

...On the 13th of April, 1969, Sunday, the *Diario Sur* Newspaper announced the following head titles: “Manuel Cortés has been in his house for thirty years. He was the last Mayor of the Republic in Mijas. His wife Juliana Moreno López has kept the secret and has only shared it with her daughter María.” They published photos of me walking through the village. Journalists came from all over the work, like bees to the honey; I got so sick of them, I decided not to give any more interviews. I have spent the best years of my life between walls. Was it worth it? I never lost faith in Democracy. The tyranny of the dictatorship could not last forever...

...When he came out into the sunshine, with his pale pockmarked white face and unsteady walk, “I have forgotten how to walk” said Manuel. It was the 11th of April of 1969 and Mijas had an extra inhabitant on their census list, the day before 8,822 and the day after 8,823, a newly born baby of 64 years of age, blue/green eyes, Manuel Cortés Quero...

...Like a tourist that has come from a cold country for the first time, Manuel lied down on a chair in his patio, removed his shoes and sunbathed, a forbidden pleasure for thirty years. You could hear him say to his coreligionists of the socialist’s party:

-At least for me, the war is over...



Manuel Cortés Quero *“The Mole of Mijas”*

In the following paragraphs we have tried to give a general vision of the 30 years Manuel Cortés Quero was hidden because of his belief in democracy and socialism. They have been taken out of the book “Los Topos” – The Moles – by Jesús Torbado and Manuel Lequineche and edited by Argos-Vergara in 1977.

...The Mayor of Mijas has joined exodus with his wife and his one and a half-year-old daughter, María. “The fall of Málaga, does not mean the end of the Republic,” thinks Cortés. After marching, with great difficulty, through the woods all day looking for the Almería road, Cortés decides that his wife and daughter should return to Mijas. “Juliana, you have never been involved with politics, they won’t hurt you.” The Mayor embraces his wife, gives her fifty pesetas and kisses his daughter before leaving for Almería...

...Two years later, Manuel Cortés has lost the war. His division “La cuarenta de Carabineros” has been demobilised in Valencia. He says good bye to his friends of war and in the middle of all the chaos at the time, in Valencia, he decides to go back to his village, in the Málaga mountains, to be with his wife and daughter. His conscience is clear; he is only a defeated soldier, one of the six hundred thousand soldiers that have lost the war....

...I use to go out at night, like the owls, to relax and stretch my stiff legs and move my arms. My muscles were numb and my joints sore. I would lay down on my old rough bed, walk up and down the room, being careful not to make any noise, trying not to cough. In reality, the fact of being in such a busy as a bar and barbershop benefited me. Who would ever look for me in such a busy place?...

...I use to drink water and very rarely wine. I had never been a wine drinker. My habit was tobacco, I would smoke all the rationing I was brought. I had constant discussions with Juliana about the subject. “They are going to see

the smoke, Manolo, one day they will see the smoke...” It was impossible that they would have seen the smoke, but Juliana was obsessed with any fault with the security system...

...The first two years were the most depressing for me, until we decided to move to a house... It had a spare room, a hidden room, where I could break the silence and live with Juliana and my daughter María. And that’s just what we did. Juliana rented the house, number 5 in Capitán Cortés Street, from a friend. The house had a cupboard that once had been used to hide the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus...

...As soon as we arrived, we put hands to work. We had to clear the cupboard and clean it out. That was my hiding place for a few days until I could prepare a new hideout. This was situated under the stairs. I drilled a hole that made way to the space under the stairs and made a large tile of plaster to disguise the hole and painted it a red colour. When the owner of the house would visit to pick up or leave the olive oil containers, I would run and hide under the stairs and the owner never suspected that had been some building done there, a false wall that led to the hidden space under the stairs. To do all this work, we picked Thursday and Friday of Easter Week as we knew that our neighbour attended Mass punctually and this way would not hear the work going on through the thin walls. The noise of the saw blended in with the drums and music of the processions...

...I have to admit that some days I was desperate; I needed to escape, go out, no matter what. I felt discourage and Juliana and María would pay for my bad moods...

...I pulled out my own teeth, as soon as I got an ache, patiently, I would work at the tooth until it was loose and then I would yank it out with my fingers without any pliers or tongs. I pulled out nine or ten teeth this way. Juliana would warn me, “be careful if it gets infected you will be in a bad way”. I would place myself in front of the mirror and try and loosen the tooth in question, curled up in pain I would yank the tooth out. The worst were the ones that would not

loosen. When I got out, I went to the dentist, one in Mijas and another in Ronda, I had to have four back-teeth out...

...In 1960, my daughter got married. I had to make do watching her come out of church through a little hole above. The wedding procession left the house and after the ceremony María scurried away to come to my room and kiss me, just as we had planned. Down-stairs the groom was looking for her “Where ever has this woman got to?” On their honeymoon, María confessed everything. Silvestre, her husband, was not bothered at all, “Now, I understand all the small noises from upstairs, why you use to take so long every time you left the house and why you always threw me out of the house just before a good television programme...”

...There wasn’t much more to wait, less than I expected, to return to life and exist legally. On Friday the 28th of March, 1969 at 10 o’clock in the evening, like always I had my ear stuck to the radio waiting to hear the report of the governmental agreements. Manuel Fraga Iribarne, Minister of Information and Tourism, was the man in charge of giving out these reports. I got a lump in my throat when I heard the Minister speak, because of the emotion of the moment, I couldn’t think straight; something had been said about Franco giving amnesty to the persons who had committed crimes from the 18th of July of 1936 to the 1st of April 1939.

This is what I had been waiting to hear for the last 30 years. I stopped and thought to myself, “Manolo, this could be a dream, calm down, don’t go and spoil everything now”.

I rushed down the stairs; Juliana was in the living room sewing. “Juliana, I have just heard over the radio something about an amnesty that Franco has given, you must ask the porter of the Town Hall the Official State Bulletin...”