

Epilogue

Antifascist sentiment

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Doctor in antifascism (31 March 1944)

The Hollywood Academy of Cinematography has awarded an Oscar to Paul Lukas because he admirably interpreted an antifascist role in the movie *Watch on the Rhine*. This is like earning a doctorate in antifascism.

In the film, the protagonist is interrogated. When he answers what is his profession, he says he is an antifascist. It reminds me of that popular theater character who replies in similar ways to the same question, “Me? What am I? I’m a subscriber of *El Imparcial*” – and took out a card to prove it.

I thought that antifascism was an idea; rather, the opposite of an idea. Okay, let’s say it once and for all and forgive me for it. It’s the rear end of an idea because the real idea – a bad idea, by the way – is fascism. Antifascism is the supine position of fascism.

Be it the backside or the front, I cannot conceive that antifascism is a profession or an occupation. However, I must make peace with this idea and try to understand it. Antifascism is not the first ideological expression that becomes a profession. I met several romantics in Madrid who amount to no more than that: romantics who lived off it. They even had their uniform: a suit with grease spots, invariably of a dark color. They wore a wide-brimmed hat with a scarf around the neck. They made an unshakable promise not to go to the hairdresser. They had dark circles under their eyes. These physical characteristics, although naturally not part to the outfit, were an integral part of it.

How did they live off their profession of being romantics? Placing verses in a magazine from time to time and scrounging for money. And they never lacked the devotion from the tender heart of a young woman who took pity on them and even gave them a home. It was not a lucrative profession, but it was seen with sympathy and the workload never killed them. Some gained so much weight that they had to abandon the profession because a specific physique is a must for a talker. Romantics had to be thin.

In that, romantics coincide with the antifascists. A fat man cannot make a living out of their antifascism, although they are remunerated more than the romantics were. You also have to work more. Above all, they have to smoke a lot.

A professional antifascist without good lungs doesn't last. They usually work for pay in an antifascist association and deliver speeches at rallies, meetings, and in secret conferences with this-and-that committee, in which as many ideas as cigarettes are consumed. These new professionals need a good ribcage.

None of this is very dramatic for a movie. Instead of a good ribcage, the professional antifascist had a gun in the film. This is a mystification of antifascism. He is not a gangster. Hollywood is confused about how a professional antifascist, a doctor in antifascism, should act.

The recent case of a professional antifascist of ours here, in New York, proves such cinematographic error. When he left his profession, he never thought of becoming a gunman. He became a poet instead.

This example destroys the widespread myths about antifascists being revolutionaries and that revolutionaries are cold and terrible, passionate, and brutal men. If so, an antifascist who stopped being professional would become a butcher or a surgeon, which is the same thing, the only difference is that one sells the meat and the other gives it life.

The antifascist may be a revolutionary and because he is so, he is a sentimental man. Without sentiment, there is no revolution. Hence, the antifascist who becomes a poet acts in a logical and natural way. Not being able to pour his sentiment in his profession; he pours it rhythmically onto the page. It dignifies a professional antifascist.

Yes, friends, antifascism is the tears we hold back that become rage.

Actress of the people (17 February 1948)

Twenty years ago, when I met her, she was the same, but not quite. I already start getting mixed up, but this is the truth. Twenty years ago, she was the same, but not exactly because she was younger, with more fire in her look, more vivacity in her movements, and a quixotic spirit, of which she keeps the roots. Then she only made people laugh on stage. She was comic grace made flesh. Today, that same flesh has increased a little in weight – because everything has increased in life. Besides having the invaluable virtue of making

people laugh, she also makes people cry. The comic actress can be, by virtue of her art, the tragedian.

You must see her with a handkerchief so you can dry your tears of joy and sadness, those that embarrass us a little. If I was given to rename people, I could call her the actress of the handkerchief, the handkerchief in the audience. Twenty years ago, she was called Marita Ríos. Today, she is the first actress of the plays that she performs by the name of Mary Reid. Here, the name doesn't change anything: different, but still the same.

In the Spanish community of New York, she is the actress of the people par excellence. She works for the people and they applaud her like crazy and appreciate her as one of their own. She identifies with her audience and them with her to the point of no longer being able to distinguish if she is part of the audience, or them, elevated by her art, become an integral part of her. If you do not understand this, neither do I. However, this is the secret of Mary Reid's success: her simplicity makes her very complicated to describe. If I am allowed, I will say that Mary Reid, the first actress of our community, is anti-Franco up to the hilt. However, she has never delivered a speech against Franco and has never held in her hands a banner that says: "Death to Franco!" Mary Reid reserves any histrionics for the stage, where they should be. Unless you say otherwise; and if you say so, you do not know what you are talking about.

In her heart, she is more an enemy of Franco than those with banners that protest this or that in front of the Consulate of Spain in New York. She does more, much more for the anti-Franco cause than all of the anti-Franco speeches by professional Spanish republicans because you never fall asleep listening to her admirable performances on stage. To Mary Reid, the Marita Ríos of yesterday, and the always good-hearted woman, the cause of anti-Francoism owes her good bags of money. Look at her smiling, round face, which was once lean and nervous, because she is a cute golden mine.

In the company of a group of theatre amateurs and a few professionals, she has staged the most famous Spanish classic plays. The crowd has attended, numerous and cordial, again and again, to see her in these plays. She has served the SHC and helped raise many funds to alleviate the miserable situation of thousands of Spanish refugees and has contributed to keep alive, alert, and threatening the resistance movement in Spain itself.

Mary Reid, as her last name indicates, is the daughter of an Englishman and was born in Gibraltar. However, her mother, a native of Málaga, gave birth to this priceless talent, her cheerful and generous Andalusian heart that she carries as a torch of hope and optimism wherever she goes.

Franco has a formidable enemy in Mary Reid. She doesn't say a word against him. The grief she feels for the people's blood, Marita's people, which is Spain (now bleeding in a fratricidal war), stops her words. A word that is a curse to the cruelty of the maximum traitor of the country. But with her performances, she magically engages the public that forms the solid anti-Franco base in New York and keeps alive the hope to save unhappy Spain and get rid of the Ferrol Frankenstein who grabbed hold of the country.

Mary Reid deserves at least the honor of a pasodoble with her name. Maestro Jiménez, who has plenty of lyrical talent and affection for the artist, may one day surprise her with this offering. Or does Mary Reid prefer a chotis?

The anti-Franco fight owes much to her, but the Spanish theatre owes her at least as much. Mary Reid should be content to have debtors of such importance: Benavente, the Quintero, Muñoz Seca, Martínez Sierra, Galdós, Pérez Fernández, Perrín and Palacios, Arniches ... the most famous authors of the last and present century have been known in New York thanks to Mary Reid and her friends, who have truthfully performed their most popular plays.

Talking about Spanish theatre in New York is talking about Mary Reid and I do not want to talk anymore. I have already spoiled Reid's innate modesty; the exemplary actress of the Spanish people.

A heroine and the ungrateful (4 June 1948)

Although the Spanish refugees in France think that the Confederadas (Confederation of Hispanic Societies, SHC) work in automatic mode, I am afraid that it's not true. One presses a button ... and the most that might happen is that the button would tickle whoever is wearing it. In SHC there are no automatic buttons, only those in the garments of members in the SHC modest offices on Henry Street in Brooklyn. The Spanish refugees in France estimate that upon arrival in New York and on their way to a Latin American country that will provide refuge, they simply visit the SHC and ask for Maria Cordellat, who will be kind enough to press an automatic button on a dollar machine. Maria, then, very friendly, approaches the machine, which in the imagination of the aforementioned refugees resembles a jukebox with a container, and when she presses the button, a handful of dollars falls from it. The Spanish refugees then fill their pockets with dollars and happily depart. The United States is a great country where dollars grow inside automatic machines!

However, these same refugees soon find out that SHC is a modest organization that occupies wretched premises in the humblest neighborhood of Brooklyn. Its members are workers and lot of miserable Spaniards in the community do not support the SHC's mission with a single cent. When refugees met the heroine of the organization, Maria Cordellat, the tireless, uncomplaining, long-suffering executive member, who leads the bureaucratic weight of the organization, and they hear from the lips of this stoic comrade the sad truth that there is no money but plenty of requests for it, they feel disappointed.

"What kind of scam is this? We had been told in France that upon arrival in New York, the SHC would look after us, pay our expenses to reach Guatemala, México, or Venezuela and give us a few dollars so we did not walk away empty handed and digging in our pockets. We've been cheated! You are cheating us and have kept the money that you do not want to give away? We know in New York there are many philanthropic millionaires. What do you do with the money? We have rights, we are Spanish refugees"

Maria Cordellat, with infinite patience, lets them speak. It costs nothing, and what the hell! The venting does them good. Some of them, if not allowed to unleash their characteristically Spanish intransigence, would explode. Although not much would be lost if they exploded. What can be expected of those who haven't learned to be humble in need and in misery, and can only utter words of acrimony, resentment, and haughtiness, instead of words of gratitude? Maria Cordellat explains that the SHC can help inasmuch as the limited funds allow. She cannot give hundreds of dollars to each Spanish refugee that stops here because there are limited funds. The Spanish community of New York and of the United States are poor, hardworking, and can only contribute in small amounts to SHC. In addition, no millionaire philanthropists, not even philanthropists, contributed even a single dollar to SHC. Naturally, Spanish refugees do not believe whatever Maria Cordellat has to say. How could they, who were so excited, believe her disheartening words? But Maria Cordellat doesn't give up. That's when her heroic willpower shows. She could just say, with the most charming of smiles: "Sorry, folks, but we lack funds and SHC can't help." But she doesn't say so. She starts to work with the international committee, with local organization, with all kinds of US philanthropic centers so that the refugees can depart with the expenses of their stay covered and some Mexican money in their pockets.

All of this work requires many steps, many efforts, and getting many negative responses. But we already know that Maria Cordellat is the Joan of Arc of SHC. She goes to Ellis Island, handles the cases of Spanish deportees and succeeds in sending them to a country in our America before they are deported to the prison that is now Spain; she brings them clothes, shoes, and comforting words that are worth more than all the money in the world. She finds someone to go with refugees who find themselves disoriented in the big city, and, if necessary, turns to her husband: the baritone of the people, Vicente Cordellat, who sacrifices hours of work to help the refugees.

Through its great ambassador, Maria Cordellat, the SHC does more than what's possible. When needed, she plays heartfelt melodies at the piano because Maria Cordellat is also an excellent pianist and lightens the hearts of Franco's victims. Maria Cordellat hasn't yet been paid the tribute she deserves. I hope it doesn't take long to pay her back. Nobody would deserve it more than her. If only as compensation for the words of gratitude that the Spanish refugees upon arrival in their destination countries ... never write. After all, they came to New York and they were not treated like millionaires!

Who kills them? (28 January 1949)

When someone dies outside their home, the corpse becomes public, and the forensic examiner investigates the causes of their death. This way, the cause of those who die on the streets is known, while those who die in their homes not even their doctor knows the cause of death. This must cause serious dislike

amongst the deceased. Too many Spanish refugees die away from home, that is to say away from Spain, and it's convenient to examine the cause of their deaths. It's not a physical death, but a moral one, and the forensic examiner never finds the evidence. The truth of the matter is that most of the deceased, who were pro-Republic when alive, enter the afterlife quite upset, and for good reason.

I am moved to write these lines due to a recent death, the great journalist and great republican, Antonio Fernández Escobés, another of the many intellectuals who have lost their lives in exile. Fernández Escobés not only died outside of Spain but away from home, on a street in Mexico City, victim of a heart attack. He had left his heart in his homeland like so many refugees do, and unfortunately you cannot live long without a heart. The body of the admirable journalist spent many hours in the morgue and was about to be buried without a friendly hand to rest on his forehead. In harsh and barbarous words, he died like a dog.

A few weeks ago, another illustrious journalist, Fabián Vidal, also found himself poor, helpless, and sick, and just like a dog he threw himself over a balcony onto the street below. Antonio Zozaya, another enlightened writer died in exile also old and poor. Many others, whose names I can't remember now, have died in Mexico and Buenos Aires. Abraham Polanco, for example, former editor of *El Sol* and *La Voz* of Madrid, is dying, sick and exhausted. The famous writer Ceferino R. Avecilla belongs to this last category as well. And yes, Ángel Samblancat, old and abandoned, hasn't died because his fighting will is stronger than the Grim Reaper. When it comes to take him away, he smacks the Reaper.

We are already so used to hearing about intellectuals of the Republic who die in exile that when we are given the fake news of someone's death, such as in the infamous case of distinguished, former director of *Solidaridad Obrera*, Enrique López Alarcón, we do not hesitate to believe it immediately. We are happy he heartedly followed the brave example of Samblancat, who is still alive, to the glory of the Spanish letters and to ease the Spanish dictator's conscience, assuming he has one. Bagaría, the great caricaturist of republican Spain, also died of grief in Cuba. Pompeu Fabra, a great Catalan lexicographer, died on Christmas day in Pradas, where he lived in exile, more or less "like a dog"... And there are more, many more.

Who kills these men representative of the Spanish culture?

The first serious stab wound was from Franco, an insurgent general who with the help of two totalitarian nations took over Spain. They flew from Spain, which ceased to exist and has become an ignoble prison. And they threw themselves into the world with no more weapons than their hopes and pen. Helpless weapons to fight in life! Especially when their chests are already stabbed. And they fell and got up awkwardly and walked staggering and died. In Fabian Vidal's case, death was taking too long, and he heroically and resignedly went to look for it. But Franco is not the only one who kills them. Let's take responsibility. Franco hurts them to death and we, the republican Spaniards, finish them off. We impassively see the leading members of

Spanish intellect die one after another. Nobody gives them a hand; nobody helps them. We are hyenas, we are beasts, and we are ignoble. Fascist Spain can be so. It's its goal. But not us! And, above all, the Spanish refugees! Those who, alongside with these exiles, have lived the painful fight against Falangism, and then the misery of exile in France. What heart of stone do these Spanish refugees have!

Many exiles are in Mexico, some in very good positions. Are they unable to decently support men like Fabián Vidal, like Fernando Escobés, like Antonio Zozaya? Are they not able to support a publication that would provide decent compensation to Samblancat, AVECILLA, Polanco, Suárez Guillén, and other Spanish intellectuals who struggle among other refugees? Publication to which we, who are not refugees, should contribute because we are Spaniards living in exile. But we are wild beasts, we are selfish. And we are letting them die and when they become corpses, we shed crocodile tears. These men, who with their brilliance and light illuminate those who still live, are the authentic, fundamental, legitimate, and exalted glory of the true republican Spain.

We let them die like dogs. We are miserable!

Anti-Francoism is not the same as poker (4 July 1952)

One man turned to another and said:

“Are you coming to the SHC meeting?”

“It's so hot!” exclaimed the other, who was playing poker. It didn't occur to this brave player, who wanted a straight flush, that in Madrid it is also very hot. It would be better for humanity if he wanted to make walnut or oak staircases instead. Besides the heat, people have to suffer Franco and his regime, which is like walking around in the middle of the summer with a noose around your neck.

Lord Byron, the great English poet, said a beautiful thing many years ago that I share with the anti-Franco players of poker or whatever. Forgetting that their compatriots suffer, they decide to help them “when it will be less hot.” Byron said that a lack of empathy for others was a true social art for the stoics people of the world ... who have no heart.

This friend for example, he may have a trio of aces in his hand, but if he doesn't have a heart, then he's of little value to the millions of Spaniards who have to endure his poker player's indifference.

I'm not saying that selfish people don't have a purpose in life. Thanks to them, we are able to greatly appreciate the generous, the disinterested, and the magnanimous. World fauna is diverse: there are selfish people like there are rats, cockroaches, and other smelly, annoying animals. Just like chemical science is inventing ways to kill these pests that don't do humanity any favors, maybe someday, in a more organized society, we'll have a DDT to fumigate the places where the selfish live.

Until that day comes, we are occasionally forced to drink coffee with these anti-Franco who view their anti-Francoism as a recreational activity like poker.

“Okay, since you insist, I am done playing for today. I regret it very much because the game was going to be a good one since Agustín is coming, a devil bluffer, but I’ll go to the SHC meeting.”

Don Francisco Franco y Bahamonde is the one who insists, and for 13 years he has kept Spaniards subdued and subjugated slaves. Through his tyrannical regime, he puts in jail the carpenter who proclaims, “I need higher wages! I can’t eat or dress decently with what I earn!”

You and many like you, sympathize with this carpenter, with miserably paid workers, with the honest middle class turning now into the working class. However, you are in New York, California, Ohio, or wherever, enjoying a decent salary (achieved by free unions and the US social system). You and many like you shrug your shoulders and your anti-Francoism becomes nothing more than recreation to you, a sort of invisible game of poker. Remember that those living in Spain always lose.

“What can I do?” asks the card player. “I chip in during collections. What else does the SHC want?”

You are as lost as a tourist on the subway. The SHC doesn’t want anything. It has never wanted anything. SHC is like the chameleons; it lives off the wind. What the SHC and the anti-Franco – who should support it – want is for everyone to make a common effort. Dropping a few quarters like a tiny Rockefeller is not enough. This money is needed. A resistance movement against Francoism cannot be organized by recruiting chameleons. Resorting to hydrogen will not publish a protest weekly like *España Libre* that keeps anti-Francoism alive and intense and so remarkably encourages thousands of Spaniards in Spain, who pass the periodical from hand to hand.

We need “mazuma,” or money in Yiddish. We also must attend meetings, make plans, maintain correspondence with anti-Franco organizations scattered around the world, and get ready for action. In short: we need to get to work. We need to get to work for the thousands and thousands of Spaniards who suffer Franco’s tyranny, who get sick and die of misery, who are morally devastated because years go by, but the Spanish question never ends. Now, if you prefer playing poker or any other recreation ... then you have an evil conscience.

Don Félix like a snail (1 March 1957)

They say Great Britain weighed down Anthony Eden, especially when the country fell on his shoulders. He looked strong like the Suez Canal, but he was actually very weak. As a result of his colossal effort, he got sick to the point where he couldn’t continue to bear the burden of the government.

Imagine carrying a republic in a state of catalepsy!

A few days ago, I was honored to meet and hug a man from Paris who made a few stops in the Antilles. He was heading to Mexico with the Spanish Republic on his shoulders. I don't hesitate to call him Colossus of Rhodes the Colossus of León because Don Félix Gordón Ordás was born in the province of León, Spain. Seeing him with his gray mane, his poet's head, his short neck and his broad shoulders, I admire him for three things: for his abundant hair, for his clear ideas, and for his back. Connecting both heads of state, I thought, "Oh, if only Anthony Eden had Gordón Ordás' back!"

Like a snail, Don Félix Gordón Ordás carries the Spanish Republic on his back around the world. No wonder he seemed so overwhelmed when I met him (I went with a good number of other republican Spaniards) at the San Juan airport (or aerodrome, as he says). His bags were taken care of immediately, but nobody could take care of the weight of the Spanish Republic on his back, not even the most fervent Republicans. Nobody can remove a snail's shell from its back.

"Well, Don Félix. When will the Spanish Republic be restored?" Don Félix instinctively looked over his shoulder, and turned to his interlocutor as if to say, "Why don't you ask me instead when I will unload the Spanish Republic from my back?"

Don Félix isn't the only one. In Paris, there's Mr. Martínez Barrio, the President of the Republic in exile but Mr. Martínez Barrio is even older than Don Félix. He is a symbol and a historical name ready to be moved to Madrid as if he were a statue, once the republican regime is restored. But Don Félix Gordón Ordás, with a ruddy face, carries the living Republic on his shoulders. The Spanish Republican government has other ministers: four in Paris and three in other countries, which adds up to a total of seven. To make Don Félix's neck even shorter, the Treasury – a very difficult portfolio – also falls on his shoulders. He has to count the money, but there is no money. He has to lead the Spanish republican movement in Spain from exile. It's like organizing a revolution with a radar. To recap, he has to deal with the overwhelming weight of the presidency of the council of ministers, whose citizens are governed by an illegitimate government. As you can see, it's a big mess.

Well, this is the mess that falls on Gordón Ordás's shoulders, as if he were a snail. Note that I don't mean snail in a derogatory way. I mean it in an admiring, open-mouthed, respectful manner. I mean it with so much respect that when I patted him on the back, it felt as if I was patting the Spanish Republic. When we toured the streets of San Juan with several friends, I tagged behind a little, so I could get a good look at Don Félix Gordón Ordás' back.

"Come on, don't stay behind," he told me. We need the republican Spaniards to keep going forward.

"Don Félix, the Republic looks good on you," I told him without him understanding me. Don Félix was very sick a couple of years ago. I don't know where he rested the Republic while he regained his health. I know he wouldn't leave it far from his sight. But as soon as he beat the doctor (sometimes the

sick fight the doctors more than the diseases) and got his strength back, he loaded himself the Republic on his back again and said, "Let's go see those disunited republican Spaniards in America."

And this is what Don Félix is doing now, for the second round, tying republican Spaniards in America. Although some people want the Republic to be a certain way, and some want it to be another way, we want the Republic to be democratic and to be rid of Francisco Franco's shadow forever. Let's help Don Félix. That precious cargo always falling on his shoulders, but with his smile on his lips, rejuvenating every day no matter how old.