

## **Cuerda de presas**

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Artist: Fidel Martínez

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### **The voice of the suffering of female inmates in Francoist prisons**

The stories that make up *Cuerda de presas* recreate the life of Spanish female political prisoners during the first years of the Franco dictatorship. Each story takes place in a different prison, composing a mosaic denouncing the atrocities of repression in the years after the Spanish Civil War. Immersed in such an asphyxiating environment, the women are the protagonist, and pain and fury the only emotions allowed. Over the course of these stories, and in spite of all of the obstacles imaginable, the prisoners recover one by one the words that matter: those of affection, friendship, and solidarity.

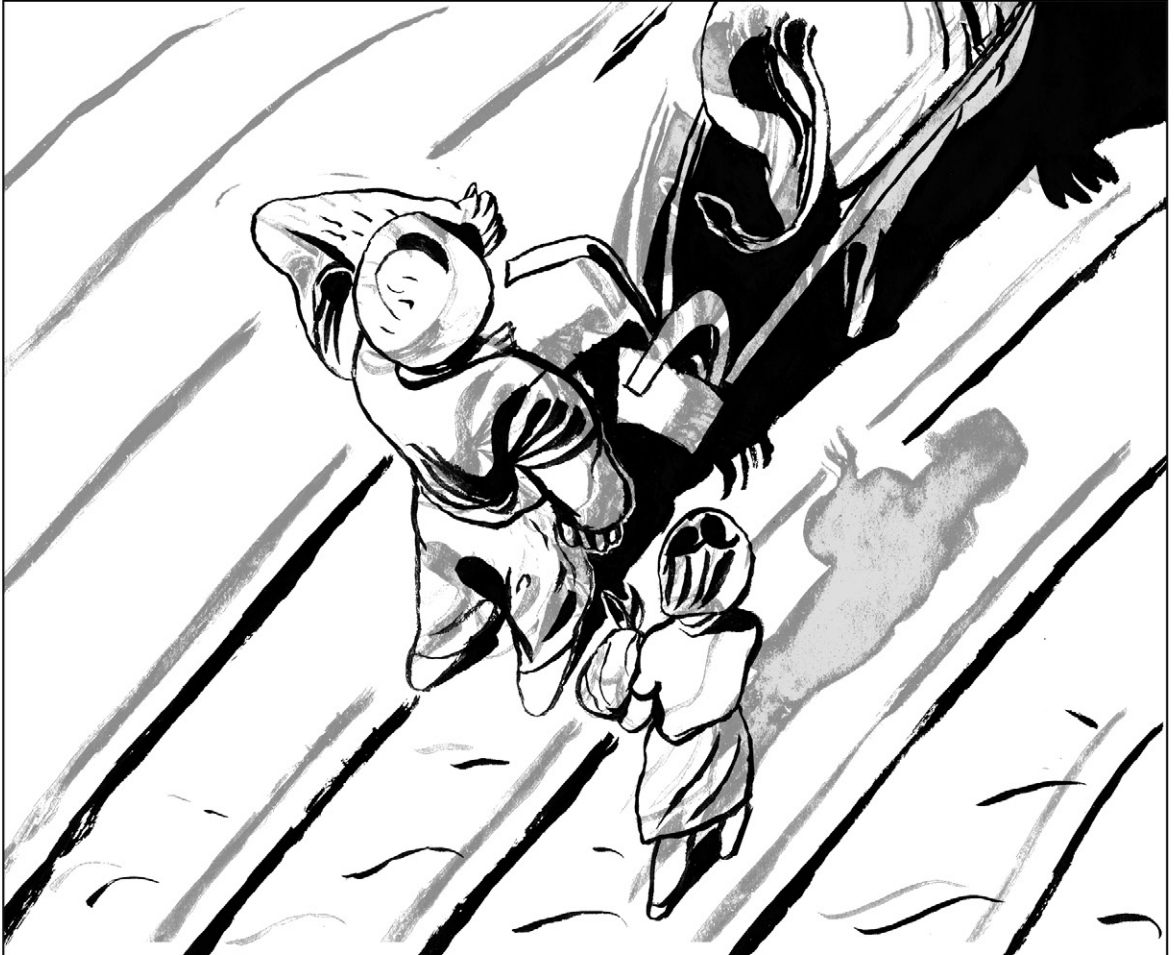
### **Rights sold in France**

FOR ME, IRON BARS WEREN'T ALWAYS SYNONYMOUS WITH CONFINEMENT.

## BEHIND BARS



WHEN I WAS A GIRL, THE PLOUGHSHARE ENABLED MY FATHER TO MAKE A LIVING OFF THE EARTH



YEARS LATER, ON MY WAY TO BEGIN WORK AS A SERVANT AT THE ESTATE OF THE FAMILY WHO OWNED THE LAND WE LIVED ON, THE SHADOWS OF THE ORANGE TREES CAST BARS ACROSS THE BUS I TRAVELED ON.



MY FIRST TRIP... I FELT TRANSFIGURED: I WAS NO LONGER MYSELF, I WAS SOMEONE ELSE.



I DON'T KNOW WHICH OF US SPENT FOUR YEARS IN THAT SUFFOCATING ATMOSPHERE



...OR WHICH OF US DECIDED TO JUMP THE MAIL TRAIN IN APRIL OF 1931 TO ESCAPE THE HARASSMENT OF THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.



I ONLY KNOW THAT, ON THE TRAIN THE SAME RHYTHM ROCKED US BOTH...



BAR-CE-LO-NA, BAR-CE-LO-NA, BAR-CE-LO-NA.



I DIDN'T THINK ABOUT IRON BARS AS I WANDERED THROUGH THAT CITY WHERE BOYS SHOUTED THE HEADLINES FROM "LA VANGUARDIA" AND "EL DÍA GRÁFICO".



THE PAPERS PROCLAIMED THE DEFEAT OF THE MONARCHISTS IN A ELECTION THAT WOULD GIVE BIRTH TO THE REPUBLIC.



THE CELEBRATORY MOOD OF APRIL WAS CUT SHORT IN MAY BY THE SMOKE OF BURNING CHURCHES: MANY SUSPECTED THE C.N.T....



... THE ANARCHISTS' UNION Y HAD JOINED WHEN I STARTED WORKING AT A NOODLE FACTORY



... AND WHOM I JOINED IN THE STREETS TO DEFEND THE REPUBLIC AGAINST THE REVOLT OF THE ARMED FORCES IN JULY 1936.

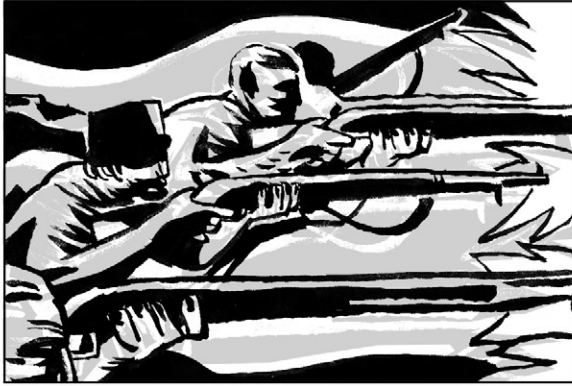


THAT SUMMER EVERYTHING SEEMED POSSIBLE: EVEN SOME OF US WOMEN WENT TO THE FRONT.





WE SHARED THE TRENCHES WITH MEN WHO INSULTED US FOR REFUSING TO WASH THEIR CLOTHES.



BUT SOON THEY MADE US RETIRE FROM COMBAT, ACCUSING US OF SPREADING VENEREAL DISEASE.



WE RETURNED TO OUR PRISONS, THOSE OF BEING WINES AND MOTHERS.



I FOUND WORK IN A SHOP MAKING UNIFORMS FOR THE SOLDIERS.



... AND I HAD TO LEAVE WHEN THREAD AND CLOTH BECAME SO SCARCE THAT WE HAD TO CUT OFF PRODUCTION.



IN ALCANTE THE WAR ENDED FOR THE REPUBLICANS ON APRIL 1ST, 1939: SURROUNDED BY REBELS WE AWAITED AN EVACUATION THAT NEVER CAME.



WOMEN WERE LOCKED UP IN THE MOVIE-HOUSES AND THEATERS OF ALICANTE: THERE WERE NO IRON BARS, THOUGH WE FELT THEM.



THERE WERE COUNTLESS TRIALS: ALL THE JUDGES WERE FROM THE ARMY.



BECAUSE OF MY POLITICAL AFFILIATION, THEY SENTENCED ME TO DEATH.



NEVERTHELESS, PUNISHMENT WAS ARBITRARY: MANY OF US SURVIVED WHILE OTHERS WERE KILLED FOR NO REASON.



WHEN THEY MOVED US TO THE PRISON IN GUADALAJARA...



... THE BARS BECAME REAL.



THE ROUTINE OF OUR LIVES BECAME  
"CELLULAR": TWENTY HOURS A DAY IN  
A CELL...



... AND FOUR IN THE YARD.



SICKNESS, HUNGER AND FIRING  
SQUADS WERE THE DAILY FACTS  
OF LIFE.



TO ADDRESS PRISON OVERCROWDING,  
FRANCO BEGAN GRANTING PARDONS IN  
1939. MY SENTENCE WAS COMMUTED FIRST  
TO THIRTY YEARS, AND THEN TO TWELVE.



IN 1951 I THOUGHT I LEFT THOSE PRISON  
BARS BEHIND...



... I KNEW THEY WOULD FOLLOW ME  
WHEREVER I'D GO.



... I KNEW THEY WOULD FOLLOW ME WHEREVER I'D GO.

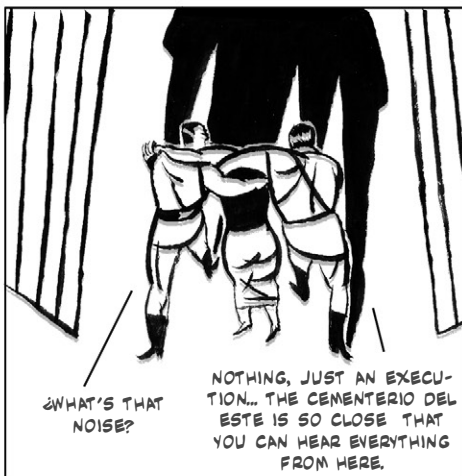


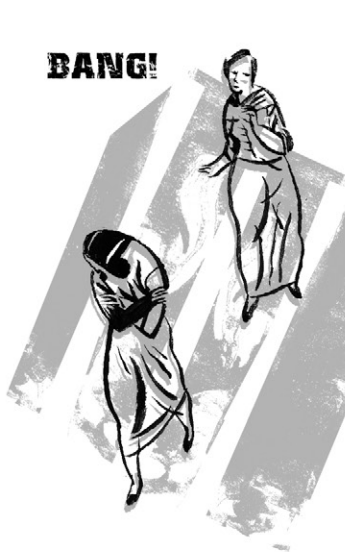
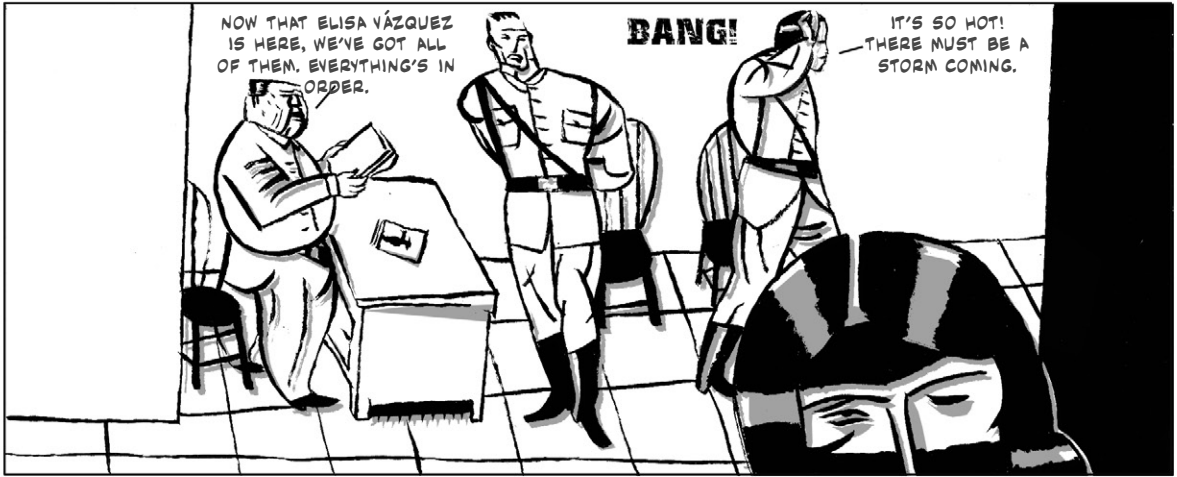
THE END





# BALLAD OF VENTAS PRISON













ON MARCH 6, GENERAL CASADO'S JUNTA CAME TO POWER,  
OUTLAWING COMMUNISTS.



ON THE 15TH, THEY LOCKED US UP RIGHT HERE, IN VENTAS.

WE WEREN'T THAT FAR OFF. CASADO'S FOLLOWERS SET US FREE ON  
THE 27TH, ONE DAY BEFORE THE REBELS ENTERED MADRID...



\* Junta de Casado: junta militar compuesta el 6 de marzo de 1939 por republicanos, socialistas y anarquistas.



