

Las Noticias (1896-1939): a successful business venture cut short by the Spanish Civil War

Las Noticias (1896-1939): una exitosa aventura empresarial truncada por la Guerra Civil



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Abstract:

The emergence of the mass press in Spain coincided with the birth of the newspaper *Las Noticias* in 1896, founded by the businessman Rafael Roldós Viñolas, recognised as one of the pioneers of advertising

Resumen:

La eclosión de la prensa de masas en España coincide con el nacimiento, en 1896, del diario Las Noticias, una cabecera fundada por el empresario Rafael Roldós Viñolas, reconocido por ser uno de los pioneros

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in Spain. Thanks to his commercial initiatives, *Las Noticias* soon became one of Barcelona's most widely circulated newspapers. His successful career was unexpectedly cut short in 1936 with the outbreak of the Civil War when the UGT seized the newspaper. After the conflict, its publication was no longer authorised. Despite the relevance of *Las Noticias* in Barcelona's society at the time, hardly any works accurately describe its trajectory. Thus, this research aims to highlight the importance of this newspaper in the history of Spanish and Catalan journalism through an exhaustive newspaper review.

Keywords:

Las Noticias; history of journalism; journalism in Spain; Francoist censorship; Rafael Roldós.

publicitarios en España. Gracias a sus acciones comerciales, pronto se convertirá en una de las cabeceras de mayor circulación de Barcelona. Su exitosa trayectoria se verá inesperadamente truncada en 1936, con el estallido de la Guerra Civil, momento en el que el diario es incautado por la UGT. Finalizado el conflicto, no se volverá a autorizar su publicación. A pesar de la relevancia de Las Noticias en la sociedad barcelonesa de la época, apenas existen trabajos que describan su trayectoria con exactitud. Así, a través de una exhaustiva revisión hemerográfica, esta investigación pretende poner de relieve la importancia de este rotativo en la historia del periodismo español y catalán.

Palabras clave:

Las Noticias; historia del periodismo; periodismo en España; censura franquista; Rafael Roldós.

1. Introduction

Although there are several works and investigations on the history and trajectory of the most influential newspaper and magazine publications in different historical periods in Spain (*El Diluvio*, *La Esfera*, *La Vanguardia*, *Blanco y Negro*, *Diari Català*, *La Voz de Galicia*, etc.), it is surprising that the history of one of the most popular Catalan newspapers from the late 19th and earlier 20th centuries, *Las Noticias* has never been addressed. It was founded in 1896, disappeared after being collectivised by the U.G.T. during the civil war, and was later banned during the Franco dictatorship. *Las Noticias* not only stands out for its impact on Spanish and Catalan society of the time but also for its founder, Rafael Roldós Viñolas' innovative commercial and promotional activities. These activities aimed to ensure the viability of this type of newspaper, which is focused on increasing the sale of copies and attracting and retaining subscribers and advertisers.

This research aims to study the trajectory of this newspaper and to highlight the different initiatives it carried out, such as the early edition of supplements and monographs on various topics or sports scoreboards that featured on its front page to report the latest sports results, which gave rise to a weekly meeting point for Barcelona society of the time. This research also reviews its large and prestigious staff of collaborators, which includes renowned writers, photographers, poets, philosophers and politicians from the first decades of the 20th century.

The literature review of the scarce academic literature on *Las Noticias* reveals several errors and inaccuracies that should be corrected to write a rigorous history of this media. For instance, the year of its foundation demonstrates these inaccuracies as some works state that it took place in 1897 (Pérez, 2001:48) or even 1887 (Guillamet, 2001:131), when in fact it took place in 1896. We gathered and analysed *Las Noticias* from the second issue published on 16 March 1896 until the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, when it was collectivised and became part of the Union General de Trabajadores trade' (U.G.T.) instrument of dissemination. We have consulted the collection housed in Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona for primary sources, the only archive in Spain that conserves/preserves almost all the copies of the newspaper. In this sense, the copies up to 30 September 1911 are saved on microfilm. It can be found in hard copy as of issue number 5633, corresponding to 1 October. It should be noted that the Digital

Library of Spain provides the digital version of the newspaper free of charge. Still, only the issues were published between 19 February 1898 and 31 December 1902.

The difficult access to these copies most likely explains the lack of research on this newspaper and the inaccurate or confusing information published at times. However, the several chronicles that report the founding of *Las Noticias*¹ and the regular mentions in different newspapers about the trajectory of this newspaper and its founder to demonstrate its essential role in Barcelona society in the early 20th century.

Without Roldós, most of the Spanish newspapers would not exist; and his fame in this respect has been such that not a single Spanish newspaper has been founded for thirty years or more, whose first concern was not to write to Roldós to ask Roldós for advice, to ask Roldós for help... and Roldós, with the affection he felt for these cultural instruments, helped them all. He shared like manna la copious publicity that his agency enjoyed (*Las Noticias*, 1918:3).

Rafael Roldós Viñolas is the first documented advertising agent in Spain to this day. Roldós was born in Barcelona, on Plateria Street, on 29 March 1846 (Administrative Municipal Archive of Barcelona, 1846). His interest in/passion for journalism arose at an early age when he began to work as a typesetter in the Ramírez printing house, “the first and most reputable of the printing establishments in that capital city [Barcelona] and perhaps in all of Spain” (*La Opinión*, 1880:2). Rafael Roldós started in advertising as an advertising broker- mainly for the *Diario de Barcelona*- until 1872, when he founded the advertising centre Roldós y Compañía, where he also managed advertisements. He began to incorporate other services such as writing advertisements: “He went from ad broker to advertisements: he sensed them. He woke merchants up from their lethargy, wasted his time, and as a result of his work, an advertising centre emerged, one of the most important in Spain” (*El Noticiero Universal*, 1918:4).

Roldós’ entrepreneurial spirit pushed him to develop various businesses of different kinds, including the creation of the company Sociedad de Artistas Españoles, dedicated to reproducing and selling oil paintings and other art objects in 1886 (Serra, 2015) or launching the brands “*Vigor estomacal*” (*Boletín Oficial de la Propiedad Intelectual é Industrial*, 1904:1311) and “*La Flor de Oro*” (*Boletín Oficial de la Propiedad Intelectual é Industrial*, 1909:1247), in 1904 and 1909 respectively. He has also presented some projects to the Barcelona City Council, such as the proposal to decorate the Rambla of Barcelona for *La mercé* festivities in 1887 (Roldós, 1877) or the installation project for public urinals in the city centre as an advertising medium, to modernise Barcelona’s image before the imminent 1888 Universal Exposition (*Proyecto de retretes públicos*, 1887).

However, the foundation of *Las Noticias* in 1896 is “undoubtedly the greatest love of his life in the industrial area/era” (*El Noticiero Universal*, 1918:4). Especially during the gestation/incubation of the newspaper, Roldós seemed to put his heart and soul into it:

He rarely went to bed in the business agency he had set up in the basement of the Quatre Nacions hotel. At home, he only stayed there when he was eating and sleeping, but not always. The intellectuals of the *Penya del Café Orient*, where he used to go/frequent, had lost sight of him. My Roldós was fully absorbed by a single idea: the triumph of “*Las Noticias*” (*La Veu de Catalunya*, 1936:7).

The press underwent a notable change at the end of the 19th century: the Printing Law of 1883, the development of the railroad and the telegraph, and the population’s higher literacy levels allowed for the consolidation of the daily press and fostered the

¹ For example, between April and June 1936, the journalist Joan Costa publishes in *La Veu de Catalunya* and in the section “*Memòries d’un periodista*”, different chronicles about *Las Noticias*, which gather unedited information about its beginning and evolution.

creation of new newspapers and the improvement of existing ones –which had been unstable for years, were mainly controlled by the different political parties and had a limited circulation due to their high price and the working classes' illiteracy-. Moreover, this boom in the press at the end of the century was favoured by the release of new illustrated publications such as *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, *Blanco y Negro*, *Nuevo Mundo* and *Mundo Gráfico* “with a different presentation format and novel contents compared to the traditional daily press” (Valbuena, 2014: 60).

2. Birth and early years of *Las Noticias*

On Sunday, 15 March 1896, the first issue of *Las Noticias* was published. It was published in Spanish and contained four pages and five columns; it was laid out as follows. The front page featured the masthead *Las Noticias* and the heading “Evening newspaper, news, notices and telegrams” below. On the left, there is information about the cost of the newspaper –5 cents– and its subscription –1 peseta a month in Barcelona– and on the right, information on the rates for advertising spaces. It also includes the newspaper’s editorial office and administration address, initially located at number 17 on the second floor of *La Rambla del Centro*.

At its foundation, the editorial office and administration of *Las Noticias* were located on *Rambla del Centro* 17, first floor 3A, while the newspaper’s address was on Calle Guardia 14. Newspaper printing was first done in the *Diario Mercantil* printing house on *Gran Vía de las Cortes Catalanas*, number 212 (Anuario Riera, 1896:278). Two years later, the newspaper was printed in the printing house *Tipografía Hispano Americana*, located on Calle Marqués de Barberá 13 and 19. In 1899, *Las Noticias* already had its own printing house on Calle Guardia 14, where the newspaper’s editorial office was later moved.

In 1897, only one year later, the initial heading included that it was an illustrated newspaper that also featured advertisements and clarified that “This newspaper is not affiliated with any political party”. At that time, it was no longer an evening newspaper, and in 1903, it included “published in the morning”. The change to a morning edition was due to various reasons: after realising that there was less public on the street at night to the lack of validity of its news- the evening newspaper is a paper, the current of which does not last for longer than an hour (Costa, 1936:7) and possibly, the desire to distance itself from one of its main competitors, the evening newspaper *El Noticiero Universal*. As early as 1905 and 1906, the epigraph of *Las Noticias* also announced that the newspaper had “correspondents in Europe’s and America’s main capitals”.

In its first issue, the newspaper pages are occupied by the Events, Spectacles, foreign and national Telegrams sections: latest news, General News, Entertainment (which included games and hieroglyphics) and the Stockmarket close. As of issue 6, a few days later, a new section was included on the front page called “*Crónica elegant*”, which appeared sporadically. It featured a woman’s silhouette whose attire was described in detail. It became an imminently newsworthy newspaper at the beginning of the 20th century as its contents were divided into sections with brief headings –Ephemeris, Premises, Politics, Official, Judicial, Maritime, Military, Municipal, Regional, Religious, The stock exchange, Commercial Magazine, Stock Exchange Bulletin, Public Entertainment, Sports, etc.–, while commercial advertisements feature on both the first and fourth page.

Rafael Guerrero Carmona managed the newspaper in its initial period, and Rafael Roldós helped form *Las Noticias*’ initial staff, which included philosophers, writers, politicians, poets, journalists and reporters. It is one of the first newspapers distributed to reporters throughout Spain and overseas-. Renowned and illustrious figures collaborated with the newspaper from its foundation to 1925. *Las Noticias*’ editorial office became many journalists’ and writers’ first job- some of whom had recently

arrived in Barcelona –this is the case of Augusto Uribe in 1897; Manuel Brunet, editor of the political section of the newspaper from 1917 (Guillamet, 2010:1-4); Josep Pla, in 1919 (Porcel, 2008:81), where he met and made friends with Brunet–, and the Valencian cartoonist Ernest Guasp upon his arrival to Barcelona, at only eighteen years of age (Casasús, 1996). *Las Noticias* is also the first newspaper to hire José Pérez de Rozas as an editorial assistant upon his arrival from Madrid and to reproduce his brother’s photographs, Carlos Pérez de Rozas Masdeu in 1911 (Pérez de Rozas, 2016). The following writers also worked at *Las Noticias*’ editorial office: Ferran Agulló, Emilio Tintorer –who worked as a critic in the newspaper from 1907, in the column “*Paradojas*” and under the pseudonym “Max” (Molas [hom.], 2003)–, Ramon Orts-Ramos, José de Cuéllar, Adolfo Marsillach, Màrius Verdaguer –nephew of Narcís Verdaguer and Francesca Bonnemaïson–, Rafael Moragas, Mario Verdaguer, Julià Pérez Carrasco, Domingo Cirici Ventalló or Josefina Solsona, who published several narrations in Spanish in the newspaper between 1922 and 1927 (Real, 2006:256). The following noteworthy collaborators included Miguel de Unamuno (Sotelo, 1993), Ramiro de Maeztu, Edmundo d’Amicis, José Martínez Ruiz, *Azorín* –who was editor of *Las Noticias* and other newspapers, sometimes under different pseudonyms– (Almarcha and Sánchez, 2005:14), Manuel Folch y Torres –who later founded the well-known magazine *Cu-Cut!*– (Castillo, 1997:60), José Echegaray, Juan José Morato, Rubén Darío, Leopoldo Alas, Pablo Iglesias, Josep Maria de Sagarra –whose friend Josep Pla helped him to make his debut in the newspaper (Permanyer, 1982)–, and Eugeni d’Ors, who wrote the section “*Las obras y los días*” in 1920 (Pascual, 1994:704). Some of its correspondents, such as Carlos Martí in Havana or Pérez Jorba in Paris, are also well-known. Likewise, *Las Noticias* is one of the first newspapers to have a photojournalist, Sánchez Manzano.

In 1909, the Salamancan Juan Barco y Cosme (1858-1927) –a close friend of the collaborator Miguel de Unamuno– took over from Rafael Guerrero as editor of the newspaper, centring it ideologically around liberalism. This departure left the newspaper “with as little spirit as a store of vetis and threads” or as its editor in chief, Josep Miró i Folgueras, described it, as a “news cementary” (Ametla, 1963: 217)

A series of common factors converge in *Las Noticias* and the most important newspapers of this period; among them is the modernisation of the business conception of journalistic activity, the imitation of successful foreign models, the improved social consideration of the journalistic profession, or the impetus of “new political forces in the public debate and the increasingly weak system of the Restoration” (Barrera, 2007:247).

2.1. The subscribers’ loyalty to Las Noticias is critical to its success

Rafael Roldós Viñolas was aware that he had to foster subscription and customer loyalty to *Las Noticias* to obtain a fixed income that would allow him to keep the newspaper afloat. Furthermore, it enabled him to prove his readership to potential advertisers, another fundamental source of financing for the newspaper. Even before the publication of the first issue, Roldós flooded Barcelona with promotional posters, promising to give away several oleographs to his first subscribers. Moreover, the name *Las Noticias* was posted on the building facade in striking gold letters, which caught the curiosity of passers-by: “Many people went on to subscribe to the newspaper for two or three months as they were very much looking forward to taking that gift home” (Costa, 1936: 7) From the third issue onwards and during its first few months in circulation, small advertisements about the newspaper’s characteristics and its subscription price featured in the newspaper.

Roldós also prioritised readers' loyalty. This was the case even before the newspaper was founded. Sometime before the first issue hit the streets, he put up a collection of artworks in his office, which could be seen from the street, advertising that readers could obtain the works after subscribing to the newspaper. This strategy proved to be successful: "Roldós' tactics were the key to the new journalistic enterprises' success" (Costa, 1936:7). Thus, Roldós obtained substantial income that allowed him to launch the new newspaper: not in vain, "Las Noticias" stickers were, needless to say, a great success and soon spread throughout Catalonia (...) In this way, the subscription rates grew at an unprecedented rate." (Costa, 1936:7).

Coupons are often featured in *Las Noticias* in the form of advertisements as they did in other newspapers. Readers had to cut out and send them to the newspaper's headquarters to obtain slightly discounted oleographs and other works of art- reproduced by the Sociedad de Artistas Españolas, also owned by Roldós-. These artworks rewarded its readers' quarterly subscription since they received one of these artworks as a gift, which was usually part of a collection that encouraged readers to maintain their loyalty throughout the year. The newspaper quickly prevented any potential subscription losses during the summer months, so it announced: "Warning, we inform our subscribers that those who leave Barcelona during the summer months may continue to receive the newspaper at the same price as in Barcelona by notifying this administration. The gift will also be sent to the designated address" (*Las Noticias*, 1896:1).

Several booklets were also published in instalments for this purpose- for example, the novel *La mujer del payaso*, by Javier Montepín or *Ni más ni menos*, by E. Marly. Current event sections were also published in chapters, such as "Memorias de un reo de muerte" (Memoirs of a death row inmate), in 1896- which recounts an interview with Silvestre Lluís over several issues, a prisoner awaiting execution or "*Proceso Ruidoso: La secuestradora de niños*" (The Noisy Proceeding: The Child Kidnapper), which narrates the macabre event surrounding Enriqueta Martí in March 1912.

These initiatives allowed the newspaper to be disseminated "in such an extraordinary way that everyone was surprised, and after a few months, *Las Noticias* gained profits and a subscription that only some newspapers could do in several years" (*Gaceta de Cataluña*, cfr. en *Las Noticias*, 1918:2). These actions allowed Roldós' new journalistic enterprise, considered by many as a "ridiculous adventure" due to its lack of editorial experience, to go head-to-head with the most widely circulated newspaper at the time *El Noticiero Universal* (Costa, 1936:7), and the model *Las Noticias* was based on. Therefore, it is logical that Mr Roldós "Before starting a work of such magnitude, (I) wanted to follow the same route as the great Valencian journalist" (*La Veu de Catalunya*, 1936:6). Thus, in 1898, *Las Noticias* published 6000 copies, less than leading newspapers such as *La Vanguardia*, with 14, 000, *Diari de Barcelona*, which circulated 9,000, and *El Diluvio* and *El Noticiero Universal*, both circulating 8000 copies. In 1905, just a few years later, *Las Noticias* became the newspaper with the second largest circulation with 11,000 copies- only behind *La Vanguardia* with 18, 000, and overtaking *El Noticiero Universal* by a thousand copies (Figueres, 2014:171-188; García-Nieto, 1958).

According to Barrera, the national newspapers *A.B.C.* (1903), *El Debate* (1910) and *El Sol* (1917) stand out as the "newspapers that led the way and championed the necessary renewal of the press during the first third of the 20th century" (Barrera, 2007: 245).

2.2. The role of advertising in *Las Noticias*

The fact that Rafael Roldós ran the advertising agency Roldós y Compañía ensured that the first copies of the newspaper featured several advertisements on the fourth or back page. These spaces were usually reserved for commercial communication during the last years of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Advertisers such as Almacenes La Victoria, Wertheim sewing machines, Mentholina elixir (created by doctor Andreu), Feroline basalm (a home remedy), and Almacenes El Indio, among other private advertisements often featured in the newspaper.

The advertisements did not state the rates until the first decades of the 20th century. Instead, they were announced as “Advertisements, tactics and notices at conventional prices” (*Las Noticias*, 1898) or “Advertisements, tactics and notices at prices according to rates, which is sent free of charge to anyone who requests it” (*Las Noticias*, 1898) located next to the newspaper’s masthead. It was not until 1910 that these rates began to be published in detail almost daily, a practice that would continue until 1925. The following table shows the evolution of *Las Noticias* advertising rates, except for obituaries, whose price, format and size had to be consulted in a specific catalogue in the newspaper’s editorial office, and leaflets, whose rates varied according to their size.

Table 1. Evolution of the advertising rates in pesetas per line

Year	1911	1912	1913	1917	1918	1922	1927
Frontpage	0.75	0.80	0.85	0.95	1	1.25	1.50
Miscellaneous	1	1.25	1.30	1.25	1.5	-	-
Referred from	0.60	0.75	0.90	0.75	1	1.35	1.75
Official and Judicial	-	-	0.60	0.60	0.80	1.50	1.10
Shows	-	-	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.35	0.40
Last/Fourth page	0.30	0.25	0.25	0.15	0.20	0.30	0.35
News at the director’s discretion	2	1.75	1.85	1.95	2.10	-	-
Newsletters	-	-	-	-	-	2.35	2.60
Industrial items	-	-	-	-	-	15	15

Source: created by the authors based on the advertisements in *Las Noticias*

From 1925 onwards, the information on advertising rates became more concise, and this space was dedicated to publishing different supplements published by the newspaper. In some issues, it is limited to a short module listing the rates for the most common formats and sections: “General” (0.40 pesetas), “Slogan” (2 pesetas), “Paragraphs” (2.60 pesetas) and “Newsletters” (3.25 pesetas), accompanied by the phrase: “for other sections consult rates” (*Las Noticias*, 1929 and 1933).

3. The golden years: The “*Las Noticias Palace*”

The origin of this second stage of the newspaper *Las Noticias* dates back to 1914, when Rafael Roldós Viñolas bought a plot of land at la Rambla de los Estudios, number 6, where he planned to build a majestic building to house all the newspaper’s offices: he demolished the existing building to proceed with the start of construction and carry out his project:

He is interested in proceeding to demolish the house of his property, located in the Rambla de los Estudios, number six, in compliance with the current Municipal Ordinances, so he informs V.E, requesting the corresponding permission (*Expediente de Permiso a Don Rafael Roldós...*, 1915).

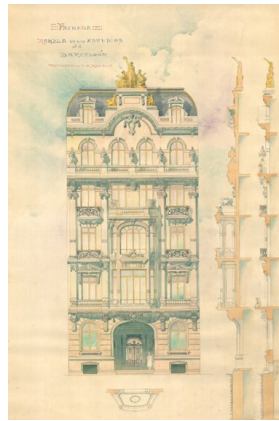
The architect Antonio Pons drew up the initial sketch of the project, and the Barcelona City Council was permitted to carry out the work. The initial project underwent considerable changes, so Roldós turned to the City Council again to request permission to expand the proposed building, arguing that it was essential for it to be “more extensive and appropriate” due to the “multiple departments, offices, editorial administration, printers, warehouses, material deposits, housing for senior staff and subordinates, drawing and photography workshops (*Expediente de Permiso a don Rafael Roldós...*, 1915) that the building had to accommodate.

Image 1. First sketch of the “Can Roldós” building (Perspective of the facade, 1914)



Source: Historical Archive of the Architect’ Association of Catalonia (COAC)

Image 2. Plan of “Can Roldós” project (Alçat i seccions, 1915)



Source: Historical Archive of the Architects' Association of Catalonia (COAC)

After finishing the works, all the departments of *Las Noticias* began to include the printing press, located in the basement of the building- and the Roldós y Compañía's agency was moved to the new headquarters, a process that finished in 1920. Two years earlier, in 1918, Rafael Roldós Viñolas passed away, so he could not witness the culmination of his project. From that moment on, his sons took over the running of the agency: Ruperto and Rafael Roldós Gómez, who went on to manage the advertising agency and the newspaper.

Just before the expected move in 1919, and according to Josep Pla –a result of his time at *Las Noticias*–, the editorial staff of *Las Noticias* had the following layout:

A room with a large table where each editor has a chair and a drawer to store the tools for writing with pen and ink on quartilles made out of paper left over from the printing press. The newsroom, which has a window overlooking the narrow Street of Guardia, occupies the most significant room of a warehouse on the ground floor, in which lower floors separate the management and direction of the newspaper, and at the end of everything, the machine room, to which the long corridor of the house leads to the entrance (Guillamet, 2022: 203).

The new *Las Noticias*' headquarters soon became a symbol of Barcelona and became popularly known as “Can Roldós”, “Casa Roldós”, or “Palacio de *Las Noticias*”. In May 1922, the Barcelona football club inaugurated the Les Corts stadium, resulting in a growing interest in football in the city, which the press benefited from. Some newspapers installed large boards on their facades to report the sports results, especially on Sundays. Solà describes how citizens, eager to know their favourite team's sports results, begin their journey on the Rambla on El Liberal's balcony boards, continue to *Las Noticia's* administration to see what was new on Can Roldós's blackboards, continue to *Las Noticia's* administration to observe the news on Can Roldós boards and end at the capulet of a kiosk on the Rambla de las Flores, which houses the results of the newspaper *La Tribuna* (Solà, 1979).

Such is the popularity of the so-called “Pissarres de Can Roldós” that it was common to read that “there are still groups of people at 1 am in front of *Las Noticias*” (*L'esport català*, 1926:3) or that “the groups on la Rambla in front of Can Roldós board cut off traffic” (*L'esport català*, 1926:6). The reliability of the information on these boards even made the newspaper become the primary source of information for other sports publications, such as *Xut!* or *El deporte catalán*, which took the information on the boards for granted: “the most beautiful one is *Las Noticias* a newspaper with scoreboards and sensationalist information, contests and quizzes...” (*Xut*, 1926:3). Naturally, this phenomenon was its greatest attraction and favoured the sale of copies following sporting events.

Although there was a high staff turnover among the different newspapers in Spain, the list of collaborators for *Las Noticias* is extensive, highlighting its heyday and the history of Catalan journalism in the first decades of the twentieth century. In 1927 the number of people working in newspaper companies was approximately 1350, distributed among the leading newspapers in the city, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Workers in Barcelona newspaper companies in 1927

Newspaper	Number of employees
<i>La Vanguardia</i>	324
<i>El Día Gráfico</i>	133
<i>Las Noticias</i>	112
<i>La Noche</i>	107
<i>La Publicitat</i>	90
<i>El Noticiero Universal</i>	88

Source: created by the authors based on Jones (1994:242-243)

During this period in Catalonia, half of the press circulation was divided between *La Vanguardia*, *Las Noticias* and *La Publicitat*. Thus, the 11 000 copies published by *Las Noticias* in 1905 increased to 60 000 in 1927.

Juan Barco was at the head of *Las Noticias* until 1925, when Alfredo Pallardó replaced him until 1929 when he died. During the years he was in charge, Pallardó dedicated himself to the newspaper with a true vocation: “his sentences, full of experience and modernly oriented, not only reflected his good intentions, but also the affection that he had for *LAS NOTICIAS* and the pride he put into his position as Director (*Las Noticias*, 1929: 7). The newspaper correspondent Valls Giménez shows Pallardó’s diligence when he describes his attitude in one of the many meetings they shared: “during that time, without diminishing the interest of the conversation, he went over notes, looked at originals, crossed out items with blue pencil, attended to the editors who came in to consult him, gave orders and used the telephone all in an orderly fashion” (*Las Noticias*, 1929: 7). From then on, the journalist José Fernández, who “surely thought his name was too short and changed it to José León Fernández Coca (Fernández, 1993:283), left the position of subdirector and took over as director, a position he held until July 1936.

3.1. The supplements: a commercial opportunity to attract new readers

The appearance of new newspapers and, consequently, the increase in the competition made some newspapers propose new strategies to maintain sales, for example, the development of themed supplements. This tool helped the newspaper to gain more prestige and revenue since it allowed them to attract new audiences –dealing with specific themes, or oriented explicitly towards women and children, for example– and to segment them better –which is fundamental for advertising sales– *Las Noticias* or *La Noche* are two of the pioneering publications that introduced supplements, but due to its success, this practice extended in the 1930s to other newspapers –such as *La Publicitat* or *La Rambla*–. Among these, the supplements targeted at women stand out:

One of the phenomena that took place in the press in the early years of the decade was the emergence of what has been called Women Pages in the Anglo-Saxon media. These women’s pages (a kind of supplement aimed at women), which some newspapers had been publishing for years (*Las Noticias*, *La Noche*), were a novelty among many general information newspapers, such as *La Publicitat* and *La Rambla*, among others. And this observation allows us to value the importance that women, as readers and protagonists of events, were gaining. (Altés, 2007:38).

Therefore, at this time of the year, the week is almost entirely covered with the publication of five different supplements. On Tuesdays, the “Sports information” supplement is distributed on Thursdays, and “Cinematography” on Fridays and Saturdays are intended to reach new readers with the “Women’s supplement” and the “Children’s supplement”, respectively. At the end of the week, the “Comercio y Finanzas” supplement is published on Sundays.

4. Collectivisation and prohibition of *Las Noticias*

The military uprising of July 1936 and the Spanish Civil War’s beginning led to appropriation and collectivisation in the state press, which few newspapers avoided. In Barcelona, only those newspapers related to or belonging to the left-wing Republican parties were respected. *La Humanitat*, *La Rambla* and *Última hora* –from Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya– *La Publicitat* –from *Acció Catalana*– or *El Diluvio*. Republican and anti-clerical. Thus, between 1936 and 1937, 15 newspapers were expropriated or collectivised in Barcelona alone; the reasons were twofold –to provide a loudspeaker and to silence hostile or indifferent voices to the revolutionary demands, even those that did not have an ideological tone (Figueres, 1997:85-123), as is the case of *Las Noticias*. Trade unions and political parties would be these processes’ main agents or promoters (*Fundació Caixa de Catalunya*, 1995:408-409; Serra, 2015).

Thus, *Las Noticias*’ period of prosperity came to a halt, and the beginning of the conflict marked a new direction: from then on, it became the communication instrument through which the U.G.T. trade union communicated with its affiliates; this is shown in the newspaper’s masthead, from November of that year onwards: “newspaper at the service of the people”. From January 1937, it would be “spokesman”, and from July “Instrument of the Catalanian Committee of the U.G.T”, and all references to its founder, Rafael Roldós Viñolas, were eliminated. The purpose of the trade union’s strategy and the resulting new direction of the newspaper are reflected in a letter signed by the secretary general of the U.G.T., Antonio Sesé, dated 2 March 1937 and addressed to the U.G.T. Union Boards.

Las Noticias, the morning newspaper, is the mouthpiece of our Organisation. “*Las Noticias*” is adapted to its new orientation in an organized, uninterrupted and safe way. Today it can already be assured that its content responds almost completely to the needs of our beloved organisation, which obliges all the affiliates to be seriously concerned with the survival of our newspaper (Sesé, 1937).

From that moment on, the publication of information favourable to the Government of the Republic and the Generalitat, the union itself or the chronicles of war operations at the front exemplified the newspaper’s new propagandistic vocation, which had become the union’s instrument. Its last issue was published on 24 January 1939.

In July 1936, Gabriel Trillas- president of *l’Agrupació Professional de Periodistes (APP)*², an institution created in 1934, which became dependent on the U.G.T. at the outbreak of the civil war (Martí and Ortega, 2011:157)- took over the running of *Las Noticias* until Ferran Bertran Aumatell took over in 1938, a position he held for only one year. During these years, Josep Rosell was editor-in-chief, Pau Lluís Torrents joined as a photographer and Rivero Gil as a cartoonist. Among his collaborators were Josep Carner, Regina Opisso, Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Juan Ramón Jiménez and María Teresa León, among others.

The end of the war in 1939 reconfigured the situation of the press: two days before Franco’s troops entered Barcelona, on 24 January, the last issue of *Las Noticias* was published. The winners of the war decided which newspapers could be published. In Barcelona, only *La Vanguardia* (which added “Española” to its name), *El Correo Catalán*, *El Noticiero Universal* and, on Mondays, *The Hoja Oficial de la Provincia de Barcelona* were authorised to publish. *Solidaridad Nacional*, a newspaper of the Movement which occupied the offices of *Solidaridad Obrera*, was added to the list (Cadena, 1986: 20). Between 1940 and 1941, only seven out of the twenty-eight newspapers published in Barcelona in 1936 were authorised: two pro-Franco newspapers (*Solidaridad Nacional*, on 14 February 1940; and *La Prensa* on 28 May 1941, both from the National Movement) and four privately owned ones: *La Vanguardia*, from 27 January 1940; *El Correo Catalan* and *El Noticiero Universal* both from 14 February 1940 and *Diario de Barcelona* on 24 November 1940 (Casasús, 2015:161-170; Figueres, 1997:95-96). It can be affirmed that “the Catalan democratic press was the overriding victim of Francoism” (Cadena, 1986:19). The ideological stance of *Las Noticias* during the civil war, totally adverse to the new political order, complicated the possibilities of republishing the newspaper which is catalogued in a report as a newspaper that was “frankly left-wing [...] with an unconditional adherence to Azaña (*Informe del Jefe de la Sección de Bienes Patrimoniales... 1943*)

On 22 April 1938, the Home Office, led by Ramón Serrano Súñer, decreed the Press Law. The various articles included in these laws legitimised the process of the seizure of *Las Noticias* by the Regime. From that moment on, and despite the many attempts by its owners to get it back, the newspaper would not be published again. “Neither did the Roldós family, who owned a major advertising agency, were able to republish the newspaper *Las Noticias* that Rafael Roldós had founded at the end of the last century with the motto of politicalism” (Guillamet, 1996: 16).

2 It is an institution whose purpose is to improve the working conditions of journalists, which acts in a similar way to a trade union. This association, created in 1934, became part of the UGT when the Civil War broke out.

5. Conclusions

The exhaustive analysis of the different issues of *Las Noticias*, from its foundation in 1896, until the beginning of the Civil War, when it was collectivised, and out of its owners' control, has allowed us to make a historical review of the newspaper and the beginnings of the mass press in Spain, and also the main commercial and advertising initiatives of the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century.

One of the main differences between *Las Noticias*'s and other contemporary newspapers is its founder, Rafael Roldós' experience as an advertising agent. Even before the newspaper's first issue appeared, Roldós had already planned a strategy to foster subscriptions and the loyalty among its future readers. Among the most highlighted, the newspaper is surprisingly one of the first to use sales promotions, especially through discount coupons in the newspaper. The newspaper stands out as one of the first to publish supplements on different topics in the 1920s, aimed at broadening its readership –especially women and children–. This practice helped segment the newspaper's different audiences, a factor of great importance for advertising. Advertisers can place their ads in the most relevant spaces for their target audience and, consequently, increase their effectiveness.

From a journalistic point of view, *Las Noticias* has prestigious collaboration from journalists and intellectuals from the Catalan and Spanish scene and is also one of the first newspapers to incorporate correspondents distributed throughout the national and international territory, as well as graphic reporters who covered citizens' need to approach events through image, beyond the stories sent by journalists. In the social sphere, the recognition of this newspaper and its founder in Barcelona society is noteworthy. The repercussion of the death of Rafael Roldós in the press of the time, Joan Costa's chronicles published in *La Publicitat* about the foundation of the newspaper or the continuous references to the "can Roldós' boards", both in society chronicles and the leading sports newspapers, are only some examples of the importance of this newspaper.

The difficulties in accessing copies of *Las Noticias* or its controversial closure and subsequent banning are possibly two of the reasons for the scarcity of academic literature on this newspaper. However, given its pioneering nature and social repercussions, we consider that *Las Noticias* deserves to occupy a prominent place in the history of the Catalan mass press. The contribution of this work allows us to advance in this sense, partially covering the existing gap in the academic literature on this newspaper.

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7. Each author's specific contributions

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Methodology	Cristina Martorell Castellano
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Discussion and Conclusions	Cristina Martorell Castellano and Carolina Serra Folch
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