid, Publicaciones de la Residencia de Estudiantes: Sociedad Estatal de Commemoraciones Culturales.

OTERO URTAZA, E. y GARCÍA ALONSO, Mª (eds.) (2006). Los marineros del entusiasmo en las Misiones Pedagógicas, en OTERO URTAZA, *Las Misiones Pedagógicas, 1931-1936*.

PALMERO CÁMARA, Mª del C. (1990). *Educación y sociedad en la Rioja republicana (1931-1936)*, Salamanca, Universidad Pontífica.

PARTIN, M. O. (1969). *Waldeck-Rousseau, Combes, and the Church: The politics of anticlericalism, 1899- 1905,* Durham, Duke University Press.

PAYNE, S. G. (2006). *The Collapse of the Spanish Republic, 1933-1936: Origins of the Civil War*, New Haven, Yale University Press.

PRELEZZO GARCÍA, J. M. (1994b). La Institución Libre de Enseñanza, en DELGADO CRIADO.

PUELLES BENÍTEZ, M. de (1991). *Educación e ideología en la España contemporánea*, Barcelona, Labor.

REVUELTA GONZÁLEZ, M. (1999). *El anticlericalismo español en sus documentos*, Barcelona, Ariel.

RINGER, F. (1979). *Education and Society in Modern Europe*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

ROBINSON, J. H. (1988). Why Schooling Is So Controversial In America Today, *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics and Public Policy,* 3, 4.

RUIZ RODRIGO, C. (1994). La educación en Valencia, en DELGADO CRIADO.

SALGUERO, M. (1997). *Libertad de cátedra y derechos de los centros educativos*, Barcelona, Ariel.

SAMANIEGO BONEU, M. (1977). *La política educativa de la Segunda República durante el bienio azañista*, Madrid, Escuela de Historia Moderna.

SAMANIEGO BONEU, M. (1994). La educación durante la República y la guerra civil: panorama general, en DELGADO CRIADO.

SÁNCHEZ, G. I. (1936). *Mexico-A Revolution By Education*, Nueva York, The Viking Press.

SÁNCHEZ, J. M. (1987). *The Spanish Civil War as Religious Tragedy*, University of Notre Dame Press.

SANTIAGO SIERRA, A. (1973). *Las Misiones Culturales (1923-1973)*, México D.F., Secretaría de Educación Pública.

SANZ DE DIEGO, R. M. (1994). Jesuitas, en DELGADO CRIADO.

SCHELL, P. A. (2003). *Church and State Education in Revolutionary Mexico City*, Tucson, University of Arizona Press.

TIANA FERRER, A. (1994). Rodolfo Llopis, en DELGADO CRIADO.

TIMASHEFF, N. S. (1942). *Religion in Soviet Russia, 1917-1942*, Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press.

TOWNSON, N. (2000). The Second Republic, 1931-1936: sectarianism, schisms and strife, en ÁLVAREZ JUNCO y SHUBERT.

URZAY BARRIOS, J. Á. (1995). *Educación, cultura, y sociedad en Calatayud durante el primer tercio del siglo XX (1902-1931)*, Zaragoza, Institución Fernando el Católico.

VASCONCELOS, J. (1982). *El Desastre*, México D.F., Fondo de Cultura Económica.

VAUGHAN, M. K. (1982). *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880-1928*, DeKalb, Northern Illinois University Press.

VAUGHAN, M. K. (1997). *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940*, Tucson, University of Arizona Press.

VIÑAO FRAGO, A. (1994a). Los institutos de segunda enseñanza, en DELGADO CRIADO.

VIÑAO FRAGO, A. (1994b). Escolarización y alfabetización (1900-1939), en DELGADO CRIADO.

Resumen

Agendas políticas detrás de la escolarización: México y España en los años treinta

Durante la década de los treinta del siglo XX, muchas voces reclamaban el uso del término «educación popular» para remarcar las sociedades en crisis, mediante la reorganización de la cultura popular y las fidelidades. La influencia internacional jugó un papel fundamental en estos cambios. Este artículo debate los esfuerzos de la Segunda República española para conseguir la transformación social a través de la educación, y cómo este proceso ya había sido puesto en marcha en México durante una década, con diferentes resultados. En ambos casos, invocando la autoridad del Estado contra el rol educativo tradicional de la Iglesia católica, llevó a la resistencia popular a una escolarización de tipo gubernamental, incluyendo una amplia violencia y una frustración última del programa. El artículo sugiere que el monopolio del Estado sobre la escolarización es siempre una fuente de amenaza a la libertad, especialmente cuando un régimen poderoso pretende imponer su perspectiva ideológica.

Palabras clave: *Control estatal, Adoctrinamiento, Educación popular, Anticlericalismo, Resistencia popular.*

Perfil profesional del autor

Charles L. Glenn

Is professor of Educational Leadership and Development at Boston University, where he teaches courses in education history and comparative policy. From 1970 to 1991 he was director of urban education and equity for the Massachusetts Department of Education. Glenn is author of a number of books, including the historical study *The Myth of the Common School* (1988, 2002; Milan 2004; Madrid 2006), *Educational Freedom in Eastern Europe* (1994, 1995), *The Ambiguous Embrace: Government and Faith-based Schools and Social Agencies* (2000), and, with Jan De Groof, *Balancing Freedom, Autonomy, and Accountability in Education (3 volumes, 2004)*.
Correo electrónico de contacto: glennsed@bu.edu