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Repression in the Conservative Málaga Press at the Beginning of the Civil War: The Decline of *La Unión Mercantil*

Abstract

The media landscape in Spain underwent a major transformation after the *coup d'état* of 18th July 1936, with the subsequent eradication of newspapers and radio stations, at the same time as the emergence of new media in support of one or other side.

Managers, journalists, photographers and other workers involved in the newspaper business were those most affected by the new situation. This article focuses on repression in the newspaper sector in Málaga, with the aim of reconstructing the events that took place between summer 1936 and the entry of Franco's troops on 8th February 1937. The work focuses on the first wave of repression that affected the conservative press in Málaga, in particular the case of the newspaper *La Unión Mercantil* and the figure of its former Director, Manuel García Santos. The working methodology is based on qualitative analysis of legal documentation repositories, newspapers and personal sources of family members of those researched. The results are intended to

help alleviate the shortage of research in this field, especially in Andalusia. Thanks to the different sources consulted, this work offers a snapshot of events, rescuing from oblivion many Málaga journalists who, having exercised their profession freely, suffered censorship, persecution, prison, exile and death during the war and immediate post-war periods.

Keywords

Repression, Civil War, press, Málaga, *La Unión Mercantil*, Manuel García Santos.

1. Introduction

No study of the press can ever be alien to the political and social context of a territory. The relationship between journalism and politics is “a phenomenon of singular importance, necessary to understand the most recent Spanish history” (García Galindo, 2014, p. 31).

This research focuses on the city of Málaga, in the period between the military uprising of 18th July 1936 and the fall of the city on 8th February 1937.

In the political and historical context of 1936, the Popular Front's victory in the elections of that year led to a climate of extremely violent actions throughout the province, lasting right up until the moment the city fell. Málaga society had become polarised, and tensions became even more acute after the February 1936 elections, with the city being paralysed by a general protest strike (Nadal, 1984).

The capture of key municipalities in the province such as Antequera, Ronda and Archidona by Queipo de Llano's troops drowned out hopes of Málaga city receiving much-needed defence, and it would end up in the hands of the rebels on 8th February 1937 (Barranquero, 1994). There was a lack of coordination and the city found itself isolated, making it difficult to meet its needs and protect it. Furthermore, the advance of the Francoist front received help from Italy and Germany, meaning so-called "Red Málaga" –a bastion of the Republican cause– fell seven months after the uprising.

The evacuation of the city was ordered somewhat belatedly on 7th February, one day before Franco's troops entered the city. Given the lack of means and transport, people were left with no way to go other than along the coastal road. Nothing had been organised, and many Málaga people did not know for sure where Almería or even France was. The headquarters had to be moved to Nerja, a town located on the road to Almería (Barranquero, 1994). The exile, known as the "Desbandá," would be remembered for thousands of citizens from both Málaga and other Andalusia provinces fleeing for Motril, and, later on, Almería. Italian-Francoist aviation and German corvettes created a desolate landscape during that heart-breaking exodus. The luckiest ones managed to reach Almería after about seven days on foot (Majada & Bueno, 2006).

Municipal agents, judges, prosecutors, the military court's secretariat, bailiffs and other local officials were all appointed on the day the city fell. In the first two months (February and March 1937) "almost 5000 people –4168 men and 819 women– were sent to the provincial prison" (Barranquero, 1994, p. 239).

On a journalistic level, the nationalist press published headlines celebrating the triumph of military operations on the Southern Front from 9th February onwards, while the Republican press kept the tragedy quiet for a whole day so as not to demoralise the rest of the troops (Barranquero, 1994).

Political circumstances therefore shaped a media network influenced by different governments, suffering a double wave of repression: the first in the summer of 1936, and the second from February 1937 onwards.

On 18th July 1936, the newspaper sector was quickly purged of any media that could encourage and benefit from the coup d'état, in order to strengthen and create new information instruments in defence of the Republican cause.

Málaga city, where the newspaper sector had undergone huge change and modernisation since the late nineteenth century, experienced a major advance from 1931 onwards, with twenty-nine new titles appearing. The four newspapers with the largest circulation at the time of the military uprising were *La Unión Mercantil* (1886–1936), a privately published title which led the news transformation in the conservative city of Málaga; *El Popular* (1903–1937), Republican; *El Cronista* (1895–1936), liberal conservative; and *Diario Málaga* (1919–1936), Catholic. *El Popular* was the only newspaper left after 18th July, as the three conservative newspapers suffered directly from the first wave of repression during that hot summer of 1936 (García Galindo, 1995). Along with *El Popular*, other newspapers that were active in the defence of the loyal government were *Amanecer*, a Republican publication that defended the positions of the republican-socialist coalition; *Vida Nueva*, representative of the republican left; the anarchist titles *Faro* and *CEFA*; *Octubre*, a mouthpiece for the United Socialist Youth; and *Vanguard*, representative of the Communist Party's Provincial Committee (García Galindo, 1989, p. 164).

When Franco's troops entered Málaga on 8th February 1937, the purge turned towards professionals from the republican, socialist and anarchist media, among others, with institutionalised repression becoming established in this new context.

The Republican newspaper *El Popular* would print its last issue on 7th February, one day before Queipo de Llano's troops entered the city. The appropriation of its workshops would give way to the publication of the Falangist mouthpiece *Arriba* on February 10th. One month

later, this newspaper changed its name to *Sur*, and would go on to be directed by Sebastián Souvirón. This newspaper came “to contribute, from its pages, to the construction of the New State, and to consolidate the national-syndicalist revolution as an organ of expression of the Falange” (García Galindo, 1989, p. 166). One day before, on 9th February, the editorial office and workshops of the trade union newspaper *Julio* were also appropriated, and publication of *Boinas Rojas* started, later changing its name to *La Tarde*, under the direction of Juan Cortés Salido, former editor of the newspaper *La Unión Mercantil* (Blanco, 2006, p. 21). The morning and evening titles *Sur* and *La Tarde* would be the two newspapers that were part of the Movement’s press chain in Málaga, until the new press law of 1966 led to the start of publication of *Sol de España* in 1967.

The methodology behind this research is qualitative. Access to judicial sources from the Military Court Archive in Málaga, documentation from newspaper sources, as well as oral and written testimonies allow us to clear up the circumstances of that summer of 1936, in which the most significant victims were the heads, managers and workers of the conservative press, and, in the particular case of this article, the newspaper *La Unión Mercantil*.

2. Recent historical notes on repression in the newspaper industry

Evolution in the historiography of social communication in Andalusia, from the initial works of José Altabella through to the contributions of Alfonso Braojos, has been very positive and is continuing in the same vein. Over recent years, new approaches and contributions have been enriching studies on the history of journalism and communication in Andalusia (García Galindo, 2007, p. 343-360). However, there is still a long way to go, not only in smaller towns but also in many provincial capitals.

In the case of Andalusia, research on Franco’s repression has been carried out in each of the different provinces. Some of the main authors are listed below. In Málaga, the studies of Nadal and Barranquero Teixeira; in Córdoba, Moreno Gómez; in Granada, Gibson and Gil Bracero; in Almería, Quirosa-Cheyrouze and Rodríguez Padilla; in Huelva, Espinosa Maestre; in Seville, Ortiz Villalba y Salas; in Jaén, Cobo Romero; and in Cádiz, Romero (Lacomba, 2006).

A more recent look at published works reveals the level of methodological and thematic renovation, all thanks to “new documentation repositories, a new approach to oral history, and interest in the actions of individual subjects or certain social groups that were previously given little consideration” (Barranquero, 2014, p. 159), giving more attention to aspects of greater qualitative significance, which is the technique used in this research. Access to military archives continues to provide rich material for current research, and, along with oral sources, forms the methodological basis.

The repression of information professionals during the civil war and the dictatorship period affected civilians of all ideologies equally throughout Spanish territory. Media restructuring was relentless, rapid and fierce on both sides. By the summer of 1937, there was not a single journalist loyal to the Second Republic who could play his trade in Cádiz, Seville, Málaga, Granada, Extremadura, Cantabria, Asturias, Navarre or the Basque Country. Those who had not managed to leave for the Republican zone were either in hiding or dead (Díez Álvarez, 2010, p. 20). The lucky ones managed to escape by boat or on foot, and even continued their work as journalists. Others remained in hiding, were arrested, imprisoned and/or executed, and others died while fleeing. Detainees were subjected to summary trials without legal guarantees, sentenced to death, executed, or, in some cases, released or occasionally pardoned after serving time in prison, but with no guarantee of being able to exercise their profession again. In this regard, the creation of an Official Register of Journalists, following the Press Act of 1938, was the most devastating filter to prevent any suspect from practising the profession again. Indeed, in order to be on the Official Register, journalists had to declare which newspaper they had worked for between 18th July 1936 and the date of the so-called “liberation,” whether they had ever been a member of a political party or trade union

organisation, and whether they were masons (Nuñez Díaz-Balart, 1997). The legal standing of journalists became a labyrinth as repression became institutionalised. They could be tried by military law through summary courts-martial, which would give out long prison sentences, through the Court of Political Responsibilities, or by the Court of Repression of Masonry and Communism, which took up cases following official complaints or by acting *ex officio*. This new plan would begin in earnest in 1940 (Cordero, 2018).

Appropriation was the fastest way to restructure written and audio media during the conflict. Information was the optimal propaganda weapon to achieve the ultimate goal: to win the war. Any interest in information was therefore lost, as newspapers and radio stations focused solely on communicating their ideals.

Although there is extensive work on repression in Andalusia, there are very few studies that analyse this issue as it relates to the world of journalism. Nevertheless, there is cause for optimism, since the last decade has seen an increasing number of studies into the personal profiles of journalists who suffered repression and survived to tell the story, giving a voice to those who suffered the pain of the war first-hand and are now becoming known, 80 years later on.

Research published on this subject has focused on cities with greater media representation, such as Madrid and Barcelona. The recent work by Cordero Avilés offers a very interesting balance of the capital city, where the number of murdered journalists was estimated at around one hundred. It also offers a snapshot of the situation in other parts of the country (Cordero, 2018).

In Andalusia, there are still very few works that have rescued from oblivion the memory of hundreds of journalists who suffered repression during the civil war and the immediate post-war period. The works of Checa Godoy show that the repression affected around 200 professionals in Andalusia, making it imperative to plug the historiographical gaps in the suppression of journalists (Czech, 2011).

We are now going to review some of the most recent research on this topic. In Cádiz, the studies carried out by Concha Langa Nuño (2009), which analyse the profile of the journalists who suffered persecution, are particularly of note (published by Cádiz Press Association). In Granada, the contributions of Francisco Vígueras on the figure of Constantino Ruiz Carnero, Director of *El Defensor de Granada* (Vígueras, 2015), and those of Mercedes Oriol, on the journalist Francisco Oriol Catena, Editor of *El Defensor de Granada* and Deputy Director of the Falangist title *Patria* (Oriol, 2015), are also noteworthy. In Almería, research by Hernández Bru (2004) traces a perspective of the difficult situation experienced in the provincial capital through analysis of the newspapers *La Crónica Meridional* and *Diario de Almería*. According to the author, “never before has there been such a rate of mortality, by way of murder, as in the short period from 1936 to 1939” (Hernández, 2004, p. 538–539). In Málaga, the works of Mateo Avilés (2009), and, more recently, the case of Eduardo León y Serralvo, Director of *El Cronista*, as analysed by García Galindo, López and Novas (2016), are all important. In Málaga capital, the publication of the group *La Comunicación Social durante el Franquismo* (García Galindo, Gutiérrez Lozano & Sánchez Alarcón, 2002) is also worthy of distinction.

Another recent work that has partially studied repression in the newspaper sector is by Sánchez Balaguer, which analyses the consequences of an uprising in southern Valencia, near the border with Murcia (Sánchez, 2014).

In Valencia, the work of Enrique Bordería (2000) is notable for its extensive analysis of the war, Francoism and repression. The same is true for some case studies, such as the one published on the satirical magazine *La Traca* (Laguna, 2015).

Logically, the cities of Madrid and Barcelona have the largest number of published works on this subject, ranging from documents written directly by the protagonists, such as Chaves

Nogales or Eduardo de Guzmán, to works that either offer a general overview of the war or are case studies of journalists.¹

It should be noted that research analysing the repression of journalists is on the increase thanks to doctoral theses.

3. The journalistic context in Málaga in the summer of 1936: the first press appropriations

Málaga city takes on special interest in this subject as it suffered two-fold repression in two different socio-political contexts, fragmented by the capture of the city by Franco's troops on 8th February 1937 (Avilés, 2009). In the case of Málaga and other provinces such as Almería and Jaén, senior managers and some workers of the conservative press were shot in the summer of 1936, while from 1937 onwards people working for left-wing, social and anarchist republican newspapers, among other ideologies, were persecuted.

During summer 1936 in Málaga, the first wave of repression took the lives of several managers and other press workers who had supported the coup (Prieto Borrego, 2011, p. 32). The political instrumentalisation of the press and radio meant informative journalism turned into propaganda (García Galindo, 1989, p. 163).

On 9th March 1937, the Seville edition of the newspaper *ABC* carried an article on the situation of the press and journalists who were persecuted and shot during 1936. Logically, the context in which it is printed offers a perspective on the persecution of professionals with a conservative ideology. Under the headline "Málaga during the Red Rule," it lists some workers from the graphic world who were shot, such as Vicente Davó Casas, Director of *Diario de Málaga* and Chair of Málaga Press Association; Rafael Ramis Silva, Editor of *La Unión Mercantil*; Eduardo León y Serralvo, Director of *El Cronista*, and his son Miguel León y Donaire; and Justo Mensayas Aceituno, Director of *La Unión Mercantil*.²

Indeed, one of the first victims was Vicente Davó de Casas, Director of the Catholic newspaper *Diario de Málaga*, founded in 1919. He was arrested and later shot in San Rafael cemetery on 22nd August 1936, at the age of 48. Three days before his death, *Gaceta de Madrid* reported that Vicente Davó had been relieved of his duties as an assistant teacher at a secondary school in the city.³

That same day, 22nd August 1936, Antonio Baena Gómez, President of the Board of Directors of the newspaper *La Unión Mercantil*, was also murdered (Avilés, 2007, p. 150). Several weeks later, on 8th September 1936, Eduardo León y Serralvo, founder, owner and director of the liberal conservative newspaper *El Cronista*, was arrested and subsequently murdered on 20th September 1936. Both he and his son, Miguel León y Donaire, who worked in the newspaper's workshops, were rounded up from prison and executed (García Galindo, López & Novas, 2016, p. 159-172). That same month of September, Ángel Creixell de Pablo Blanco, son of the founder of *La Unión Mercantil* and a worker at the newspaper, was arrested and killed in Málaga. In October, his brother Antonio, who lived in Madrid and worked at the newspaper's correspondents' office, was also a victim of persecution. Both brothers were on the Board of Directors.

It should be noted that the repression, which was institutionalised from 1937 onwards, relentlessly persecuted Republican journalists and other left-wing forces in Málaga. Some of

¹ Some examples of interest are Chaves Nogales, M. (2001). *A sangre y fuego*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe; see also Sánchez Camacho, A. (2008). *La represión de la prensa republicana madrileña en el primer franquismo (1939-1945)*. (Doctoral thesis). Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid; Martínez, J. (Ed.). (1987). *Periodismo y periodistas en la guerra civil*. Madrid: Banco Exterior; Sánchez Camacho, A. (2009). Augusto Vivero (a journalist whom the Franco regime took reprisals against). *Historia y Comunicación Social*, 14, 143-156; and, more recently, the aforementioned research by Cordero, R. (2018). *Periodismo y periodistas republicanos en el Madrid de la Guerra Civil (1936-1939)*. (Doctoral thesis). Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

² Gómez Bajuelo, G. (1937, marzo, 9). Málaga durante el dominio rojo. *ABC* (Edición Andalucía), p. 11.

³ Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts. (1936, 23rd Aug.). *Gaceta de Madrid*, p. 1427.

the best known and most widely studied cases are the figure of Juan Rejano, Deputy Director and Editor of the Republican newspaper *El Popular*, who took exile in Mexico until his death in 1976 (Arcas Cubero & San Juan, 2011); Juan Santana Calero, Director of the anarchist newspaper *Faro*, who managed to flee from Málaga along the coast road, but was killed in the province of Almería in 1939; Luis Velasco Damas, Director of *El Popular*, who managed to sail aboard the *Sinaia* and take exile in Mexico along with Rejano; Rosendo Corripio Márquez, Editor-in-Chief of *Julio*, who was arrested and shot; Rafael Escolar García, Editor of *El Popular*, who fled to France; plus a long list of victims yet to be catalogued (Checa Godoy, 2011, P. 465; Avilés, 2009).

4. Diary of a fire

The history of *La Unión Mercantil* is of great historical significance not only for the city of Málaga, but also for the whole of Andalusia, where it was one of the most influential newspapers. It was also in circulation in other parts of Spain and abroad, particularly in northern Morocco and South America, where it had correspondents (García Galindo, 1995).

Born in the context of the industrialisation of the Spanish press, which gradually abandoned its ideological approach for a more modern, informative, business-focused press, *La Unión Mercantil* (1886) soon became the most important bastion of information not only in Málaga but throughout Andalusia. It is also notable for publishing the weekly *La Unión Ilustrada* and *La Unión de Málaga*. Its founder was José Creixell Olivella, of Catalan origin, who arrived in Málaga at the end of the 19th century. He married Remedios de Pablo Blanco, with whom he had four children: José, Antonio, Ángel and Remedios.

His success in the newspaper industry led to the persecution he suffered throughout his 50 years of life, mainly by anarchist groups.

A bomb attack and two fires confirm the history of criminal acts suffered by *La Unión Mercantil* between 1920 and 1936. The first of these occurred on 22nd 1920 when a device exploded in the workshops, affecting the machinery and administration offices and causing several casualties. The alleged authors were defined as “anarchism professionals” (García Galindo, 1995, p. 318).

The second tragic episode took place during the early hours of 12th May 1931, when “a group of 20 to 30 thugs burst into the headquarters of *La Unión Mercantil* and *La Unión Ilustrada*, dousing doors, windows and store rooms in petrol and setting them on fire” (Vázquez, 2013, p. 44).

The last act of violence that the newspaper received was the final blow. On the night of 18th-19th July 1936, the headquarters was set on fire again, marking the end of a journey that had begun on 2nd January 1886. Although there were attempts to relaunch the title, this new challenge proved too much. *La Unión Mercantil* closed definitively after fifty prosperous years at the forefront of news journalism in both Málaga and Andalusia.

Following a break in publication between 17th and 23rd 1936 due to events after the *coup d'état*, the Republican newspaper *El Popular* reappeared in Málaga on 23rd July 1936. Its pages told of the fire that brought an end to *La Unión Mercantil* and of *Diario Málaga*:

Various groups marched to Calle Martínez, entering the store “La Bilbaína” and destroying most of the stock, and continuing on to the building of “La Unión Mercantil,” which was set on fire. The flames destroyed our fellow newspaper’s workshops and offices, with the flames spreading next door, where the offices of the Port Works Board and the house of the Notary Public Juan Barroso were located, completely gutting the property. Mr Barroso’s home also contained his magnificent library, considered one of the best in Spain. “El Diario de Málaga” was similarly destroyed.⁴

⁴ Varios incendios. Lamentables consecuencias de la provocación. (1936, julio, 23). *El Popular*, p. 3.

In this research, we will pay special attention not only to the Creixell family, who owned the newspaper, but also to its former editor, Manuel García Santos.

Originally from Arcos de la Frontera, he was 42 years old at the time. García Santos is hugely important in this research, given his particular journey from the moment of his arrest in Málaga through to his voluntary exile in Mexico. His life experience allows us to assess the harshness of the repression on journalists, and the misfortunes they suffered in order to continue working in their profession.

The story starts after the editorial offices of the *La Unión Mercantil* were burnt down, and its employees met in order to find a solution to what was their source of livelihood.

The vast majority of employees attended the meeting. Other employees were absent, some could not go because they were under house arrest, and some refused to go for fear of reprisals. It is known that the former Administrative Director Justo Mensayas (later executed) did not attend and was replaced by his deputy, Quintín Guisado Ramos. Workers from the company's different departments were therefore represented at this initial meeting. Manuel García Santos (Director) and Juan Cortés (Editor-in-Chief) were in charge of editing, while administration was represented by Quintín Guisado Ramos (Office Manager) and Manuel Gómez Márquez (Treasurer). Finally, Manuel Blanco, José Contrera Solana and Francisco Sánchez Rodríguez headed up the workshops.

At the time, Ángel Creixell de Pablo Blanco, son of the newspaper's founder, José Creixell Olivella, was the Secretary of the Board of Directors, and also one of the most important shareholders. The committee met with him at Hotel Regina to sort out the problem of the employees' livelihoods. Some personal sources point out that Creixell provided guarantees to buy food at Casa Almarza grocery store for a value of 3000 pesetas, as well as cash amounting to 1000 pesetas. Antonio Baena, President of the Board of Directors, also did likewise.

The expectations of both the Creixell family and Antonio Baena were that the city of Málaga "would be liberated" in a matter of days, which is why these first payments were made to cover only a short period of time. However, as the weeks passed by, Ángel Creixell believed that the best way for employees to receive aid was to cash in the all-risk insurance policy worth 500,000 pesetas, as the policy could still be found in the vault in a part of the building that was still standing. The initial idea was to publish the newspaper again.

However, the pledging process was not successful, and several members went to the prison to find Antonio Baena, who ordered the Bank of Spain to collect around 6000 pesetas in the form of a guarantee. This aid was signed off on 30th July 1936.

But the money quickly ran out and the political situation remained very complicated. A second request for financial assistance was made, but Antonio Baena declined. In the face of such extreme and ominous circumstances, Ángel Creixell and fellow shareholder Juan Tembory signed a document guaranteeing to Mr Baena that all the money advanced would be returned to him. This advance was not "a gift, but rather a refundable advance." Although the result of these conversations was negative and no further money was offered to workers, he nevertheless agreed to make an application to the Bank of Spain for a credit amounting to 35,000 pesetas, which would be guaranteed by himself, by Ángel Creixell, and by Almarza grocery store, allowing all the newspaper's employees to keep going for seven or eight weeks. It is stated in the declarations that they wanted to get further credit of 14,000 ptas, but Antonio Baena refused to fund it. Finally, Ángel Creixell guaranteed 10% of the insurance policy.⁵

The intention was also to use this money to pay Antonio Creixell de Pablo Banco, the son of the founder and brother of Ángel, who lived in Madrid with his wife and three children.

⁵ Witness interrogation involving Manuel García Santos (Director of *La Unión Mercantil*) and Manuel Gómez Márquez (Treasurer). Emergency summary procedure number 60 of military court number 15. 1937. Box 610. Málaga Military Court Archive.

Antonio Baena declined to offer financial assistance to workers in Madrid, reserving payment only for those in Málaga.

There is a typewritten letter drafted by Manuel García Santos, Director of *La Unión Mercantil*, dated 7th August 1936, and addressed to Antonio Baena, who at the time was a prisoner in the provincial jail. Some extracts are added below:

My most profound gratitude for the donation you made last week, which has ensured some respite for the many families who were waiting for it with increasing concern [...] You can rest assured that we are absolutely determined to return this amount to you in due time [...] Our approach is twofold: A) Rebuild the newspaper. B) Pay all wages [...]. The two aspirations are legitimate, but they are also in opposition. We only count on the insurance money which, as it is limited, may make it impossible to rebuild the newspaper once all wages have been paid [...] Knowing the healthy situation of your credit in local banks, we again ask you to show understanding and be benevolent in spirit and guarantee the credit operation that Mr Ángel Creixell has agreed; this operation would resolve the situation and is in no way detrimental to you, as it would be made on the firm basis of reimbursing you, as preferential payment charged to the insurance as soon as this is collected.⁶

The letter reported the difficulties Ángel Creixell encountered in obtaining credit from the bank. The bank's refusal was due to the fact that the firm *La Unión Mercantil S.A.* had exhausted the credit. Given the situation, Ángel Creixell himself went to the Liaison Committee and the Civil Government to:

Demonstrate that he places at its disposal all the goods of all kinds that he possesses, and how, despite this, banks refuse to grant him credit" [...] And we know any objections you have previously had were due to a belief that other aid could have arrived to resolve our situation...⁷

While the steps to collect the insurance were being taken, both the initial aid offered to the workers and also the subsequent aid in the form of loans were the cause of official complaints filed from 1937 onwards by José Creixell de Pablo Blanco, son of the newspaper's founder, José Creixell Olivella, and therefore brother of Ángel and Antonio Creixell. Antonio was the only male brother to survive the war. His sister, Remedios, also survived. Although the details of the official complaint are explained further on, it is worth stating that most employees declared that they could not reject the money offered to them as a day's wage for fear of "repercussions from the Marxists," and also because of the lack of food for their families. A large number of them, faced with the complaint, agreed to return the "unduly received" money, and were therefore acquitted:

The defendants Manuel García Santos, Juan Cortés, José Sánchez, Fernando González, José Ramírez, Quintín Guisado, Manuel Moscoso, Emilio Martínez, Dolores Amado Arnixhes and Carmen Amado Roselló have reimbursed the amounts they received, and the rest of the defendants have stated that they will follow the same course of action.⁸

On 27th September 1937, most of the workers who benefited from this aid were acquitted, including Manuel García Santos.

Ángel Creixell, son of the newspaper's founder, José Creixell Olivella, was the Secretary of the Board of Directors and one of the company's most important shareholders. He lived in Málaga with his mother, Remedios de Pablo Blanco. His father, the founder of the newspaper,

⁶ Letter signed by Manuel García Santos, Director of *La Unión Mercantil*, addressed to Antonio Baena, President of the newspaper's Board of Directors. 7th August 1936. Emergency summary procedure number 60 of military court number 15. 1937. Box 610. Málaga Military Court Archive.

⁷ *Idem.*

⁸ Emergency summary procedure number 13. Military court number 15. 1937 Box 637. Military Court of Málaga. See also Emergency Summary Procedure N° 60 of Military Court N° 15. 1937. Box 610. Málaga Military Court Archive.

died in Madrid in 1931, although his remains rest in the historical San Miguel cemetery in Málaga.

According to his closest friends, he hoped that Málaga would be “liberated” in a matter of weeks following the coup d’état and the fire at the newspaper’s offices, meaning the initial aid would be merely to overcome the cash flow problem that had been affecting *La Unión Mercantil* employees for several weeks.

After the fire, he had contact with the commission set up to manage aid for workers from Hotel Regina, where he lived. However, there are records of three attempts to arrest Ángel Creixell. Manuel García Santos (Director), Juan Cortés Salido (Dean Editor), and Manuel Blanco (Treasurer) all tried to get a safe conduct to save his life.

According to Manuel García Santos, there were several attempts to arrest Ángel Creixell at Hotel Regina, but Manuel Blanco Castro, the Treasurer, was able to prevent it. However, when he moved to Madrid for fear of reprisals in Málaga, Ángel was arrested at the third attempt, and executed on the very same day. When answering the judge’s questions about the coincidence between Ángel Creixell’s time of death and the fact he signed off payments for employees before dying, García Santos states that it was Manuel Blanco’s absence that allowed such circumstances rather than any other financial reasons.⁹

All efforts to safeguard Ángel Creixell’s life were futile. His death occurred on the very same day as his arrest. Some testimonies suggest that workers from Casa Almarza found the dead body in San Rafael cemetery on 9th September 1936. A few weeks before, on 22nd August, Antonio Baena, President of the Board of Directors of *La Unión Mercantil*, was shot in prison.

After the death of Ángel Creixell, the commission of the now-defunct newspaper agreed to travel to Barcelona to acquire new machinery to relaunch the title. The final decision was to change direction, heading for Madrid instead of Barcelona. There they looked for Antonio Creixell, but by then he had already been arrested along with his three children, Antonio, Ángel and José Creixell Luigi.

Before the war, Antonio Creixell lived in Málaga with his family, but after the advent of the Second Republic he decided to move to Madrid to avoid the harassment he was receiving due to the new political situation. In October 1936, he was arrested along with his three children, and, according to the testimony of his wife, Carmen Luigi¹⁰, a car from the communist newspaper *Mundo Obrero* showed up at his house and arrested the four of them, who would lose their lives in Paracuellos del Jarama. Carmen Luigi, demoralised by the loss of her husband and children, left Madrid and moved to Málaga, where she was cared for by José Creixell’s family.¹¹

After Franco’s troops entered Málaga and created a new local government in the city, José Creixell, brother of the murdered Antonio and Ángel, lodged a formal complaint against the workers of the newspaper’s commission, accusing them of the murder of his two brothers and of illegally handling money after the fire. The list of people accused with illegally collecting money is long, although one of the possible culprits was the newspaper’s Director, Manuel García Santos.

This formal complaint shares similarities with the case studied by García Galindo, López and Novas (2016) about the figure of Eduardo León y Serralvo, director and founder of *El Cronista*, who was shot alongside his son Miguel León y Donaire in September 1936. Once Franco’s government was established in Málaga, his son Antonio lodged a formal complaint for the appropriation of *El Cronista*, and also for the murder of his father and brother.

⁹ Statement by Manuel García Santos. Emergency summary procedure number 13 of military court number 15. Box 637. Málaga Military Court Archive.

¹⁰ Court appearance of Antonio Creixell de Pablo Blanco. Emergency summary procedure number 60 of military court number 15. L.28. Box 610. Málaga Military Court Archive.

¹¹ De las Cuevas, M. L., personal communication, 19th October 2016.

On 2nd April 1937, José Creixell de Pablo Blanco, who was 45 years old at the time, reported a large group of newspaper employees for having accepted money belonging to Ángel Creixell. The list would include the director of the newspaper, Manuel García Santos. This led to some workers returning everything they had received after the fire, including Manuel García Santos. However, doubts about him only began when he was finally arrested on 15th February 1937. He was the subject of several complaints: firstly, for having been part of the so-called ‘appropriation committee’ and, more importantly, for having collaborated in the anarchist newspaper *Faro* during the war, a complex issue which is discussed further below. He was even called to testify about the death of the last Director of *El Cronista*, Eduardo Leon and Serralvo, and about the deaths of Ángel and Antonio Creixell, and ultimately faced several criminal proceedings.

He was considered a right-wing thinker, both for his actions and for his work as editor of the right-wing newspaper *La Unión Mercantil*, but after the military uprising of 18th July he suddenly changed his stance, starting to write left-wing articles praising the Republican faction, presenting himself as a Marxist convert until he gained their trust. When the anarchist newspaper *Faro* came into circulation, he began to work for it in a technical capacity, befriending the man described as the “murderer Juan Santana Calero,” for whom he prepared radio speeches.¹²

Following this accusation, García Santos stated that in September 1936 two armed individuals came to his home, one of them Santana Calero, Director of the anarchist newspaper *Faro*, with a proposition: to help them improve circulation for the newspaper. His help was limited to technical aspects. A few days later, after seeing his outstanding technical work, he was assigned to a writing post, which, according to his testimony, he was forced to accept as “refusal would necessarily have meant death.”¹³

García Santos asked the Mexican Consul for a passport to escape, but the Consul, knowing how well known he was, could not grant his wish. A letter from the Consul confirming the facts is included in the summary. In it he explains how García Santos had no choice but to agree to collaborate in *Faro*:

Over the course of a casual encounter in the street one day, I had to express to García Santos my surprise, since I knew his true feelings from the many years he spent at *La Unión Mercantil*. García Santos made me understand his situation by explaining how he had been materially kidnapped by such a sinister character [...] he sent me a letter begging me insistently to get him out by any means I could, just as I had done with many other well-to-do people in Málaga, and this letter was written in terms of such anguish that I was made to understand the tragedy this man was living through, forced to live and collaborate with somebody with such opposing ideas as Santana.¹⁴

On 12th March 1937 Manuel García Santos was sentenced to twelve years and one day of temporary confinement with the accessory of absolute disqualification as a result of contributing to the rebellion through the pages of the newspaper *Faro*, without his fear of rejecting the position at the paper being admitted as an exonerating circumstance.

The examining judge in the criminal process prosecuted Manuel García Santos for military rebellion. He recognised his outstanding work in a “newspaper of record” such as *La Unión Mercantil*, and also that he had to agree to work in *Faro* in order to save his life. However, his authorship of an article entitled *Septenary* did him no favours:

The examining judge agrees that the accused could not be considered a willing collaborator with the most select of Málaga’s criminals, with it being impossible to

¹² Emergency summary procedure number 13. Military court number 15. Box 637. Málaga Military Court Archive.

¹³ *Idem*.

¹⁴ Statement by Porfirio Smerdou, Consul of Mexico in Málaga. 6th March 1937. Included in Emergency Summary Procedure number 13. Military court number 15. Box 637. Málaga Military Archives. Málaga Military Court Archive.

overlook the fact that *Faro* was an anarchist organ and that the role played by the Libertarian Youth in the murders and horrors that this population endured is on everyone's mind [...] However, the copy of the letter, which is attached to the court order and which was addressed to this defendant by the fateful Santana Calero, makes it clear that the relations between him and the anarchist criminal and dissident elements were strengthened to the point of fraternity, of which this is an example. [...] The accused himself confesses [...] his collaboration in writing and sending to Santana, with the intention of publishing the article Septenary, which, according to the declarations of the accused himself, offered extensive praise of the personality of the aforementioned Santana Calero.¹⁵

The support he received from José Torres Abaijón, Captain of the Navy Quartermaster's Office, or from well-known Doctor Pérez Bryan, was of no use.

After 17 months in Málaga provincial prison, a pardon was requested by Manuel García Santos on 17th August 1938. The request was accompanied by a handwritten letter from the journalist, dated 2nd August 1938. In it, García Santos asked for a total reprieve of the sentence, or a reduction to 6 months. It is interesting how García Santos names the case of Ignacio Mendizábal de la Puente, who, according to his statement, was Editor-in-Chief of the Republican newspaper *Amanecer*. Mendizábal de la Puente was pardoned in April 1937, and later joined the editorial staff of a Falangist newspaper [possibly *Arriba*, later renamed *Sur*]. García Santos accused Santana Calero of leaving the article written by García Santos in a visible place when Franco's troops entered the city. He believed this was to cause him harm due to his "insincere friendship." Although this article about an air raid on the city was never published, its praise of Santa Calero played a large part in his prosecution and imprisonment.

The Seville edition of the newspaper *ABC* defends the work of García Santos as the head of *Faro*:

Many writers from *La Unión Mercantil* joined *Julio* under coerce and obliged by circumstances. The newspaper's Director became the technical advisor of the anarchist newspaper *Faro*, directed by Santana Calero. [...] And there was no choice but to sign things with opinions that were not shared at all.¹⁶

The courts found no evidence of his involvement in the death of Ángel and Antonio Creixell.¹⁷

After the pardon, García Santos all but disappeared in Málaga, and he did not appear in either of the Falange newspapers that started circulation in the city from February 1937 onwards, namely *Sur* and *La Tarde*.

Not until the 1940s did he start working in Madrid as a bullfighting critic for the weekly *El Ruedo* (Carrión Morales, 2010, p. 94-121). In 1948 he also published the book *Manolete: el dolor de su vida y la tragedia de su muerte*, and later on, in 1962, a second book, *Juan Belmonte. Una vida traumática*, published by Editora de Periódicos La Prensa S.C.L.

In his own words: "The last year I was a bullfighting critic in Madrid was in 1947. That year a bull killed the "Monstruo" in Linares, and I came to Mexico to publish a book and ended up staying here."¹⁸ His departure for Mexico would therefore be between 1949 and 1950. Once established in the country, his experience as a bullfighting critic allowed him to edit *El Ruedo de México* from 1950 to 1954. He would also collaborate in *El Sol de México* with a bullfighting column entitled "Desde mi barrera" during the 1960s and continued to work for the newspaper *Novedades* in the 1970s, by which time he would be about 76 years old. He died in Mexico in 1980.

¹⁵ Summary proceedings of the examining judge in the court order for Manuel García Santos. 11th March 1937. Emergency summary procedure number 13. Military court number 15. Box 637. Málaga Military Court Archive.

¹⁶ Gómez Bajuelo, G. (1937, marzo, 9). Málaga durante el dominio rojo. *ABC* (Edición Andalucía), p. 11.

¹⁷ Summary n^o 29. Summary proceedings. Military court number 6. Málaga. 9th October 1939. Málaga Military Court Archive.

¹⁸ García Santos, M. (1969, septiembre, 27). Desde mi barrera. *El Sol de México*, p. 22.

As can be seen, a lifetime of dedication to journalism, and with experiences that, as was the case with other colleagues, makes it imperative to disseminate his personal and professional career and ensure his figure is never forgotten.

5. Conclusions

The aim of this work has not been to offer tables, figures, numbers and percentages of the journalists who suffered persecution for carrying out their profession during the civil war, but rather to recover the memory, story, experience and accumulation of circumstances that led many professional journalists to die or flee and not be able to exercise their profession freely, conditioned by the political context that surrounded the civil war and the subsequent dictatorship.

Thanks to the judicial sources consulted, it has been possible to give a voice to the protagonists of those terrible years and move forward with studies that will, little by little, help rescue their memory from oblivion.

The fact that the press was turned into a political weapon ultimately resulted in persecutions, appropriations and murders of journalists and other workers linked to the profession, not only in Málaga but throughout Spain.

In the case of Málaga, the media landscape underwent a drastic change when the conservative newspapers *La Unión Mercantil*, *Diario Málaga* and *El Cronista* disappeared after the 1936 *coup d'état*, while left-wing newspapers such as *El Popular*, *Vida Nueva*, *Faro*, *Octubre* and *Vanguardia* were all shut down after Franco's troops entered the city on 8th February 1937.

In the case of *La Unión Mercantil*, the *coup d'état* of 18th July 1936 against the legality of the Second Republic was the perfect excuse to annihilate the trajectory of a news media, of a privately published title, which, with 50 years of history behind it, was well consolidated in both Málaga and Andalusia.

Attempts to close the newspaper throughout the 1920s and early 1930s show that there was a tacit interest in curbing the newspaper's informational intentions, particularly by anarchist groups. This was ultimately achieved after the last fire and the death of some members of the editorial board, in the context of the military uprising of 18th July 1936 and the months that followed.

The ashes of the discord that consummated the closure of what was the most important newspaper in almost all of Andalusia in the first third of the 20th century brings one of the most significant chapters in the history of journalism in Málaga to a close.

The Directors of *Diario Málaga* and *El Cronista* also suffered the same fate, being executed during the summer of 1936.

With this work, we have tried to rescue from oblivion the profile of the last Director of *La Unión Mercantil*, Manuel García Santos. His story is a tribute to so many professionals who fought to keep their journalistic work alive, and who have yet to be duly researched.

This work has sought to rescue his memory from oblivion, and to highlight the need to continue in this vein in order to dignify journalism as a profession over the course of history. It is therefore demonstrated that the repression affected both sides in equal measure, and Málaga is a good reflection of this fact. All journalists, whatever their ideology, suffered the scourge of censorship, the end of press freedom, and the risk of death for carrying out their profession.

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