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Eduardo Guzmán – libertarian journalist and historian

Antonio Téllez Solà

April 2000

Eduardo de Guzmán Espinosa was born in Villada (Palencia) in 1909. He was an honest recorder of all of the revolutionary upheavals of his times. A journalist by calling, he was active from an early age, assisting with a number of Spanish and American publications. In 1930 he was appointed editor-in-chief of the Madrid daily *La Tierra*, the first issue of which appeared on 16 November that year. The director and owner of the paper was Salvador Cánovas Cervantes, a veteran battling newspaperman who contributed to *Solidaridad Obrera* during the civil war. *La Tierra* went under in the summer of 1935, the victim of months of extended censorship and repeated seizures following the 1934 uprising.

Eduardo de Guzmán was the first reporter to make a realistic and blood-curdling report on the bloody events in the village of Casas Viejas (Cádiz), since renamed Benalup de Sidonia: the village, with its 5,000 inhabitants, was attacked by the forces of order who murdered 22 anarchists during 11 and 12 January 1933. In 1935 Eduardo joined the republican morning paper *La Libertad* as its political editor and editorialist and by the time of the army revolt in July 1936

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he was on its staff. In February 1936 he was appointed director of the newly-founded *Castilla Libre*, which served as the CNT's newspaper during the civil war.

Eduardo de Guzmán stuck by his post until 28 March 1939 when, with Franco's troops already inside the city, it published its final issue. He then left for Valencia and thence to Alicante where 25–30,000 people had mustered to await the evacuation ships that never came. On 1 April 1939 he was captured by the Italian 'Littorio' Division. In Eduardo de Guzmán's own words, this was the start of a long odyssey:

"I have been in Yeserías prison in Madrid, at the far end of the Paseo de las Delicias, since 3 August 1939, having arrived here after the forty-nine day nightmare in the police stations at Almagro 36 and Alcalá 82 (of the thirty of us from the concentration camp in Levante dispatched to those stations on 16 June, five died under questioning and another twenty three were sentenced to death, of which eighteen have been executed.)"

A summary court martial held on 18 January 1940 and lasting just ninety minutes decided the fate of 29 people, over half of whom were sentenced to death. Eduardo de Guzmán was one of those. The sentences handed down by Standing Court Martial (Madrid) No 5 were confirmed by the Captaincy-General on 25 January 1940. A minority of those under sentence of death was pardoned. Eduardo de Guzmán was pardoned on 21 May 1941 after a sixteen-month nightmare. He was released on parole in 1948. He was released but was denied the right to pursue his profession and was forced to turn to other employment. He was not rehabilitated as a journalist until 1978. In 1951 he faced another trial on espionage charges and served another year in prison in Ocaña.

Aside from making a goodly number of translations, Eduardo survived over the next two decades by writing over 400 westerns for the Arizona collection under the nom de plume Edward Goodman, and upwards of a hundred detective novels for the FBI collection – some of them made it to the silver screen – using the pen-

name Eddy Thorne. Meanwhile, under his own name, this prolific author was a complete unknown in Spain.

In 1969 Eduardo de Guzmán started working for the Mexican News Agency AMEX and later for the review *Indice*: he also contributed to the weekly *Triunfo* and to *Tiempo de Historia*. Among the many works published under his own name we might mention his splendid book *Madrid Rojo y Negro. Milicias Confederales* (*Madrid in Red and Black. Confederal Militias*) published by *Tierra y Libertad* in Barcelona back in 1938, with a foreword by another crusading libertarian journalist, José García Pradas, who was then working on *CNT*. In his introduction to the book and its author, Pradas wrote:

“In his book *Contraataqué* (1937) Ramón J. Sender, that ideological and literary will o’the wisp, house author and mouthpiece to the soviet bureaucracy, shamelessly glossed over our distinguished part in the defending of Madrid and displayed the hireling’s audacity in depicting a few “anarchist” individuals who are not as this hack would like us to be, in order to explain away his own inability to remain in our camp and fight from within our ranks. [...] The best retort to *Contraataqué* is Eduardo de Guzmán’s vigorous and dynamic book. What Sender hides under a dense blanket of sectarianism, Eduardo de Guzmán exposes to the light, to the bright red light of the truth about our fight. What the will o’the wisp would besmirch with mud, is here set out without vituperation (...) Eduardo de Guzmán was well-placed to write this book. He is one of Spain’s leading journalists, displaying an extraordinary talent for the difficult and uncertain calling of journalism. He is a member of the CNT and director of its daily *Castilla Libre* and has personal, first-hand knowledge of the deeds and the men that he depicts or cites. He lived through the heady days of the entire campaign in Madrid and has felt the hurts of war, not just through the impact of this cataclysm upon his mind, but also because in his heart of hearts and in his very veins he has suffered through the loss of his brother Angel de Guzmán on the battle-front, facing the en-

emy, who discovered in him the lusted-after prey of a captain of the Confederal Militias ...”

Other titles from Eduardo de Guzmán include:

España entre las dictaduras y la democracia (1967), *Aurora de Sangre* (the basis for the movie *Mi Hija Hildegard*), *La muerte de la esperanza* (1973), *1930. Historia política de un año decisivo* (1973), *El año de a Victoria* (1974) which won the International Press Award in 1975, awarded by seven great world publications (including *Le Nouvel Observateur*, *Newsweek*, *Triunfo* and *The Observer*) as the most interesting political book published in Europe in 1974, *Nosotros los asesinos* (1976), *La Segunda República fue así* (1977) and *Historia de la prensa*, two editions of which sold out. In 1976 he helped launch the National Retired Journalists’ Coordinating Committee. And in 1982 he was awarded Freedom of Expression Award by the Pais Valenciano Journalists’ Union.

Eduardo de Guzmán died in Madrid of a heart attack in the early morning of 4 July 1991 at the age of 82. At the time of his death he was working on *El Periodismo español en la actualidad*.