

[recent posts](#) [log in](#) [register](#)

libcom.org [blog](#) [news](#) [library](#) [history](#) [gallery](#) [organise](#) [forums](#)

Home / Blogs / Reddebek's blog

The Friend of Andreu Nin



English translation of [an article](#) about a POUM supporter, Esperantist and friend of Andreu Nin.

When one speaks about the Esperantism of the most well known leader of the POUM [The Workers Party of Marxist Unification], Andreu Nin (1892-1937), one always begins at the same starting point the Esperanto club Fraternity/Brotherhood. He cofounded it in 1909 in the town he was born in, El Vendrell in Catalunya. It starred Maria Julvert (1888-1968) among others, a teacher of painting and design, and activist in the early feminist movement, and Amadeu Martorell (1888-1958). About Maria Julvert we know a lot thanks to the findings of Gisela Alc3n. But about Martorell we know only a little. He certainly was a good friend to Nin, demonstrated by this letter sent on the 12/06/1910 (private collection) Joan Inglada, who found this letter explained that "Nin became an Esperantist in 1907 together with his friend Amadeu Martorell, who learnt Esperanto in Vilafranca del Pened3s, where he worked". But who was Amadeu Martorell?

It is possible to partially answer this question thanks to an article about his life which appeared in February 1936 and was published in the cultural magazine Estampa, the most printed magazine in Spain in the 30s. Concerned with modern society and politically conservative in the context of the second Spanish Republic. The text about Martorell appeared in the column "Humble Lives". Interestingly, it does not link Esperanto with any type of social or political goal.

According to this information, we know that his mother passed away before he was one year old. Martorell was often beaten and went hungry while growing. He became a skinny and malnourished child, waxy coloured, and lost his hair, especially on the top of his head, and was covered in abscesses. Usually the focus of mockery and bullying by the other children he learnt to defend himself. He combined the family work as shepherd with outstanding participation in elementary school. However, when he was ten his father forced him to become

Posted By
Reddebek
Jul 4 2020 13:36

Tags
[Amadeu Martorell](#),
[Javier Alcalde](#), [POUM](#),
[Reddebek](#), [Esperanto](#)
[language](#), [Spanish civil](#)
[war](#)

Share
[Tweet](#)

Attached files

About this blog




Providing analysis and criticism (mostly criticism).

Featured



[Sudan: Anarchists against the Military Dictatorship](#)

Yesterday, in Sudan, during nationwide demonstrations against the military dictatorship that seized power on October 25, state forces repeatedly used live rounds against protesters, killing at...



libcom.org

[Like Page](#)

Follow 61.7K followers

Log in for more features

Click [here](#) to register now. Logged in users:

- ▶ Can comment on articles and discussions
- ▶ Get 'recent posts' refreshed more regularly
- ▶ Bookmark articles to your own reading list
- ▶ Use the site private messaging system
- ▶ Start forum discussions, submit articles, and more...

a student of bread making. He remained a bread maker for a decade. But he was not an average worker. Often weak and ill, he read much literature and philosophy, which did not please his employers. For these reasons he was regularly fired.

The Fifth Universal Congress of Esperanto (UK) took place in September of 1909 in Barcelona. At the time the police of El Vendrell arrested a person, for travelling on the train without a ticket. He spoke an unknown language and repeated the word "Esperanto". Because of that the police called on a local Esperantist: Amadeu Martorell. After speaking with the stranger Martorell explained to the police that he was the Russian poet Gedrezi Ciklari, and that a thief had stolen his briefcase, including his personal documents and train ticket.

At 21 years old Martorell decided to go abroad in search of a more agreeable life. In Paris it was Esperanto which he depended on as he did not know French. Thanks to it he started work at the Grand Hotel du Globe, an international hotel for Esperantists owned by the Leclercs in the Latin Quarter. Another famous guest was the Russian Vasilij Devjatnin (1862-1938), who worked professionally for Esperanto in Paris, famously walking for 42 days to the 1912 UK to Karkova in the company of the Turkish Romano. For six years Martorell again combined work (mostly at night in the restaurant) with his studies in high school. Later he returned to Spain to become a teacher.

When Martorell entered the teaching college he was 27 years old. At the same time he also taught Esperanto privately to proletarians in Barcelona. Suddenly however, the school was shut due to legal troubles with Martorell teaching before receiving an official diploma*. After a brief stint in a warehouse his fellow proletarians helped him get a post as a school manager in the town of Valls. It was a rationalist school (built on the teaching model pioneered by Francisco Ferrer) inside the offices of the Centre Obrer Instructiu [Workers Teaching Centre]. One of his students was Josep Piñas Serra (1899-1986), who during the Spanish Civil War became the mayor of Valls, and after the conflict would be exiled into the French concentration camps. Having finished his studies Martorell was appointed a teacher at a workers school. He celebrated the success of his studies by going on a fishing trip with his friends, as shown by the photograph in the article of Juan Puente in Estampa. Easily recognisable on the right of the picture is his dear friend Andreu Nin.

Later Martorell enrolled in University to become a dentist. He continued his studies in Madrid and became a paediatric dentist first, and then a Doctor of medicine and surgery later. To pay the tuition fees he again taught privately. In Madrid, just as in Paris he did not get to enjoy the sites and night festivities of the city.

The journalist of Estampa ends his article by asking Martorell "What will you do now?" He answered: " I just discovered that my calling is to be a teacher," he continued modestly "I would like to direct a children's ward in a hospital or teach little ones in a modest school". But soon after the military rebellion occurred, and Martorell would never teach again.

The details about his later life are sparse. In the epoch of the Civil War advertisements from a Doctor Amadeu Martorell in the journal El Baix Penedès, the local information publication of the POUM have been found. During the conflict he worked in the hospital at El Vendrell. Later, as the Republicans were suppressed he suffered under a military tribunal. He was only spared a heavy prison sentence at the last minute, by the efforts of the new (Francoist) mayor of El Vendrell, who travelled to Tarragona to speak favourably on behalf of Martorell to the army tribunal. After the war he got work as a dentist but quickly grew seriously ill. He died in 1958.

Javier Alcalde

The author thanks the granddaughters of Amadeu Martorell who graciously agreed to pass on some important information. Xavier Margais gave us the letter which first appeared in Joan Inglada's article.

Translated into English by Reddebek.

*This information isn't in the article which just said the school was closed due to illegal activities of the staff, but was provided by another Spanish Esperantist who checked it for me. I'm not sure whether this meant Martorell had a more senior position at the school or if the authorities used his unofficial teaching as a pretext to close the school.

[reddebek's blog](#) | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments