

Jerry White
(Canada)

**Republican Difficulties: Noè Jordania's *Difficultés Socialistes*,
Antoni Rovirii Virgili's *L'Estat Català*, and the Vagaries of
Exile Writers in France**

Although it is presently gripped by poisonous arguments about immigration, it is important to remember that France has, in its post-Revolutionary DNA, a sense of being a *terred'accueil*. That was especially true of the early part of the 20th century, where it served as a landingpad for European exiles of many stripes. For the most part immigrants from this period faded into the fabric of French society, in a way that is in keeping with republican idealism around the state not taking any interest in its citizens' origins and this treating each citizen equally. That was by and large true, for instance, of refugees from the Russian Revolution or the Spanish Civil War. But in both of these wars, there are sub-groups which provide an important exception to this tendency, an illustration of the degree to which republican ideology is actually much more flexible and malleable than the *intégristesd'intégration* in French life have tended to present matters. Because if we speak of the Russian Revolution and the Spanish Civil War, we are not just speaking about Russians and Spaniards. We are also speaking, for instance, of Georgians and Catalans. The writing that some of these "minority nationals" did in French exile can help clarify this kind of *souplesserépublicaine*, clarify the degree to which republican idealism can emerge in more than one way. I have in mind here *Difficultéssocialistes*, published in 1933 by NoèJordania, who was then based in Paris (specifically in the suburb Leuville-sur-Orge) and *L'Estat català: Estudi de dret públic*, which was written from Perpignan by the exiled Catalan politician and intellectual in 1947 but not published during his lifetime.

For this readership I will largely forgo the introduction to NoèJordania, and just identify a few key aspects of his life that I think will come out as we examine *Difficultés-socialistes*. Before becoming the head of the "Menshevik" or social-democratic government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918–1921), Jordania was well-acquainted with European political thought. His longest period outside of Georgia was in Warsaw, but he had a fairly substantial period of study in France, where he met many of France's most prominent socialists (his encounter with Jules Guesde is the most well-known). When the Bolsheviks invaded Georgia in 1921 and ended this short-lived independence, exiles scattered all over Europe. Many gravitated towards France in no small part because of the strong presence there of the *Internationalesocialiste*, which had sent a delegation to visit independent Georgia in 1920; the French government itself was famously cool to the exiled government's pleas for assistance. In short, it was socialism as such, and specifically an

internationalist form of socialism, that defined Jordania's relationship with France; when we point to his connection to the country, we are inevitably pointing to other countries at the same time. In *Difficultés socialistes*, this intense investment in a locally-rooted political tradition exists in a kind of creative tension (I suppose we could say dialectic) with an internationalist sensibility, and that is the key to understanding the kind of republican tradition that Jordania was helping to enunciate with the Democratic Republic of Georgia, and from which defenders of French republicanism can, I believe, learn a lot.

Something very different is going on with the work of Antoni Rovirai Virgili. Here I will spend more time on biographical details, since I assume he is more or less unknown to both a Georgian and a broadly international audience. Rovirai Virgili was one of the most important political theorists to write in Catalan. His magnum opus is the three-volume *Història dels moviments nacionalistes*, which was published between 1912–14 and examined movements in Poland, Ukraine, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Flanders, Transylvania, etc. (he did not have a chapter on Georgia). But most of his work is actually devoted to federalism, and the other book of his that is a candidate for the title "magnum opus" is the collection of essays *Nacionalisme i Federalisme*, published in 1917. Rovirai Virgili helped to found a number of left or centre-left catalanist political parties, including the one that became the country's most venerable, *Esquerra Republicana*, which emerged in 1932 under a Spanish Republic that was relatively friendly to the notion of Catalan devolution, which it granted in the form of the Statute of Autonomy of 1932, restoring the autonomous parliament known as the *Generalitat*. He was elected to that parliament in October 1938, at the very end of the Spanish Civil War, and just three months later he went into exile in France. Following the death of Josep Irla, he became president of the *Generalitat-in-exile* in 1940, and like Irla he also died in office, in Perpignan, in 1949. He left behind a fairly massive collection of Catalan-language material written in exile, some of it published in émigré journals in France, Switzerland and Mexico, and much of it unpublished.

The most ambitious of these was the book-length work *L'Estat català: Estudi de dret públic*, which he finished in 1947. This won the prize for "Best Book on a Judicial Theme Relating to Catalonia" at the 1947 *Jocs Florals*, an annual celebration of Catalan culture that in the Franco era was being held in exile (the 1947 edition was in Westminster). And yet, it was never published, sitting in manuscript form until 2016, when the presses of the university named for him, *Universitat Rovira i Virgili*, published an edition edited by Xavier Ferré Trill, a professor of pedagogy there. It is an important part not only of his work but of the landscape of mid-century exile writing, precisely for the way that it so clearly tries to re-create the situation of the home country in a new territory, and a new language. Indeed, in some ways the book is like many of those that Rovirai Virgili had written in the pre-Civil-War period, at the height of *catalanisme*. It has three parts, and the first part as well as much of the second part are taken up by a highly detailed history of Catalonia, beginning in the early mediaeval period.

It is somewhat remarkable for its total lack of engagement with France. Although Rovirai Virgili was no stranger to French political history – in terms of republicanism, the

history of the Revolution, and the ways in which her minority groups such as the Bretons had evolved, by the time we are in 1947 that interest seems to be fading. What is in its place is a laser-like focus on the history of Catalonia and the evolution various kinds of state formations that did indeed emerge there, many times within larger states. In terms of structure, the first part of the book “drags” a bit inasmuch as it is extremely top-heavy with fine details of a very wide spread of Catalan history.

Jordania’s *Difficulté socialiste* has a part where it “drags” as well, and the specifics of that drag are illuminating. I refer there to the book’s two longest essays, “De la démocratie” and “Les origines du bolchevisme.” The former uses almost entirely French examples, and the second almost entirely Russian ones. At one point in “De la démocratie” Jordania rails that “La souveraineté du peuple – fondement même de la démocratie – n’a jamais été la doctrine de la bourgeoisie. Par contre, son second attribut – la liberté – a toujours été inscrit sur son étendard” (Jordania 1933: 103)[The sovereignty of the people – the very foundation of democracy – has never been the doctrine of the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, its second attribute – freedom – has always been written upon its banner]. His evidence for this flows from the history of the period just before to just after the French Revolution; that is to say, he quotes Rousseau and talks about Robespierre’s opposition in the Assemblée constituante to the bourgeoisie’s liberal principles. Something similar is going on in the chapter about Bolshevism, where he pores over the finer points of the movement’s emergence, its ideologists, etc. Rather than engage specifically with France, he here shifts to a discussion of Europe overall, damning the Bolsheviks for being, in essence, insufficiently western. He writes that “Ainsi, la Russie n’est par [*recto* pas] l’Europe... le capitalisme, la bourgeoisie, la Constitution sont les attributs de l’Occident; l’obchtchina, l’aterl, et l’administration du mir, viola les attribues de la Russie, et c’est par eux qu’elle entre dans le socialisme” (Jordania 1933: 189)[Thus, Russia is not Europe... capitalism, the bourgeoisie, and the constitution are attributes of the west; the obchtchina, the aterl, and the administration of the Mir, these are the attributes of Russia, and it is through them that Russia enters into socialism]. What we are seeing in these very long essays is a strain in Jordania’s thought that goes back to his earliest days as a political actor. Of the formative period just before the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, Stephen Jones writes that “Georgian social democracy’s semilegal activities from 1907-1914, though limited, were part of an attempt to europeanize Georgia and separate it from what Georgians saw as a Russian Jacobin tradition” (Jones 2005: 227). For the social democrats of Jordania’s generation, the lessons of Jacobinism were essential, and the distinctive form of socialism that they developed in Georgia, one that integrated peasant communities into a national proletariat, was a way of redeeming revolution from the sins of its extremists. Jordania published quite a bit in Georgian during the early years of his exile, mostly on topics of specifically Georgian interest (perhaps a bit like what we see with Rovira i Virgili and other Catalan exiles). But with *Difficulté socialiste* she was doing something very different. He was returning to the very foundations of his political thought and the struggles it had led to, and doing it without ever mentioning Georgia explicitly.

Really, he is talking about France, the place where, for whatever reason, he had found shelter from the storm. *Difficultés socialistes* shows just how much his woes were now, truly, her woes as well.

Rovirai Virgili is returning to some of the basic principles of his thought as well; rather than the moderate social-democracy that Jordania is rediscovering, what he returns to in *L'Estat català* is federalism. This is a key aspect of much *catalanista* political thought, especially in the late 19th and early 20th century. Rovirai Virgili, though, is now explaining the matter in more explicitly republican terms. That is to say, in *L'Estat català* his emphasis is not just on federalism as a set of institutions and procedures (although there is plenty on that), but also as an embodiment of *pluralism*. In the book's first chapter, which gives the broadest imaginable sketch of Catalan history, he has a section provocatively titled "Les Catalunyes," the Catalonias. What he is referring to there is the territory where the Catalan language is spoken: Catalonia, Valencia, the Balearic islands, a tiny part of Southern France, the micro-state of Andorra, and the Sardinian city of L'Alguer. He also talks in that section about "Les quatre Espanyes" — the four Spains, which he argues are made up of Castella, Catalonia, Portugal and the Basque Country. So far, so good, as this kind of talk would have been a fairly regular part of discussion around an "Iberian Federation," which would have been very big in Rovirai Virgili's circle. But he argues that there is a crucial difference:

La raça i la llengua, que diversifiquen les Espanyes com la geografia i la història, no diversifiquen les Catalunyas; al contrari, les unifiquen. Les Catalunyas fan una Catalunya. Les Espanyes no fan una Espanya. Les quatre Espanyes – *Castella, Catalunya, Portugal i Euskadi* – són quatre nacions. Les tres Catalunyes – Principat, València i les Illes – són tres regions d'una sola nació (Rovira i Virgili 2006: 52–53).

[Race and language, which diversify the Spains as do geography and history, do not diversify the Catalonias: on the contrary, they unify them. The Catalonias make one Catalonia. The Spains do not make one Spain. The four Spains – Castella, Catalonia, Portugal and the Basque Country – are four nations. The three Catalonias – the Principality, Valencia and the Islands – are three regions of a single nation.]

A few lines down he qualifies all this by saying that "No hi ha cap imperialisme ni cap irredemptisme en el sentit ampli del nom Catalunya. No hi ha més que l'afirmació d'una unitat lingüística, cultural i espiritual. La terra de les nacions pertany als homes que l'habiten" (Rovira i Virgili 2006: 53) [There is no imperialism nor any irredentism in the broad sense of the name « Catalonia ». There is no more than the affirmation of a linguistic, cultural and spiritual unity. Nations' lands belong to those who live on them]. What Rovirai Virgili is holding in balance here are the imperatives of unity and diversity, and resolutely refusing to give up on unity. That is, not to put too fine a point on it, a very French way of seeing the matter of national identity. French republicanism is famously heavy on the first and not so friendly to the second, that is to say that it is widely understood as being heavily centralising on the basis of language. The centrality of the French language in all aspects of the national life, especially in education, is widely seen as being hostile

to difference. This is, in essence, the vision that RoviraiVirigli has for Catalan identity, that is, that it forms “una sola nació,” and one that is marked by “una unitat lingüística.” But the key to his analysis is itself derived from the highest idealism of republicanism, which is to say that “La terra de les nacions pertany als homes que l’habiten.” I cannot think of a more pithy summary of the basic assumptions of civic nationalism. And what that approach to civic nationalism inevitably leads to is a respect for pluralism, which is the inevitable bi-product of defining an identity by the proverbial facts on the ground, that is to say by virtue of the people who occupy the territory in question, regardless of their ethnic or linguistic identity.

This kind of republican difficulty would have been front of mind for someone like Jordania. Indeed, federalism was something of a sticking point for him. Georgia is of course a multi-ethnic state; “[e]ls homes que l’habiten” include ethnic Georgians as well as their Kartelian cousins the Svans and Mingrelians, as well as Armenians, Azeris, Greeks, Ossetians, Abkhaz, and substantial Jewish and Muslim communities. Some sort of decentralisation was obviously going to be necessary for an independent Georgia, and the experience of the autonomy granted to Adjara during this period seemed to provide shades of things to come. But although Jordania was strongly influenced by European models such as Belgium’s or Switzerland’s, he would not have adopted the kind of federalist idealism that we see in the work of RoviraiVirgili so easily. Malkhaz Matsaberidze writes that “Federalism was... associated with Georgia’s history of fragmentation.” He goes on to say that:

The unitary system, however, presented the Social Democrats with a conundrum. The constitution, in Chapter Eleven, “Autonomous Governance” (Articles 107; 108), stipulated that that Batumi district, along with Abkhazia and Zakatala, should be granted autonomy.... Pavle Saqvaridze argued that like the Belgian Constitution of 1831, the principle of a unitary democratic republic was compatible with autonomy, as long as autonomy did not mean state autonomy (Matsaberidze 2014: 153).

“State autonomy” is exactly what L’Estat català is arguing for, even if the meaning of the term “state” is, as with so much Catalanist discourse of this era, kept deliberately ambiguous and may very well mean something that stops short of full political independence. But the predominance of the state is something that Jordania had clearly become suspicious of, something that he makes very clear in the chapter of *Difficultés socialistes* entitled “Étatisme.” He writes there that “Le culte de l’individu cède sa place à celui de l’État” (Jordania 1933: 8) [The cult of the individual has given way to the cult of the state]. He sees the bureaucratic spirit that this inevitably leads to as contrary to what he sees as a just society, and just as contrary to the French socialism that has inspired him. It is Jules Guesde who he invokes when he most vividly explains the ravages of this experience of the state, writing that state-ism:

...tient les travailleurs, pour employer l’expression de Guesde, par le ventre ainsi que par le collet. Cette nouvelle classe, c’est la bureaucratie, les fonctionnaires. Le fonctionnarisme est le pilier de l’étatisme. C’est pour quoi aussi l’on met les intérêts des fonc-

tionnaires à côté des intérêts du prolétariat et l'on proclame leur défense pour une œuvre socialiste. Ce problème a tellement remué le parti socialiste français... qu'un congrès a été convoqué à Avignon pour le régler (Jordania 1933: 24).

[...takes the workers by the stomach as well as by the collar, to use Guesde's expression. This new class is the bureaucracy, the civil servants. Civilservantism is the pillar of statism. It is also why the interests of the civil servants are put side by side with the interests of the proletariat and their defense of socialism is so proclaimed. This problem has so shaken the French socialist party... that a conference has been organised in Avignon in order to deal with it.]

The rise of the state is something, though, that wasn't really new in Jordania's thought. Brisku has pointed out that "Envisaging the making of the modern nation in terms of economic unification and cultural autonomy, Zhordania would argue, controversially with respect to contemporary Georgian historiography, nearly 20 years after 'Economic Development and Nationality,' that Georgians had no need for their nation-state" (Brisku 2016: 310). Brisku is referring there to Jordania's essay "Our National Question," part of his Georgian-language book *The National Question*, published in Tbilisi in 1922. This hostility to state formations is clearly connected to the forces that were pulling apart the nascent Democratic Republic, that is to say competing claims not only for recognition and legitimisation, to which Jordanian was basically sympathetic, but also competing claims to sovereignty and the institutions that make sovereignty possible, to which he just as obviously was not.

This, really, is the key difference that he has with a minority exile like Rovirai Virgili. Both were strongly Europhilic, wanting their "small nations" to be able to take their rightful place at the table alongside other "small countries" like Belgium or Lithuania or Poland. And both did so from a place on the left that we would now clearly identify as a distinctly European social democracy, one that was open to the role that the bourgeoisie plays in building a fully functioning society (Stephen Jones' book *Socialism in Georgian Colors* argues that what we now know as European social democracy can be seen in its earliest form in 19th century and early 20th century Georgia). But Rovirai Virgili was adamant that this was about Catalans building a state of their own, even if not fully independent, and gradually making a bureaucracy that was defined by its Catalan-speaking quality. That is very French; a highly bureaucratised society joined together most strongly by language. For Jordania, it was independence as such that was key; the state, and the bureaucracy that would follow it, was never more than a necessary evil. As time wore on, he saw it more and more just as an evil.

Despite these differences, though, what we can see through this comparison of *L'Estat català* and *Difficultés socialistes* is the ways in which exile writers in 1930s and 1940s France rethought and revitalised the republican tradition of the country that took them in. Sometimes this was explicit, as in the case of Jordania, writing in French about the really fine points of socialism within the Hexagon. Sometimes it is implicit and almost unwitting, as we see with Rovirai Virgili, writing in Catalan and focussing more intensely

than ever on Catalonia itself, but doing so in ways that would be unthinkable outside of France. Writing in 1987, Alain Finkielkraut summarised the basic concept of French national identity in a way that brings out the common republican heritage that both Jordania and Rovirai Virgili seemed to be discovering in their exile of the 1930s and 40s. In his book *La défaite de la pensée*, he quoted Witold Gombrowicz as he wrote the following:

« Un Français qui ne prend rien en considération en dehors de la France est-il plus français ? Ou moins français ? En fait, être français, c'est justement prendre en considération autre chose que la France. » Phrase admirable et qui explique l'attrait que la France a longtemps exercé sur les étrangers chassés de chez eux par la bêtise haineuse du Volksgeist (138–39).

[“Is a Frenchman more French or less French if he sees nothing but France? To be really French means to see something beyond France.” An admirable observation and one that explains why France for many years has attracted foreigners chased from their homes by the hateful stupidity of the Volkgeist] (Friedlander 102; translation modified slightly)

Neither Jordania nor Rovirai Virgili were fleeing the Volksgeist, that is to say ethnic nationalism, as such. But they were certainly “étrangers chassés de chez eux,” finding themselves to be Georgians and Catalans who were being forced to think less and less about Georgia and Catalonia. And in so doing both became, in their own ways, very French indeed.

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**ჯერი უაიტი
(კანადა)**

**რესპუბლიკური სირთულეები: ნოე ჟორდანისა
„სოციალისტური სიძნელები“, ანტონიო როვირი ვირგილის
„კატალონური სახელმწიფო“ და საფრანგეთში ემიგრირებულ
პოლიტიკოს ავტორთა კაპრიზები**

რეზიუმე

საკვანძო სიტყვები: ემიგრანტი პოლიტიკოსები, რესპუბლიკური ტრადიცია, ფედერალიზმი.

სტატიაში ერთმანეთს არის შედარებული საფრანგეთში ემიგრირებული ორი პოლიტიკოსის ნაშრომები. ესენია: საქართველოს პირველი რესპუბლიკის მთავრობის ხელმძღვანელი, ბოლშევიკების შემოჭრის შემდეგ საფრანგეთში გადასახლებული ნოე ჟორდანია და კატალონიელი პოლიტიკოსი და ემიგრანტი, მოგვიანებით კი კატალონიის პარლამენტის თავმჯდომარე დევნილობაში, ემილი ანტონი როვირი ვირიგილი. საკვანძო ტექსტებია ნოე ჟორდანისა „სოციალისტური სირთულეები“ (Difficultés socialistes) (1933) და როვირი ვირგილის „კატალონური სახელმწიფო“ (L'Estat català) (დანერილია 1947 წელს, მაგრამ არ გამოქვეყნებულა 2016 წლამდე). მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ ორივე ეს ტექსტი რესპუბლიკურ ტრადიციასთან არის დაკავშირებული, ჟორდანისა ნაშრომის ცენტრში დგას ფრანგული რესპუბლიკანიზმი და, მასთან ერთად, ფრანგული სოციალიზმი, მაშინ, როდესაც როვირი ვირგილის ნაშრომში გაცილებით მეტია საუბარი ფედერალიზმის ტრადიციის მეშვეობით სახელმწიფო წარმონაქმნების ჩამოყალიბების შესახებ. ის არ იზიარებს ჟორდანისა აზრებს ადგილობრივი ბიუროკრატებისა თუ ხელისუფლების შექმნაზე, რომ აღარაფერი ვთქვათ ჟორდანისა შეხედულებაზე ფედერალიზმის შესახებ. საფრანგეთშიც კი, ვირგილი კატალონიელ პოლიტიკურ მოაზროვნედ დარჩა, ერთ-ერთ იმათგანად, ვინც სამწუხარო პოლიტიკური მიზეზების გამო, საზღვრის სხვა მხარეს აღმოჩნდა. მეორე მხრივ, ჟორდანისა სწრაფვა, მთლიანად ჩაძირულიყო რესპუბლიკურ იდეალიზმში, გახლდათ ძალიან „ფრანგული“ მიდგომა, რამდენადაც იგი ცდილობდა ადგილობრივ პოლიტიკურ ტრადიციასთან სრულ ინტეგრირებას, თუმცა ამას ისე აკეთებდა, რომ აშკარად ჩანდა სამშობლოდაკარგული კაცი.

დასკვნის სახით, ნათქვამია, რომ სწორედ ჟორდანისა „სოციალისტური სიძნელები“ გვთავაზობს უფრო არსებით ჩარევას (ინტერვენციას) თანამედროვეობის ისეთ ურთულეს პრობლემებში, როგორებიცაა მოქალაქეობა და კულტურული კუთვნილება.