

Radio Pirenaica: The Oral Historical Memory of the Grimau Case

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Abstract. The Grimau case consisted of the arrest, conviction and execution of one of the most important communist leaders in the fight against Franco's regime infiltrated in Spain in 1962, and its corresponding judicial process full of very serious irregularities, including an alleged suicide attempt. This news would not have had an international impact if it had not been for Radio España Independiente (REI), known by public opinion as La Pirenaica, a clandestine station subsidized by the Soviet Union. The methodology used has been to use the Historical Archives of the Communist Party of Spain, the script section of Radio España Independiente, from November 7, 1962, the day Julián Grimau was arrested, until April 20, 1963, when he was executed. A total of 164 days of consulted broadcasts. The most important conclusions are: To emphasize that, despite the serious irregularities of the judicial process and the strong impact of its execution on world public opinion, this case has not been part of the current awareness of Spanish public opinion.

Keywords: Historical Memory; Radio España Independiente; Julián Grimau; Francoism

[es] Radio Pirenaica: La Memoria Histórica oral del Caso Grimau

Resumen. El caso Grimau consistió en la detención, condena y fusilamiento de uno de los líderes comunistas más importantes de la lucha contra el franquismo infiltrado en 1962 en la España de Franco, y su correspondiente proceso judicial repleto de irregularidades gravísimas incluido un supuesto intento de suicidio. Esta noticia no hubiera tenido un impacto internacional sino hubiera sido por Radio España Independiente (REI), conocida por la opinión pública como La Pirenaica, una emisora clandestina subvencionada por la Unión Soviética. La metodología utilizada ha sido utilizar los Archivos Históricos del Partido Comunista de España, sección de guiones de Radio España Independiente, desde el siete de noviembre de 1962, día en el que Julián Grimau fue detenido, hasta el 20 de abril de 1963, cuando fue ejecutado. Un total de 164 días de emisiones consultadas. Las conclusiones más importantes son: Destacar que, a pesar de las graves irregularidades del proceso judicial y el fuerte impacto de su ejecución en la opinión pública mundial este caso no ha formado parte en la conciencia actual de la opinión pública española.

Palabras clave: Memoria Histórica; Radio España Independiente; Julián Grimau; Franquismo

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1. Introduction

Historical Memory has given rise to an interest in many historical characters from the Civil War to the last year of the Transition. But there is a chapter on that process that hasn't been valued enough, even though its importance and it is the role of some members of the Spanish Communist Party on the fight against Francoism and the transition to democracy. This is the case of Julián Grimau who was the last communist executed on 1963 because of the crimes committed during the Civil War, twenty-five years after the end of Civil War. He was ar-

rested in Madrid accused of on charges of subversive activities. It seems that he was betrayed by a comrade. Julián Grimau got arrested on November the 7th of 1962 in Madrid. At fist sight, the policemen, knew that they had arrested a communist, but what they didn't know was Julian Grimau's relevance. Semprún described him has a self-sacrificing, if somewhat careless, militant (Semprum, 1982, p.190). This is the moment where one of the darkest stories of the Grimau's case takes place, since, in the General directory of Security, the safest place in Spain, the policeman said that Grimau tried to commit suicide by throwing himself out of a window.

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His trial starts on 18 July 1936, the date on which the facts are set out in the Prosecutor's indictment. His trial was a sham since the beginning, as there were no witnesses, the statements were second versions and in a book that identified him wrongly accusing them of having tortured members of the nationalist side in the Barcelona Czech prison. Finally, the commander auditor and the main prosecutor, Manuel Fernández Martín, had forged his law degree, a degree in which he had only been enrolled for two years. (La Vanguardia, 2018). It was of no use that his 28-year-old defense lawyer, Captain Rebollo, pointed out that at the end of the Civil War Grimau's name didn't appear in the Causa General, and there was no file open against him. It is important to point out that three years later the limitations would expire from the committed crimes during the Civil War (Novais, 2015). The aim of this study is to clear up the truth of a case related to the Historical Memory and the Transition which has not been as influential and important as it should be in Spanish public opinion today, in spite of the strong influence it had in its day. This gives rise to the problem of historical figures and events not having their place in history.

2. Status of the issue

The Spanish Transition has given rise to an huge amount of research. However, there is still much to be studied in order to reach definitive conclusions. This is the case of the role of the Communist Party of Spain, PCE. During Franco's regime it was the most active of the opposition parties with the creation of Radio España Independiente and its influence on public opinion. Specifically, with the Grimau case.

Some of the best-known authors on this subject are: Luis Zaragoza's work, *Radio Pirenaica: la voz de la esperanza antifranquista*, a basic work in the study of Radio España Independiente and one of the most cited by subsequent authors. The next most important work is Armand Balsebre and Rosario Fontonova's *Las cartas de la Pirenaica: Memoria del antifranquismo*. In which the letters received by the station from its audience are compiled. That was completed in 2014 by Balsebre with *Radio España Independiente, La Pirenaica, The voice of the victims of the Franco Regime*. With information about Dolores Ibárruri's life, founder and first director of the station known for her speeches under the pseudonym Antonio de Guevara and Juan de Guernica. Radio España Independiente was no stranger to nationalities and its broadcasts were in Catalan, as Catalonia was one of the region's most critical of Franco's regime. With *Ràdio Pirenaica: Catalan-language broadcasts of Radio España Independiente* by Teresa Pàmies Ramón Mendezona is the one who provides the most business data with his work, *La Pirenaica: Historia de una radio clandestina and La Pirenaica y otros episodios*. There are very specific published works such as: *La mujer y el mito: La pasionaria de Avilés*, and Balsebre and Fontonova with *Las mujeres de la Pirenaica*. The first anti-Francoist feminism in Spanish radio.

3. Methodology and objectives

We have used the bibliography that has been published for only 30 years, much of it published by the authors themselves. We have also selected the work of specialists such as Balsebre who, as well as providing data, give an academic character to research that has not been studied very much. But the greatest number of hours has been spent in fieldwork, studying and selecting from the Archives of the Communist Party of Spain, the section of Radio España Independiente, the scripts considered to have the greatest impact from the 7th November 1962, the day Julián Grimau was arrested, to the 20th April 1963, when he was executed. This represents a total of 164 days of broadcasts consulted. During this entire period, there is no news or references to the situation of Julián Grimau on only 40 days (Ruiz García, 2019).

4. Analysis

4.1. The detention

The first news item we find in the broadcasts of Radio España Independiente is after the seventh of April, when Julián Grimau was arrested in Madrid by the Brigada Político Social (Mendezona, 1981:176). The first reference we find is in the news bulletin of the tenth of November (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones Radio España Independiente, 1962, p. 309). The information given is that Julián Grimau had been arrested, tortured in the General Directorate of Security and that he had fallen out of the window. But as is to be expected, the listener is left to suspect that he was thrown out of the window, recognising that they do not have sufficient information to be sure (Galán 1988:312). That news was reported three days after it happened, giving rise in the broadcast of November 10th 1962 to an editorial denouncing the methods of the Brigada Político Social and calling for an end to the torture. (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1962, p.362) "We know Julián Grimau, a firm and whole man [...]."

Under what conditions could a man of his mettle be impelled to throw himself off a balcony? (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1962, p.314). On the same day, Radio España Independiente denied a report given to the regime's press by the Brigada Político Social, which stated that Grimau had been arrested on 8 November. Making a comparison with the news provided to the media by the Associated Press, Radio España Independiente denounced that this misrepresentation by Franco's political police was aimed at keeping Grimau in the police station longer than the law allowed (Balsebre and Fontonova, 2014:228). By the eleventh of November, the arrest of Julián Grimau is the central issue, in which it is reported that he has been transferred to a clinic in Carabanchel. (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1962, p. 372).

It is curious to note the versions of the General Directorate of Security which stated that Grimau had

thrown himself out of the window to stop himself from testifying, information provided by the government agency EFE and which came from the Ministry of Information and Tourism, directed at the time by Manuel Fraga, which stated that he had thrown himself out of the window when he was being taken to make a statement. (Galán, 1988:313) In the description of the events given in the news of that 12th November, it is worth noting the partisan tone given:

With the integrity befitting a communist, he had declared in writing that he was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Spain and that he was in Madrid on a mission. Nothing more. His lips were hermetically sealed so as not to give away either party members or other groups of the democratic anti-Francoist opposition. (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1962, p.390).

On the fourteenth, the arrest of Julián Grimau occupies a large part of the broadcast. In addition, the official communiqués of the Communist Party continue, in this case, with an address by Santiago Carrillo that opens the day's broadcasts.

Julián Grimau is an exemplary, heroic communist, one of those who give his life for the party. He would never have taken the decision to commit suicide had he not been forced to do so by the savagery and ferocity of the tortures he suffered. (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.453).

On 23 November the news was given that Grimau had been handed over to the special repressive court led by Colonel Eymar, and that he had been transferred to Yserías prison hospital (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1962, p.302). Radio España Independiente immediately denounced the transfer of the case to military jurisdiction, arguing that there was no crime committed by Grimau that would legitimise a court martial.

From 26 November onwards, it is the first time that it is expressly stated that Grimau was thrown. In the broadcasts, special emphasis was placed on the danger posed to Grimau by being under military jurisdiction, and in the Radio Revista programme of the 27th, for the first time a report was given on the injuries he had suffered: bone fractures in the skull, wrists, hands and legs. "To say that a man is in the hands of Colonel Eymar, of the Political Social Brigade, is tantamount to saying that he is being tortured". (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1962, p.371). On November 30th Grimau regains consciousness for the first time since he fell out of the window of the General Directorate of Security. Radio España Independiente states that at that moment of lucidity Grimau appointed Amandino Rodríguez as his defence lawyer, although they were unable to meet because the prison authorities prevented him from doing so (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1962, p.520). They also al-

lude for the first time to the fact that Julián Grimau was detained without specifying the reason, since "There is no crime other than political involvement". In December, a smaller number of news items referring to the Grimau case were reported on Radio España Independiente. In particular, the number of letters from listeners concerned about the state of Julián Grimau or demanding his release increased (Galán, 1988:312).

On the fourth of December, this question was asked: "How is it possible that in 1962 Franco subsists [...] and orders torture to the point of driving the interrogated mad, who throw themselves out of the window before returning to their interrogations, as happened with Julián Grimau? (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1962, p.133). It is clearly stated that it is possible to think that Julián Grimau did not throw himself out of the window. The hypothesis is put forward in some quarters that he was thrown out because Franco's police had overstepped their bounds.

On 8 December, the news was broadcast that Grimau would be investigated for his activities during the Civil War. (Jáuregui and Vega, 2007:320). In the commentary of the 10th of December, we find for the first time a categorical affirmation by the announcers of Radio España Independiente that Julián Grimau was thrown, dismissing the official claim that he threw himself into a suicide attempt. (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1962, p.355).

They went on to criticise the initials, arguing that Julián Grimau should be tried by the ordinary courts, since nothing legitimised a court martial or the intervention of a special military tribunal. They took advantage of the sensitivity of Christmas to launch emotional messages: "May this Christmas season serve to encourage action for Grimau and for an amnesty for all political prisoners and exiles!

On the thirty-first of December, it is even reported that Julián Grimau has had a trepanation (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.534). As well as the success of the radio station's campaign on the lawyers' collective. "The Grimau case has promoted important positions within the Spanish legal profession" (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.534).

On the third of January 1963, the assertions of a team of French doctors who travelled to the Spanish capital to inquire into the state of health of Julián Grimau were broadcast (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p. 70).

This medical team from France was not allowed to see the patient, but they were allowed to see his medical records. They came to the conclusion that the Franco government's version could be disproved. This had a great influence on public opinion throughout the month of February. On the 13th of January, Radio España Independiente reported a press conference in which these doctors confirmed their claim that Julián Grimau had been tortured and thrown out of a window, while on the 22nd they reproduced an article by Víctor Lafitte, one of the doctors who went to Madrid and published in the magazine *France Nouvelle*, in which he stated that "al-

though we were unable to interview Grimau, we have obtained precise reports on his state of health. The nature of his injuries rules out the possibility of suicide". (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.417).

4.2 The Trial

On the twenty-second, the trial of Julián Grimau was announced, stating that Grimau's health, however, had not yet recovered: "According to our reports, Julián Grimau will soon be court-martialed, although he has not yet recovered from the serious wounds inflicted on him by his torturers" (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.63). (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.63).

The trial was described as:

With the same summary procedure which has already given rise to so many protests among Spanish lawyers and the denunciation of the International Commission of jurists. Furthermore, they insist that Grimau has not yet recovered from the wounds caused by the assassination attempt he suffered (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963,464p).

The worst of the news came the following day, when it was reported that Grimau was to receive the death penalty. (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.6) From then on, the news continued to be broadcast on La Pirenaica from 11 April until 20 April, the date on which he was shot, to the point that on 13 April, when the news bulletin opened with new information about the case, it was stated that "this news will be the focus of our programmes today and in the days to come" (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.6). (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.115) Despite the cruel news, the tone of the new stage of the policy of National Reconciliation promoted by the PCE was not abandoned.

On 13 April a message from Santiago Carrillo was broadcast, ratifying the version of the defenestration. This is relevant, since although he did not admit an error as such, he did modify the first speech he had made on the subject in November, in which he advocated the possibility of Grimau throwing himself in. In this speech, Carrillo denounced the silence and distortions of Fraga and the regime's media, which served to cover up the machinations of Colonel Eymar.

Coronel Eymar has not been able to find any charges against Grimau that could justify a death sentence. All of Grimau's clandestine activity in Spain has a political character, and there is no way of assimilating it to any kind of terrorism. (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.116).

On the fourteenth of April it states that, according to some French press reports, the trial and execution of Julián Grimau would take place in the next few days (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.156). Radio España Independiente

denounces the hypocrisy of trying him for crimes he allegedly committed during the civil war when the regime was preparing to celebrate twenty-five years of peace (Zaragoza,2008:390).

On 17 April a speech by Dolores Ibárruri "la Pasionaria" was broadcast in which she denounced that "by stabbing at the law and murdering the law, pressure was being put on judges, prosecutors and advisors to pass sentence against Julián Grimau" (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.356). This speech also has another noteworthy element: Dolores Ibárruri directly addresses Pilar Primo de Rivera, sister of the founder of the Falange, asking her to intercede for Grimau's life, in the name of reconciliation among Spaniards. Furthermore, it was on the seventeenth that it was confirmed that the death penalty would be requested for Julián Grimau (Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.386). On the eighteenth of April the trial against Julián Grimau took place, which Radio España reported on thanks largely to telegrams sent by PCE militants in Madrid, (Balsebre and Fontonova:2014:238) as well as through information provided by foreign news agencies, such as Reuters, Tass, Associated Press or France Presse. La Pirenaica states that throughout the whole process the lawyer appointed by Grimau has not been allowed to intervene (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.406).

The broadcasts of April 19th break with the usual pattern of Radio España Independiente's programming, since they are devoted exclusively, and without clear separations per programme, to the case of Julián Grimau. (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.476)

In the first moments of the broadcast, a biographical sketch of Julián Grimau is given: Between 1936 and 1939, this man already condemned to death (Julián Grimau), loyally served the only legal state then in existence. The same republican state to which General Franco had sworn allegiance. (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.478).

A summary of the trial itself is also outlined, in which it is stressed that "all the testimonies against the accused are second-hand, contradictory and have not been able to establish the veracity of the facts" (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.478). (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.479) This trial is seen as a kind of settling of scores, a way for the Franco regime to frighten the population, which undoes the image of liberalisation that the dictatorship was trying to present to national and international public opinion since the arrival of Fraga at the head of the Ministry of Information and Tourism (Galán,1988:323). Thus, one of R.E.I.'s correspondents in Madrid noted the stoicism with which Julián Grimau behaved during the trial in these terms: "And this man, physically weak, mutilated, stands like a giant and proclaims: I will remain a communist as long

as I live”’. (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.489).

Another of the main elements of the broadcast of this April 19th is the reaction of foreign politicians to Julián Grimau’s death sentence, chief among them the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, who sent a letter to Franco asking him to intercede (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.509.) This is particularly relevant because it was the first time a Soviet leader had addressed the dictator, since there were no diplomatic relations between the USSR and Franco’s Spain: “Guided by human feelings, I am writing to you to commute this sentence and save the life of Julián Grimau. (Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.510).

At the beginning of the broadcast of 20 April 1963, the execution of Julián Grimau was announced with a note entitled “EL CRIMEN SE HA CONSUMADO”. (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.526) They state that all the international agencies have confirmed it, as well as the official Italian radio, in view of the silence of the Efe agency. During that day and the next, the broadcasting of the programme was also altered, with the usual news programmes and sections disappearing, to become a large block in which denunciations of institutions and personalities from all over the world were reflected, the lack or very little coverage of the news by the Spanish media was criticised, in response to what was published by some newspapers such as ABC or ARRIBA (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.623) and the demonstrations called in numerous European cities such as London, Stockholm, Bern, Rome and Paris were announced (Balsebre and Fontonova, 2014:251). Ibárruri states that “Julián Grimau dead is a flag of struggle” (AHPCE, Madrid, Emisiones de Radio España Independiente, 1963, p.622) while Carrillo states that the mobilisation for Grimau’s life has mobilised people from both the left and the right, strengthening the pillars for National Reconciliation and the end of the Franco dictatorship.

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5. Discussion and conclusions

The Grimau case had such international repercussions that people such as the Queen of England and Nikita Khrushchev asked Franco for clemency. But this intensity would immediately wane, mainly due to the rise of the Cold War, in which the world was divided in two, and Grimau, for the majority of public opinion, belonged to the Soviet sphere. This is possibly the main reason for the subsequent lack of knowledge of this character. However, his human side, with events such as having to find a firing squad, since the Guardia Civil refused to execute him, the fact that a lieutenant had to give him the coup de grâce, because most of the members of the replacement squad missed the target, and the treatment received by his widow, may help public opinion to learn values in Grimau that help to understand the meaning of Historical Memory and to assimilate the negative aspects of dictatorial regimes.

The human figure of Julián Grimau as a victim of his coherences should be disseminated and studied as an example of a committed politician.

It is also important to point out how the Communist Party of Spain changed its strategy in the 1960s, contributing the concept of National Reconciliation, which would have a strong influence on the Transition. However, the important role played by the Communist Party of Spain in the opposition against the dictatorship and during the Transition is still not appreciated by ordinary citizens.

From the Grimau Case onwards, the lack of transparency in the affairs of political prisoners and the failure to negotiate under international pressure would be repeated throughout Franco’s regime, in cases such as Case 1001 against the CCOO trade unionists.

It can also be seen from the outset that Francoism had no communication strategy, which led to a series of failures based on lack of transparency and lack of truth, which would affect the regime in the eyes of public opinion. This aroused the interest of audiences in the clandestine Radio Pirenaica station, as strongly as almost on the night of the Transitors on 23 February.

In reality, Francoism was afraid to enter the democratic game of political negotiation in order not to lose its position. For it was an easy way to lose face in the eyes of world public opinion.

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