

Open Letter to Pedro Sanchez

Octavio Alberola

25 February 2019

Sr. Pedro Sánchez
Prime Minister

Being one of the Spaniards who crossed the Pyrenees on foot in 1939, seeking refuge in France, I was touched by the tribute you paid to Manuel Azaña and Antonio Machado. Those two individuals also “were forced to quit Spain” and – like many others – had to die in exile.

I was eleven years old at the time and am now aged ninety-one, and since 2007, following the passing of the Historical Memory Law, I have ceaselessly denounced the unfathomable cravenness of a law which, whilst purporting to do right by the victims of Francoist repression, fails to revoke the verdicts handed down by the Francoist courts, and also – in its Article 10 – shamefully subdivides them into two sorts, depending on the date of delivery – without any justification or explanation.

You will not be surprised, then, if I again ask you to put paid to that cravenness and this disgrace. Not merely because there is the possibility of your doing so by Decree today but also because it would be truly shameful not to do so after asking for “forgiveness” from the exiles for the fact that Spain had not done so “much earlier”.

It is true to say that “exile is always abominable”; but Francoist repression was even more abominable. Which is why it is a disgrace to allow this Law to stand with an article that makes a distinction between those who, for fighting for the democratic freedoms that everybody these days claims to champion, had their lives taken from them by Francoism.

It is precisely because “it is late, very late” that there should be no more delay ...

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