

Caciques and repression facing the secular model of the schools founded from America by the Galician emigration (1923-1936)¹

Caciques e repressão perante o modelo laico das escolas fundadas da América pela emigração Galega (1923-1936)

Caciquismo y represión ante el modelo laicista de las escuelas fundadas desde América por la emigración gallega (1923-1936)

Xosé Manuel Malheiro-Gutiérrez*

ABSTRACT

Between the last part of the XIX century and the first decades of the XX, in a context of intense European emigration, hundreds of thousands of Galician men and women moved massively to diverse regions of America. Despite the harsh conditions of departure the new situation offered positive elements such as, among others, political awareness, its influence on the mutualist associationism and the ethnic solidarity in the place of origin by means of schooling projects intended for popular classes; in some cases, inspired on the modern educational reformist trends that advocated a lay and democratic school. This produced situations of conflict with the local conservative parties, deriving from persecution campaigns during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923-1930) and a more intense repression from the military rebellion and during the

Translated by María Jesús Antelo Santos -E-mail: yourworld.negreira@hotmail.com

* Universidad de la Coruña, UDC, Coruña, España. E-mail: jose.malheirog@udc.gal <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5992-9522>

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period of the Spanish War (1936-1939). This work focusses on the labour of the societies of instruction, members of the Federation of Galician, Agricultural and Cultural Societies of Buenos Aires (Argentina). The consultation of diverse bibliographical newspaper press archives from that period enables us to reconstruct the scenario of persecution and repression in its area of influence, as an example of the perpetrated in general terms in other places in the rest of the country, and of which were victims the promoters of the schooling projects as well as their teachers, the pupils and their respective families.

Key words: Emigration. Schooling. Societies of Instruction. Caciquismo (Abuse of Local Political Power). Franco's Repression.

RESUMO

Entre o último terço do século XIX e as primeiras décadas do século XX, num contexto de emigração europeia intensa, centenas de milhares de homens e mulheres galegos deslocaram-se em massa para várias regiões da América. Apesar das difíceis condições de partida, a nova situação ofereceu elementos positivos como a consciência política, a sua influência nas associações mutualistas e a solidariedade étnica no local de origem através de projectos de escolarização dirigidos às classes trabalhadoras, em alguns casos inspirados pelas correntes pedagógicas reformistas modernas que defendiam uma escola secular e democrática. Isto gerou situações de conflito com as potências conservadoras locais, levando a campanhas de perseguição durante a ditadura de Primo de Rivera (1923-1930) e a uma repressão mais intensa após a rebelião militar e durante o período da guerra espanhola (1936-1939). Este trabalho centra-se no trabalho das sociedades de ensino filiadas na Federación de Sociedades Gallegas, Agrarias y Culturales de Buenos Aires (Argentina). A consulta de vários documentos de arquivo, bibliografia e imprensa periódica da época permite-nos reconstruir este cenário de perseguição e repressão na sua área de influência, como exemplo do que geralmente era feito no resto do país, e do qual tanto os promotores dos projectos escolares como os seus professores, os alunos e as suas famílias foram vítimas.

Palavras-Chave: Emigração. Escolarização. Sociedades Educativas. Caciquismo (abuso do poder político local). Repressão de Franco.

RESUMEN

Entre el último tercio del siglo XIX y las primeras décadas del XX, en un contexto de intensa emigración europea, cientos de miles de gallegos y gallegas se trasladaron masivamente a diversas regiones de América. Pese a las duras condiciones de partida, la nueva situación ofreció elementos positivos como fue, entre otros, la concienciación política, su influencia en el asociacionismo mutualista y la solidaridad étnica en el lugar de origen mediante proyectos de escolarización destinados a las clases populares; en algunos casos, inspirados en las modernas corrientes pedagógicas reformistas que propugnaban una escuela laica y democrática. Esto generó situaciones de conflicto con los poderes conservadores locales, derivando en campañas de persecución durante la dictadura de Primo de Rivera (1923-1930) y de represión más intensa a partir de la rebelión militar y durante el período de la guerra española (1936-1939). Este trabajo se centra en la labor de las sociedades de instrucción afiliadas a la Federación de Sociedades Gallegas, Agrarias y Culturales de Buenos Aires (Argentina). La consulta de diversa documentación de

archivo, bibliográfica y de prensa periódica de la época nos permite reconstruir ese escenario de persecución y represión en su área de influencia, como ejemplo del perpetrado de modo general en otros lugares del resto del país, y del que fueron víctimas tanto los promotores de los proyectos escolares como sus profesores, el alumnado y sus respectivas familias.

Palabras clave: Emigración. Escolarización. Sociedades de Instrucción. Caciquismo, Represión Franquista.

The Galician emigration to America in the context of the great European migrations

As we have previously indicated in other works referring to the Galician emigration, there exists a common characteristic among the migrant communities which transcends to the historic moment, to the place of origin or to the sociocultural context and which consists in adapting to the new rules set by the society of reception maintaining their roots around ethnic associations, among which their objectives are sociability, the protection of the culture and language of origin, the urgent literacy, in some cases the religious practises, or help in needs like health, employment or the repatriation. In this turn of the century European context, hundreds of thousands of Galicians moved to diverse American destinies, producing comparatively high migratory rates with similar dimensions to the ones in southern Ireland and Italy in the moments of highest intensity.

There, the Galician community found a new World which they were faced with and in which they valued a greater and improved social and cultural development. Since that appreciation strengthened by means of collective processes of organization mainly of ethnic base in the terms of how we indicated before, many of them implicated in the sociocultural, political and educational progress of the Galician society.

In that way, the pattern was followed with which in the middle of the XIX century, diverse mutualist associations were born throughout the country promoted by the migratory European communities. The Galician diaspora, with a lot of presence on the island of Cuba, Argentina, or Uruguay and also in Brazil was no different to that model, and was able to launch in 1879 The Galician Centres of Buenos Aires, Montevideo and The Habana, with the passing of time great mutualist institutions, followed by several hundred other entities in the scope of parish, local and regional, throughout the first part of the XX century, with the aim of preserving the collective identity, offer mutualist assistance, guidance in the search for work, promoting identity links between the residents or to facilitate the repatriation in case their own decision to emigrate to America, common in many cases, resulted in an unfair failure.

As we have also previously pointed out, the European emigrant communities share a positive perception on schooling and its effects on the place of destination, as its labour demonstrates in the area of urgent literacy supporting the mutualist action.

Yet apart from these objectives, another element exists, unique in the Galician case, whose associative activity introduces new features of solidarity community which respond to a change of mentality, it is the trust on education as an instrument of civic conscience and democratic regeneration, projected to the solidarity intervention in the place of origin through primary schooling. (PEÑA SAAVEDRA, 1992; COSTA RICO, 2012; MALHEIRO GUTIÉRREZ, 2018). De Gabriel (1985) also contributes interesting elements on the positive correlation between migratory intensity and literacy rates in some areas of Galicia to achieve an efficient labour insertion in destination Countries.

It is advisable to point out that the migratory phenomenon left a deep trace in the recent history of Galicia, marking aspects as relevant as the demography (LÓPEZ TABOADA, 1996), the economy (CARMONA BADÍA, 1992), political awareness (FERNÁNDEZ PRIETO, 2015) or the development of cultural manifestations of Galician affirmation would end up hatching in a favourable plebiscite of political autonomy of 1936, in the last moments of the II Spanish Republic. The shipments sent, with special intensity between 1850 and 1930, served to attenuate urgent necessities in a fin-de-siecle context with generalised scarcity (VILLARES, 2011), helping to propel the development of a country that at the start of the XX century still demonstrated a considerable delay (BEIRAS, 1982). Initiatives in brief, enclosed in what the Professor Barreiro Fernandez (1984) defined as the reencounter of the two Galicias. On the other hand, this process was also possible as they connected with other urban dynamics and with reduced, but living, working classes subsequently repressed or eliminated after the 18th July of 1936 (GRANDÍO SEOANE, 2011).

Pious Foundations and societies of instruction: from charity to political awareness

As we have indicated, between the last part of the XIX century and the first decades of the XX century hundreds of thousands of Galician men and women moved massively to America, from New York to Buenos Aires. Overseas they found a melting pot which merged a mass of European and Asian workers, together with natives, mixed-race, creole and Africans from the colonial context, providing a combination of diverse languages and cultures and dissimilar levels of formation. This intense disembarkment of workers not always adequately incorporated in destination, allowed the insecurity due to saturation of job offers and the recipient society was hatched at the expense of the effort and suffering of thousands of European proletarians who, the majority changed countries but not their situation (SÁNCHEZ, 2000). The best jobs were assigned to the qualified workers, while the harder ones and the worst paid ones were assigned to those who presented less training. This leads us to reflect upon the value of instruction as an essential means of individual and collective progress, and to verify how in the Galician case, the abandonment which the primary school experienced, mainly controlled by

the church, contrasted with the devotion that was primarily felt from the emerging Republics. “The time of the warriors is over, now it is the time of the educators of the emancipation of the minds”: this phrase from Andres Bello summarized the educational worry of the postcolonial democratic freedom and modernity (PUIGRÓSS, 2006).

The migratory experience intensified the consciousness of knowing how to read and write to succeed in an optimum labour insertion and to preserve their identity characteristics like the Russian, Ukranian and Polish emigration did, as well as the Arab (Syria, Lebanon or Palestine) founding private schools in the place of destination (MALHEIRO GUTIÉRREZ, 2018). In the Italian case Ambrosoli (1995), Rosoli (1999) or Barausse (2017) document the interest of schooling in the destination to ease the epistolary relation, at the same time as encouraging them to send their children to school, so in this way they could improve their integration in the adopted countries in a probable future. In Portugal, the press gather a similar worry for schooling and the need for a qualified emigration (ALVES, 1993).

However, the emigrated Galicians were not only content with schooling those who had already emigrated, or encourage those who had stayed to do so however they decided to contribute directly to improve the index of schooling in the places of origin creating, between the XVII and the XIX centuries, a considerable number of elementary schools, by means of special philanthropic initiatives of charitable orientation.² The previous examples reflect the worry shared between the different migrant communities about the positive effects of the making literate procedure. Where the uniqueness of the Galician case lies is in which, besides the intervention in the place of destination, or of the individual charitable action in the origin, a community plan was carried out to create a chain of primary schools through societies named “of instruction” which reached significant levels of organized structure. It was a feature of collective mobilisation that, apart from Galicia, it has only been observed by very isolated cases, in Asturias (PRIETO FERNÁNDEZ DEL VISO, 2012) and in Santander, with some other relatively isolated cases. Referred to the Portuguese case we gathered a footnote about the *la Liga Propulsora da Instrução em Portugal* (1925) created in order to “cooperate in the name of the principle of equality to place within everyone’s reach the primary instruction in Portugal (.....) with higienic and modern buildings” (BRITO FABRI DEMARTINI, 2007, p. 28), without any prior evidence or neither similar experiences in other countries of migratory tradition.

If we refer in general terms to this community intervention, the societies of

² Peña Saavedra (2012) can be consulted, among other documents. Similar cases of pecuniary in charity collection by initiative of distinguished emigrants in other regions in Spain, as is the case of Asturias (MATO DÍAZ, 2012) Cantabria, Castilla-León, Euskadi or La Rioja. (RIO DIESTRO, 1993). In Portugal the Earl of Ferreira stands out who at his death left the legacy for 120 schools to be built (ALVES, 1992). So far, we have not found, references in other regions of Europe.

instruction which the emigrated Galicians set up in America at the start of the XX century until they approached half a million at the end of the 30's, they shared characteristics with those created by other migrant communities destined to ethnic sociability or the mutualist assistance, but also, and here is where the originality compared to the rest lies, its aim one single portion was to promote the primary school adapted to the rural Galician surroundings as well as undertaking diverse improvements in the respective parishes and councils.³ Almost five hundred societies of instruction were established between 1904 and 1936 which made up 70% of the Galician councils. Among them, 35% managed to materialise some project of intervention managing to establish around 150 schools and close to 500 classrooms. Frequently, claimed Costa Rico,

it was no more than just a humble school, where before there had been nothing. At times, it was even a school building with 3 or 4 classrooms, with an emerging graduation and an exemplary amount of educational resources in its surrounding. Exceptionally, it was a remarkable and modern educative space (COSTA RICO, 2008, p.15).

We are in any case, in light of a singular phenomenon, which consisted in offering their fellow citizens, in the places of origin, educational institution, sometimes exemplary, adopting on occasions conceptual aspects of the paradigm American school, related to the educational ideology, the educative content of the curricula, the architectural functionality of the building, the amount of lecture rooms and the educational organization of the spaces, or the professional competence of the teachers. They featured, to a greater extent, with the image of the existing schools in the place of destination. In the Argentinian context at the turn of the century where they settle the basis of the national system, the construction of school buildings, mainly urban, it was not a minor matter. At the front of the migratory the rule of “educating the Argentinian way”⁴ made special sense within the framework of a public educative model called to unify the language, mould the citizens political ideal and unite the patriotic sentiment reinforced by the image of the “palace schools”, buildings with a great visual impact on the urban plot due to their monumental character and ornament which transported the imaginary group, as among which the immigrant mass was found, a determined

³ The “parish” is a local area, which lacks legal recognition. The number of parishes in each council is different.

⁴ With reference to the schools created by the Italian immigrants, Sarmiento writes in 1881: “What is that about educating the Italian way? What will be achieved is that they will never know the language of the country (...) In sympathies for the free, artistic and unified Italy we shall not be beaten by no Neapolitan, no Piedmont citizen, Roman or Genoese who live among us. It is necessary to have a normal school where children are not educated the Italian way, they are educated in the Argentinian” (CÚNEO, 1997 p. 224).

“representation” based on the value of public education as an instrument of cultural, cohesion, modernity and progress (SERRA, 2008).

The majority of the societies were established on the island of Cuba and Argentina; a lower number in Uruguay, like in Brazil or in The USA. The majority funded the Project entirely; others constructed the building and handed it over to the State, delegating on it the maintenance and the recruitment of teachers; many others collaborated partially with the neighbours in the construction or on the periodic delivery of school material or other necessary resources to the state schools. This launch of a number of educational projects following communal principles denotes the extraordinary willingness of adaptation, learning and organization of the emigrating Galicia, the capacity to assimilate the keys of a new model of intervention, which evolved from the nineteenth century charity to the Republic solidarity accepting the political paradigm of the emerging South-American states and their firm will to transform the personal shortages of departure on vital projects of progress and wellbeing also thinking of the solidarity assistance which could be reported from the emigration to those who remained without resources in the place of origin. Eventhough it was like that, in general terms, another attitude was observed, more reduced, in some recreational organizations, external to the social needs of Galicia, who, like an anonymous collaborator expressed in the pages of *Céltiga* in 1925,

they were dedicated to the promotion of the tango and the ombre and the only interferences in the life of their mother country considered in sending dozens of telegrams to the King, absurd and indifferent, or to the heads of government who formented tyranny, who condoned the depopulation due to hunger – of Galicia and that sealed, in a hail of bullets, the mouths which wanted bread and freedom.⁵

The intense societal eclosion which came about at the start of the XX century observed various attempts of Federation although a brief path – Representative Committee in the Galician Societies of Instruction, 1909 — and the Galician Federation, 1912 in La Habana; or the Federation of the Galician Societies, 1910 in Buenos Aires—, until in 1921 the Federation of Galician, Agrarian, and Cultural, emerged (in front of FSGAC)(DÍAZ, 2007).⁶ The FSGAC is going to represent the wishes of the most progressive, antimonarchy and anticlerical sector, of the emigrated Galicia, and direct its aims to the political action as a means to redeem Galicia from the caciquism” (EL

⁵ ‘About the Federation of Galician, Agricultural and Cultural Societies’, *Céltiga* 24 (1925): s/p.

⁶ Later on, in 1930, the socialist sector was divided due to internal ideological, discrepancies, and ended founding the named Federation of Galician Societies. DÍAZ, 2007).

DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1922, p. 3) through the collaboration with the agrarian movement and the creation of primary school establishments:⁷

The time of crying and cursing our luck is over. The time to work has come. From today onwards, from the Cantabrian Sea to the Miño, from the Eo to the Atlantic no other echo should reverberate than the one which expresses action. To the intense, persistent action, without rest, without end! Not one more cry! Not one more tear! Not one more plea! Not one more prayer! With our firm will, unbreakable, with our hearts inflamed with rebelliousness. Action! Action! (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1922, p. 3).

Despite the success and recognition in Galicia as well as in America, the communal labour of literacy and schooling was also a goal for criticisms of diverse nature and intensity. In some cases, for collaborating with Primo's dictatorship handing over the recently built school buildings, instead of using the classrooms to fight against the aforementioned regime and the Bourbon monarchy that supported it, forming currents of critical citizenship. It is the case of what happened with the Forcarey society (Pontevedra), a small town in inland Galicia, criticised in the heart of the FSGAC:

We know that the society of Forcarey, after having done common cause with our "opositores" "candidates" during this year and as the secretary was the comfort of the "conspiracy", committed the following errors, consciously or unconsciously: agreeing to establish a Forcarey school, the same as the the Spanish state schools. Calling in the most curmudgeon and "primista" [referred to Primo de Rivera] priest to bless the first stone. Agreeing to give as a gift to the tyrannical and dictatorial Council. Naming honorary member the mayor of Forcarey of dictatorial origin. Sending a letter of gratitude to the parish priest for putting a few drops of "holy" water on the stone. And, finally accepted to leave the Federation. May God be with you! He saved us from the trouble of having to advise them to leave (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1929, p. 2).

Because although the Directorate shows various signs related to regeneration, it is presented as an authoritarian and antiliberal period marked by the reinforcement mechanisms of control on the defense of traditional values, like the family, the property, the religion and the homeland. Severe restrictions were also extended to professorship and the expression and the autonomy of the centres and their teachers. (ESCOLANO, 2002), a control which the schools of American Society entity, among others of

⁷ By *caciquismo* (abuse of local political power), a distorted form of local government typical in the rural Galician area in the nineteenth century, in which a leader a representative of the official political power exercised complete control over the community, expressed as political patronage nullifying all individual freedom of action and suppressing the individual to economic and social of the stated leader (PRADA y LÓPEZ, 2001, p. 349-382).

private nomination connected to rural, marine or urban syndicalism did not escape and complimentary to the labour developed through the athenaeums, the working press and the libraries and reading clubs, like Costa Rico (2021) pointed.

‘Nuestra obra constructiva’ [“Our constructive work”] — stated a Publisher of EL Despertar Gallego (in front of EDG) in April 1923— cannot overlap the noisy building of the monarchy (.....) It is necessary, it is indispensable that this truth becomes a reality in our consciousness: only leaving the debris of the rotten social political building of the Bourbon monarchy we can solidly consolidate our work and open the wide flow to democratic progress (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1923, p. 1).

Because, apart from literacy, the school should also form political consciousness to serve the popular classes to put an end to the privileges and defend those who had never experienced basic schooling before, forced to emigrate abandoning lands, families and homes in very poor conditions.

Their regenerative action tried to respond to a series of shortages which the rural school was suffering in Galicia, and which indicated as well as the restrictions stated, a chronic institutional indolence on behalf of the State, the councils, and the local board of instruction.⁸ In other cases, like the ones promoted by FSGAC, they were the target of an “atrocious persecution” on behalf of sectors close to that same regime, while promoting laicist educational options and mainly connected to the agrarian movement.⁹ “The caciques realise that the union of the societies will destroy their power and that is why they do not refrain from sowing discard and doing coaction, something which will not yield results”, stated a local agricultural leader. The laicist option — which in some cases limited itself to a neutral posture to avoid reprisals— it provoked confrontations from the despotic power represented by priests, mayors teachers attached to Primo’s dictatorship against the delegates of the societies of instruction, as well as the teachers and families.

During the time in which the classrooms remained open they suffered the extortion

⁸ They were created by the Plan of schools 16/02/1825. Reorganized subsequently by the 21/07/1838 plan and after several modifications reaches The Board of Primary Teaching regulated by the 9/09/1857 law, which determined in its art. 287: “in each council a local Board of Primary Teaching should be created formed by the mayor, who would lead it, a town councillor, a clergyman designated by the diocesan and three or more parents of a family”. (DE GABRIEL, 1990, p. 80).

⁹ It was the first mass movement of the contemporary age in Galicia, with certain intensity between the end of the XIX century until 1936, reaching up to more than one thousand local organizations to fight against the foral system, against the despotism and access the ownership of the land, apart from promoting the technical innovation and the productive modernisation of the sector (FERNÁNDEZ PRIETO, 2015, p. 251-315).

of those who felt as a threat the lay educational labour of many societies of instruction. The inspections, the closures due to arbitrary causes, the fines imposed on the parents, the sanctions on the teachers and all types of defamatory campaigns about the promoters of the so called “lay schools” or “civil schools” were continuous. The heart of the most active and radical opposition used to focus on the clergy. From the pulpit with the collusion of the local cacique, the ideology followed by these schools and their support to the agrarian non catholic syndical organization was criticised. Because, in many of them, apart from applying methodological orientations of functional character, the emancipation of the peasantry was promoted through the educational action trying to contribute in the formation of a freer, more democratic and participative society.

In other cases, with less intensity, they also received criticisms for the ‘desgalleguizadora’ action which some other societies applied to their programmes, more orientated towards a possibilist formation directed to America rather than an instrument of development and social regeneration thinking about Galicia. However, in all of them the development of literacy and Primary schooling in the place of origin came first. It was thus, a community phenomenon enuine from the Galician emigration not observed in actions carried out by European communities emigrated to America.

However, it all ended in 1936. As was indicated, from the coup d’etat and in an indefinite manner from the dictatorship, the reformist impulse of the societies of instruction were frustrated, tenaciously followed already since Primo’s dictatorship, for attempting to plant in the schools’ vegetable patches the seed of the socialist and Galician Republicanism, of the regeneration and laicism. Their promoters, as well as the male and female teachers and all of those who demonstrated their support towards these educative, civic and political organizations were harshly pursued and unfairly punished.

Caciquismo, regenerative and schooling: the work of FSGAC

The administrative abandonment to which we are making reference had several causes, among them, one of economic character: the 1857 Moyan law left the responsibility of the Primary school in the the hands of the councils. In the immense majority, their exiguous resources prevented them from having the necessary means to organize the teaching, maintain the schools and defray the salaries. The pressure carried out by the Provincial Boards of Instruction: the University rectors and the school inspectors, did not impede the frequent opposition from the mayors - who incarnated the despotism and controlled councils local boards of instruction- to the obligation of their maintenance.

There exists a second cause of political character with religious connotations: the construction of the nation, as the objective of the nineteenth century Spanish liberalism which reaches positions of the State government they consolidated on the centralist unity of the State, the monarchic affirmation and the religious confession. This allowed the

education at least to a great extent to continue in the hands of the church as a guarantee — nourished by the political tyranny— of popular subordination, as De Gabriel (2018, 546) explains following Abram de Swaan:

he designed a model to explain the attitudes and behaviours of the different social sectors with respect to the diffusion of literacy and the standard language in countries with a diversity of languages, like Spain. He differentiated three big groups: the “elite metropolitan”, formed by civil servants and businessmen educated people and speakers of the standard language, the “regional communities” or peripheral who include mainly the popular classes with a high level of illiteracy and who are immersed in the language, of their own community and at times they do not know the official language; and “the local and regional elite”; cultural and bilingual, who represented the group who were the intermediaries between the centre and the periphery. From the previous model we deduce that the metropolitan elite who controlled the system of the State, would have a great interest in the generalized diffusion of the reading, writing and the official language, because in this way, they could communicate directly with the periphery in their political and economical transactions, managing without the services of the intermediaries. The periphery communities would show an interest in the written culture and the standard language, as they realised their usefulness. Finally, the local dignitaries would go against the illustration of the popular classes, as the role of the dignitaries would lose its *raison d’être* with the diffusion of the literacy and the official language.

As we can see the interest of the “metropolitan elite” collided with the “local elite” who carried out the political control on the councils and the financing and the supervision of the primary schools. The illiteracy of a great part of the population preserved the “local elite” all the benefits of its intermediary role. This explains the resistance to impose a public school system and block its development. We have to add that during the Restoration (1875-1923), the calm turns between conservatives and moderate liberals came to support the clientele practises acted out by mayors and local caciques, because once they were in government, the president of the party in his turn of power used all the necessary resources to guarantee the parliamentary by a majority of votes. An objective which was a lot easier to achieve with an illiterate, uninformed afraid and captivated population by a despotic power based on asymmetrical clientele relations. GABRIEL, 2018, p. 548). Also, initiated in the XX century, the church still has a solid implementation in the educational panorama, not only due to the control of their own centres but also because of the influence it radiates through the organ of diffusion which the pulpit represents. This is how Z. S. expressed himself with a letter to the Director of EDG headed with the title: “Arbitrarinesses, battles and hopes” the 7th February 1923:

The despotic elements are still quite powerful. These ignorant politicians from the villages are even more dangerous than the masters who offer their support from the capitals. It could be said that here the justice does not exist. The small petty tyrant from the village is everything. It is enough to be his friend in order to have the option to commit the greatest outrages and arbitrarinesses. The law is not taken into account at all (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1923, p. 3).

back to the labour of societies of instruction, the educational ideology of their schools was not homogeneous, although it shared some characteristics and tried to satisfy the felt requests, departing from a necessary process of social regeneration. As we have indicated in other works, The FSGAC wanted to group all that considerable collective work in an organized school net and directed towards an objective: to educate the popular rural classes to avoid their emigration, by means of an indispensable instrument for the regeneration and the economic development of the country, incorporating an original model—curriculum, timetable and calendar— adapted to the needs and the rhythms of the rural environment. A licensed school, provided with an efficient inspection, which will dignify the work of the teachers and will attend to the literacy of the adults. They were all, innovative features which outlined an unprecedented model in the official school scenario and marked a new way, integrated in an ambitious political project of social transformation, Galician style, which was supported in the education of the rural area on the grounds of civic consciousness, necessary to reach the levels of freedom, democracy and modernity well-known in other latitudes as were expressed by some proposals of the Society Union of Lalin to the II Congress of the FSGAC in 1923:

Every society adherent to the Federation is obliged and will take care of the instruction and training of the producing town of Galicia, trying to emancipate it morally and materially of the shameful life and despotic and parasitic custody in which it is immersed and the time has come in which the major part of Galician Societies in America channel their activities in the sense of creating civil schools in Galicia (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1923, p. 3).

Each school created by the emigrant community should mobilise the citizenship to defend the farmers against the tyrannical power and of the influence of some soutanes. On the pages of EDG there were abundant articles issuing reflections like the one that follows:

What is indispensable and of urgent necessity is a radical transformation of the methods of teaching, eliminating completely teaching religion in schools, as religion should be practised in respective temples and their homes, the school should in no way be a temple of religious practises. The teachers should take as a true vocation the apostolate of the teaching profession as true educators and not as “political-religious” agents reprimanding the pupils because they do not know the catechism off by heart or because they do not take off their hat when they name the King (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1924, p. 2).

The Agrarian and Cultural Society of Palas de Rey, Monterroso and Antas de Ulla (Lugo) also expressed it like this:

Have you forgotten, colleagues, the deplorable and shameful situation of our brothers who during various generations have been and still are suppressed by the will of the omnipotent by heartless despoilers and by politicians corrupters of consciences? In our hearts beat the desire and the necessity for more fortunate days for all. Those Pharisees of frock coat and soutane claim to obey the law of God and practise loving thy neighbour, grabbing their work product and depressing them but we believe that that the time of justice will soon come on the history clock (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1924, p. 6).

And that is how the illusion of a considerable number of societies grew to implement in Galicia a democratic, republican, regime of wide social representativeness and a defined cultural identity as the agrarian leader Anton Alonso Rios in 1927 expressed:

A seed of citizenship life must be taken to the Galician people, which becomes ingrained in the mind and heart of the child! It is essential to orientate the children with practical methods towards the scientific cultivation of the land, and guide it towards an intelligent production and exploitation of the livestock wealth. They imposed to diffuse the cooperativism as a means of economic emancipation. And in all of this, the Modern school is called to play a fundamental role in which, at the present time, our schools are unconnected to almost completely (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1927, p. 6).

School intervention, ideological persecution and political repression of the laicist model that promoted the schools of the emigrated.

As we have already indicated the political persecution carried out by Primo de Rivera's regime against the FSGAC societies had among other causes, the promotion of the laicism in their education centres, and besides the support for the agrarian movement through their trade unions and societies, whose master lines are considered in the following paragraphs of their programme of action:

The coeducational school, the laicism in teaching, the graduation of the schools, the introduction of new methods and more in consonance with the educational advances, the selection of the teaching staff, the technical, moral and administrative inspection, and the implementation of special agricultural, industrial and commerce schools (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1922, p. 1).

It is also known, that the great expansion of non-confessional agrarianism in these years has been very connected to the support received, to a great extent, by the emigrants through their societies. This came through material shipments or through the

ones who had returned who had acquired a certain political consciousness by means of experience of urban union or Masonic sociability and when they returned, they became active promoters of associationism, cooperative movement and transmitters of new ideas. It could be the case of the temporary returned Pedro Campos Couceiro, who claimed in EDG:

What is indispensable and of urgent necessity is a radical transformation of the teaching methods, eliminating completely the teaching of religion in schools, as religion should be practised in respective temples and at home, the school should in no way be a temple religious practises. The teachers should take as a true vocation the apostolate of the teaching profession as true educators and not as “political-religious” agents reprimanding the pupils because they do not know the Catechism off by heart or because they do not take their hat off when they name the King (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1924, p. 2).

The actual FSGAC, in a statement where they published the resolutions of their III Congress celebrated in 1924, reported “the interference of the clergy in schools in detrimental scientific character of teaching and of the freedom of professorship in the family with detriment in custody and the State with dishonour for the civil power” (CORREO DE GALICIA, 1924, p. 3). We only need some examples to illustrate this situation, the rest, common where they implemented schools of emigrants. On one of these occasions, in 1924, the three schools of the society “Hijos de Silleda” were closed down by the Provincial School Administration in collaboration with the clergy and the local caciques. Luciano Fogar, inspector of these schools, informed the Executive Commission in Buenos Aires about the Presentation of appeals “in front of the President of the military board of directors on the 1st of December and in front of the Minister of Public Instruction on the 14th of the same month for violating the Royal Order of the 26th of September”. The classes were maintained until the 13th of December when the mayor Jose Ferreira, accompanied by the Council Secretary and Official and by the Sergeant and two officers sealed off doors and windows. A report filed to the board of directors clearly indicated that Luciano Folgar taught “anarchist education” in that school. Through reports they confirmed the falseness of the filed report, and that the origin of the complaints were the priests of the parishes where the schools were located, because there “they did not teach the Catechism or the Sacred History and the teachers did not prove to be good catholics” (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1924, p. 5). Another case is the one of the school promoted by the society “Union of Rubín” (A Estrada), which at the start of 1924:

Received “the pleasant visit” of some savages who “kindly” started to throw stones and possibly even shots at the windows and balconies of the high flat, smashing almost all the glasses on the four sides, except the ones on the ground floor, as they had the blinds on the outside. It is a pleasure that while the town

scream at the top of their lungs claiming the schools and the emigrates do their utmost for the diffusion of the culture of their country, there must be in it hordes that appreciate it in this way (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1924, p. 5).

In the parish of Berres, close to Rubín, filed in this way the tyrannical sabotage:

So that the children of today, and the men of tomorrow, know what these men have criticised and fought against taking advantage of the revolting and rude slander against the men who continue to act in favour of society. The CD. Knows very well how many jobs these men do (local caciques) to destroy our society and it is unfortunate that there are gullible people who fall prey to these two or three malicious people who at all costs want their idea to predominate, whether they are right or not. We also know that these men receive correspondence from some offices of old despotism and in these letters they want to put pressure on some of our neighbours to achieve their goals of impeding our work (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1925, p. 8).

“The Union Party of Lalín” was also pursued by priests, caciques and even national teachers. When the society created in April 1924 their first “civil” school, the priests of the affected parishes “with the hypocrisy which always characterises them and against the good will of this society” they decided to open three new schools and maintain them for some time. “But the town does not accept turning black into white anymore, it rained on the parade, because schools were deserted with great annoyance from those who were attempting to counteract with this resource the (illegible) benefits of the civil school with which the brave and charitable members of the Union Party of Lalín honour us in Bs. As.”. The journalist Antonio Alonso Ríos, reflects on the pressure that this school suffers, in which “more than 90 pupils”:

There are some neighbours who do not define themselves clearly and are reactionary towards the school as well as the agrarian society, but this will disappear soon because the light of the school (...) produces such clear effects that shake and wake those who for convenience and mental laziness do not want to leave the servility in which these people have them submitted pretending to be decent people. Come on, neighbours of America, it depends on us to exterminate these parasites who are attempting to have the town in a condition of slavery! (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1924, p. 2).

The scene repeated itself in 1926 when they opened the second school, “to counteract its effects, the parish-priest of Bendoiro created three assisted schools, one by him, the second by the assistant and the third by Mr. Manuel Campos” (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1926, p. 4). The three nearly closed down shortly “from the moment when their benches were not occupied due to lack of pupils”.¹⁰ Apart from these causes,

¹⁰ Ibidem.

they used, with the expression of the journalist other methods of sabotage like “organizing sermons in charge of missionary “fathers” especially on the art of teaching and educating in their way” However it was all hopeless: “The civil schools were imposed in a predominant form, which is shown by the number of pupils who attended, constantly on the rise. Reviewing the minutes of “Hijos de Silleda”, press and correspondence from that period and the closure of their schools is a constant worry among the Inspector and the FSGAC. So, at the start of the 1924-1925 course this inspector informs that “the schools are still functioning, they did not dare to close them, the inspector of primary teaching of the Province walked past mine three or four times and did not say anything”.¹¹ Another note published in EDG, in April 1925, reflects the constant confrontation and the incomprehension in the face of the charity work:

It is true that those schools, in which they receive the light of teaching many boys who tomorrow will be men, and will know how to appreciate the merit of this work and continue it, have had and have enemies of everything which escapes their sinister control; they are the ones who intone hymns to a religion of fraternity which they do not feel; which in a language which is not ours, sing psalms to the God of all redemptions and do not know how to redeem themselves from their weaknesses: the ones who claim they interpret a religion of love and do not understand it because it is banned for them (...). Those representatives of a law of humanity, have fought against our work by all means, forgetting that our efforts and determination are children of the great love we feel for that unforgettable country, and everything that love consecrates, is humble and saint. But we have fought with them and against them, sustained by the conviction that we were defending a good and fair cause, and we have defeated them. More generous than them, we should forgive them, but not forget them. We are left with the satisfaction of having fulfilled our duty (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1925, p. 1).

Later, in 1927, the representative of the FSGAC sent a report to Buenos Aires indicating, among other things, that the schools were still open from the first of September. He added that the mayor, despite having tried, had still not managed its closure, “because during the holidays, as well as I as [the inspector Luciano] Folgar worked as hard as we could so that the king of Taures of Silleda [referring to the mayor] did not achieve what was promised to the different priests of the Council”. In 1929, the society was accused of being composed of “heretics and jews”, of protestants and anarchists” (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1929, p. 1).

The association “Pro Escuela en Bandeira” had initially proposed for their centre the name of “Laical School” substituted by the name of “Primary and Commerce Training School” to avoid suspicions, without having achieved it. When they found

¹¹ Copy of missive from Luciano Folgar to the CD in Buenos Aires, 25/12/1924, without paging.

out about the placement of the first Stone, the Priests of the local council set a meeting led by “Mr Torquemada de Escuadro [in reference to the priest of that parish] and they filed a complaint to the civil governor against the inspector Folgar, describing him as an unpatriotic, antichristian, and terrorist” (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1928, p. 1) together with the teachers of the society schools of Silleda and the local commission of Bandeira.

We add what happened to “Aurora del Porvenir Pro Instruction” whose homonymous school was maintained in Tomiño (Pontevedra) with the contributions of Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, and a council grant of 1,500 pta. annually which they stopped receiving when the local government changed in 1934 (AURORA DEL PORVENIR, 1935). Thanks to the generous help of Abdón Alonso, an affluent benefactor emigrated in Brazil, the closure of the girls’ department was avoided. Immediately after the military coup, the closure was inevitable, for teaching in a “laical and tendentious” way; the leaders of the societies were accused of plotting “all the anti-Spanish political campaigns which in the last years we have suffered, becoming the real military headquarters of the communist revolution in Tomiño’s terms” INFORME..., 1936) and the school remained closed various years until its later reopening as a teaching centre serving the Franco dictatorship.

En S. Pedro de Vilanova (Vedra), the mayor refused repeatedly to send the opening file for the school “Argentinian Republic” to the Provincial Board of Directors Public Instruction, which confirmed the adequate conditions of the place. Despite this Luciano Folgar decided to open it in September 1926 while the bureaucratic process was not resolved, as long as the instalations and their means exceeded in quantity and quality the ones in the official schools nearby. However, when the classes had started with an enrolment of 54 pupils, the teacher Tomás Peiteado receives a visit from the Local Board of Instruction, formed by the priest, the doctor and a couple of nationalist teachers, who informed of alleged failures, and inadequate material, “not realising that all the books were checked by the Council of Public Instruction and by the ecclesiastical authority, who offered them the following words ‘Nihil obstat, imprimatur’” (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1927, p. 2).

This school managed to continue during that course “in spite of the despicable propaganda that was carried out against the school by the authorities and the clergy who carry on with that wretched tenacity who want our town to be an eternal flock of illiterate pariahs (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1927, p. 3). And eventhough the neighbours celebrated recurring parties to bring to light their appreciation for the labour of the emigrants attempting to safeguard the activity, the mayor ended closing it up alleging that it did not meet the conditions required: “ in the month of September an inspector visited the school a Primary school inspector, he was astonished not to see the image of Christ or of the Head of State in a preferential position; he said he was going to communicate the offence to the General Board of Primary Teaching” Various of the pupils’ parents were sanctioned with fines of 5pta. for sending their children there, and

the teacher who went on teaching in various locations in the parish ended up giving in to the pressures of the governing councillor, who threatened to arrest him “if he did not leave the town” (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1926, p. 1).

The sanctioned neighbours, through formulation of appeals “were resolved favourably with great satisfaction” bringing peace to the homes of the humble parents” (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1926). Luciano Folgar went on with processes through the Inspector of Primary Teaching as he communicates by letter to the Executive Commission in October of 1928 — “The impression I have is that they will allow me to open the school if a crucifix and a photo of the Head of State (the King) is put up”, but he received a forceful response from Buenos Aires:

We acknowledge receipt of your letter and consequently we inform you that, in the meeting of the Executive Board it has been determined that if after all your efforts carried out cannot manage the opening of the school in the same conditions as it worked before it was closed down, proceed to suspend the teacher and pay the indefatigable colleague.

Peiteado two months salary as well as what he is entitled to after making him redundant. We prefer to take this unfortunate step rather than suppress to the whims and the revenges of the enemies in Spain and their children (EL DESPERTAR GALLEGO, 1928, p. 7).

Despite some processes of the Society in order to get a new place, and the attempts of inspector Folgar to convince the local authorities, the “Republic Argentina” school never opened its doors again. Tomás Peiteado would go on to receive the salary of the teachers’ Society “Hijos de Silleda” “Children of Silleda” in another school a short time after.

Due to the limits fixed in the extensión of this work, what we have collected here is only a small sample of the permanent persecution suffered during the directorate in the FSGAC schools, who also expanded out of the Federation: “In 1928, the emigrating from Devesos [Ortigueira, A Coruña] were forced to order the closure of the school created by them, “at the express wish of their founders gave to their teachings a neutral character and which they tried to impose the teaching of the Catholic doctrine”, as stated Antón Costa de *El Pueblo Gallego (The Galician People)* (2021, p. 17).

From the coup d’etat and definitely from the imposition of the Francoist regime the reformist impulse of the federate societies was cut short. Their promoters, the teachers, and all of those who at some point demonstrated a liking for the political organization of the Frente Popular were brutally pursued. In a setting of generalized repression against the educational practise, the schools and social venues sustained by emigrants under republic suspicion. Their material was destroyed or confiscated, and the teachers pursued, arrested and tortured. For its part, the agrarian activity of progressist signs and the society schools closed, the FSGAC remained aligned with the legitimate Republic

government collaborating in the collection for victims of war and of civic and cultural acts in favour of the republic forces. These acts had a charitable sense, marking a distance with the festive activities that other societies continued celebrating, external to the terrible consequences that were being experienced in Galicia.

In the región of Deza and Trasdeza, we start with Antón Alonso Ríos, “a very defined Marxist MP” (INFORME..., 1938). Emigrated to Argentina in 1908, enjoyed popularity and respect among the collectivity. He was one of the founders of the FSGAC and Director of its body *EDG*; but he was also an indisputable figure of Galician politics of the first part of the XX century, which encompassed from teaching to the political action as an MP in the Republican Courts in 1936, passing through journalism and literature. After the coup d’etat, he was forced to hide under the identity of a beggar, Afranio de Amaral. That is how he spent three years of uncountable calamities until he managed to cross to Portugal, and from there to Morocco to board to Argentina.¹²

It is convenient to clarify that, when the II Republic in 1931 proclaimed, the teaching went on to become “the ideological arm of the Spanish revolution” and a priority for the new government, on a similar line on the intervention that the FSGAC had been conducting from years before. In this new situation, many societies decided to hand over their schools to the State when they realised that their function was completely taken over by the new government. Besides, the substitution of the system of public exams with the selection through professional courses promoted that many teachers of the FSGAC schools could integrate as teachers in the official Network. It was the case of Luciano Folgar, with a vacancy in the public school of Chaín (Gondomar) at the moment of the coup d’etat. Folgar suffered temporary suspensión of both job and salary, compulsory transfer to another province and disqualification to carry out Executive Posts. The “wretched” Tomás Peiteado Mariñas AGA, (2023a), described in this way by Olimpio Liste, inspector, in a report signed in August 1936, where at the same time he accused him of his left wing ideology, of “suspicious” Christian morale and “regular” professional conduct and he asked himself how that leader despite his age, had still not gained an official post “in ownership,” wanting to ignore his exemplary work contracted by “Nueva Era de Vilanova” in Picón (Vedra, A Coruña); later by “Hijos de Silleda” en Freixeiro and, lastly, by “Unión del Partido de Lalín”. Peiteado was a substitute teacher in Cristimil on the 18th of July. He was arrested, transferred to the Saint Simon prison, tried in Pontevedra for military rebellion and sentenced to death, a sentence which was then commuted to four years in 1940, but due to his purging with definite separation he would never return to his post of teacher.

Hernán Poza Juncal, director until 1930 of the school created by the Society “Hijos del Partido de Lalín”, directed in Pontevedra the school “Escuela Nueva” at the moment

¹² As he narrates meticulously in his book (1980) reedited in 2019. (MALHEIRO GUTIÉRREZ, 2018).

of the mutiny. Poza Juncal was arrested and went to prison where he was freed through some contacts. He exiled to The USA, where he set settled his residence in New York and was a teacher in Brooklyn College in that city (AGA, 2023b). Sindo Cuñarro Rodríguez was a teacher between 1930 and 1932 in the school founded in Loño (Vila de Cruces, Pontevedra) by the residents of that parish in Buenos Aires. Cuñarro, who worked as a national teacher in Vilatuxe (Lalín, Pontevedra) in 1936, was accused of sympathising with left wing ideologies, tried in Ourense for giving aid to the rebellion, declared a stay and transferred temporarily. In 1938, he was excluded definitely from the teaching practise (AGA, 2023c).

Apart from these, there are other cases of teachers who taught in emigrant schools in the región of Deza-Trasdeza, subsequently being purged as national teachers after the coup d'état, with a charge of work and salary: Alfredo García Hermida, teacher in Pontevedra (AGA, 2023d); Braulio Brandido Rodríguez, teacher in Saceda (Cualedro, Ourense) (AGA, 2023i); José Ferro Pesqueira, teacher in Pontecaldelas (Pontevedra) (AGA, 2023e); Arturo Gil Boado, teacher in Bendoiro (Lalín, Pontevedra) (AGA, 2023f); Marcos Laseca Golmayo, teacher in Tardajos de Duero (Soria) (AGA, 2023g). To this group we add JoséAres Sánchez (AGA, 2023h), teacher in the school Aurora del Porvenir in Estás (Tomíño, Pontevedra), with vacancy in Parada (A Caniza, Pontevedra) at the moment of the military coup. He was arrested and tried in Vigo for military rebellion and charged with dismissal without prejudice. Separated from the service and termination in the educational Ladder on 11/05/1940.

In the región of Tabeirós-Terra de Montes we can quote some cases: Bernardo Mato Castro, emigrant in Cuba, teacher and accountant in the Galician Centre of LaHabana; director of the Cervantes Institute in la Estrada and collaborator on the educational task of the emigrants on their return. He passed through several public schools until he obtained his definite vacancy in Santa María de Teo (A Coruña), in 1928. A member of the Galician Socialist Union, he was arrested and due to the injuries caused of savage manner during the arrest, he died weeks later, the 4th September 1936 (AGA, 2023j); Manuel García Barros, teacher in the school of Rubín (A Estrada, Pontevedra), collaborator of the American press from 1903, director of the weekly paper *El Estradense* founded in 1906 and director of the paper *El Emigrado*, had already previously suffered the persecution of Board of Directors, but after the coup was suspended of work and salary definitely (AGA, 2023k). They were also Tomás Alfonsín, teacher in the school in Guimarei (A Estrada, Pontevedra) (AGA, 2023l); Ramón Puente Barcala (AGA, 2023m) and Carmen Rosende Martínez (AGA, 2023n) both teachers in the school created in Arnois (A Estrada, Pontevedra) with the support of the emigrants of that council; Carmen, teacher in Ribadumia (Pontevedra) at the moment of the coup.

Adding a temporary wage to the teachers victims of reprisals, collaborators in different spots of Galicia of other non-federated societies. It is the case of Angel Fraga Orosa, a representative of the society "Hijos de Goiriz" (Lugo) in 1935, teacher and

MP of Izquierda Republicana in Viveiro (Lugo). He was tried for military rebellion and sentenced to death. Executed in Lugo, on 17th of December 1936 in the walls of the headquarters of the Civil Guard (AGA, 2023o); or José Rouco Castro, also a teacher in Goiriz (AGA, 2023p); Dositeo Ramos, teacher in the school which in Santaballa (Vilalba, Lugo) created the “Liga Santaballese de Instrucción”, with vacancy in Pedragay (AGA, 2023q); Antonio Martínez Zárata, teacher of the school of the “Sociedad Mugardeza de Instrucción” in Cruceiro (Mugarbos, A Coruña), with vacancy in Chanteiro (Ares, A Coruña) (AGA, 2023r); Federico García Expósito, teacher of the school Franza-Seixo promoted by the “Sociedad de Instrucción de Franza y Seijo”; Victoriano Taibo, teacher of the school of Santiago de Mera established by the “Sociedad de Instrucción Puente de Mera” (AGA, 2023s), with vacancy in Morgadán (Gondomar, Pontevedra) at the moment of the coup d’etat. Josefa Agulló Barral and José María Rois Castro (AGA, 2023t), both teachers in the school that the society “Sada y sus contornos” had created in that location in A Coruña; Manuel Bergueiro López (AGA, 2023u) y Juan Garrido Eirín (AGA, 2023v), both teachers in the schools of Aro and Cobas which “Unión Barcalesa” established in Negreira (A Coruña).

To sum up

In the framework of Galician emigration to America, the FSGAC, carried out an extraordinary communitarian labour of literacy and schooling which transcended the ‘charitable action’ which projected onto the ‘solidary intervention’. This intervention was inspired on conceptual aspects of the Argentinian school model such as the laical educational ideology, the architectural functionality, the spacial resources and organization or the teaching competence, thus anticipating the educational postulates of the II Republic.

This progressive educative model suffered the continuous extortion of the conservative political powers and of the local clergy during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, and this led to a violent repression after the Francoist coup d’etat and during the civil war. One part of the teaching practise who carried out their labour in the schools promoted by the FSGAC joined the public system in the brief Republican Interval, maintaining its teaching commitment not exempt of political context, which originated in prior administrative punishment and reprisal with charges in some cases, prison or execution. What we included here is a very localised sample of what must have happened in the rest of Galicia between 1923 and 1940, which we understand deserves a wider study to delve into this aspect hardly known of this intervention model.

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