

Fiftieth anniversary

Jesús de Galíndez: martyr for freedom

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It was the years of the Spanish Civil War: 1936-1939. Jesús de Galíndez was 21 years old at the time. He had just earned his law degree.

At that tragic time in Madrid, the Basque Government Delegation enjoyed powers that are hard to imagine today. Galíndez refers to some of them in his book "Los Vascos en el Madrid sitiado" (Basques in Madrid under siege): "On the cover of our identity papers was the Basque coat of arms and the letterhead read 'Delegación General de Euzkadi. Madrid'. It contained all of our personal details. (...) Rather than being defined as *abertzale*, we wanted to be subject to the legal texts of autonomy, and therefore we asked for the option of 'citizenship'. (...) More than one person wrote saying they opted for 'Basque nationality' and these were people who had never considered themselves *abertzales*. (...)"

Galíndez explains how in only four months 2,033 cases of prisoners or people gone missing passed through their hands, and that 553 people of all ideologies and religious beliefs were released through the efforts of the Basque authorities.

Like so many others, Jesús de Galíndez suffered the pain of concentration camps and exile. He later became Delegate of the Basque Government in the Dominican Republic. While he was there, the research he carried out for his doctoral thesis on the dictatorship of General Trujillo was more than enough reason to make him flee the



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country for New York. In 1949 he was named Delegate to the Basque Government and at the same time taught International Law at Columbia University.

Galíndez was an exponent of an open, progressive, supportive style of nationalism, a type of nationalism that wants the same for Euskadi as the rest of the world. "I feel that way," he said in one of his writings "because I'm Basque. And because we are Basque we can hold another

citizenship; we can love the country we live in; we can have compassion for the problems of others even though some people think it strange that I should share the problems of Puerto Ricans in New York; that I should attack the Latin American dictators; that I should take part in the International League of Human Rights; that I should be moved when I hear the patriotic hymn of a Mexican *charro* or the drumbeat of a black Caribbean."

But at the same time he would remember his own homeland with the same passion, calling it "my darling, my Euzkalerria, for whom I swore my love as a child." And with dreams for the future, in his writings about the importance of founding a Federation of Argentinian-Basque Entities to safeguard the

rights of the Basque people, he proposed the creation of an "International Federation, or whatever the name of the body might be, that would be recognized by the General Secretariat of the United Nations..."

However, Galíndez never saw his political dreams realized. In fact, somehow he intuitively knew about his death. In Mexico, his verses were published in "Euzko Deya": "And I will return... I will return / or they'll bring me back dead / hide me away in the earth / the earth of my grandparents. / Lay me down in Amurrio, / as I am tired and cannot / stop along the way; / I'll fall where I fall, traveler. / Take me, take me there, / although I'm still walking, I'm dying; / take me to the steep hill / beneath the oak tree of my dreams".