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Obituary

José Maria Galante “Chato” - the tenacity of the rebel

- Features - In Memoriam - Obituaries and appreciations -

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José Maria Galante was born in Madrid on 27 April 1948, died from Covid-19 during the night of 28-29 March 2020. [1]

The news in the early morning of the death from the coronavirus of José María Galante Serrano, “Chato”, has deeply affected that huge minority that forms the ocean of resistance and dignity in the face of injustice and attacks on life. Chato, as we called him from our young age, and as he called himself all his life, was a fighter both in his political activity and in his fight against disease. Strong physically and intellectually, a good person from top to bottom, he lived life intensely without ever losing his half smile. And his life was not easy. Persecuted by the Franco regime, aneurysm, heart disease and cancer, he endured until the night of the 29th of this sad month of March that humanity is experiencing.

Chato was a political actor present throughout the history of the last five decades of our country. Throughout the history of those who organize the rebellion of the people below against oppression, exploitation and injustice. Along with his partner Justa Montero, activist and key feminist reference, he was the promoter of what became known as the new social movements since the late 1970s. In his case, both through the anti-war movement and because of his ties to Ecologists in Action. He never had institutional “positions”, but he set agendas. His militant commitment goes back a long way.

He was part of a generation of internationalist militants who in the late 1960s set out to drive the socialist revolution. He participated in the anti-Franco student movement, went underground in the Frente de Liberación Popular (FLP) and was one of the founders of the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria (LCR), participating in its leadership until its dissolution. [2] Arrested and tortured on several occasions and a political prisoner of the dictatorship, he participated in the organization of one of the escape attempts from the Segovia prison.

The memory of the fear that those of us who were at liberty, albeit in hiding, had, that the most extreme rampages of the Francoist “patriots” would lead to a massacre in the prisons comes to my mind with emotion. Both prisoners and activists in the streets had the hope and the conviction that after overthrowing the dictatorship the possibility of profound social change would open up. So for us Liberty and Amnesty had a very different meaning from what was later given in the formula of “amnesty in exchange for amnesia” and the 1978 regime.

Things did not go as Chato had imagined, but he did not throw in the towel or let himself be carried away by “disenchantment”. He remained faithful to his commitments to the workers’ movement and expanded them through his participation in the struggles against NATO and in his connection with Ecologists in Action. He was a member of the Advisory Council of the *Viento Sur* magazine from its foundation. His last great cause was, as he himself declared, “to work against forgetfulness” and to vindicate the victims of the dictatorship. He was one of the promoters of [La Comuna](#), which brings together people from different political currents who suffered torture, prison or exile, and was a promoter, along with the deceased Carlos Slepoy and several of the people tortured by Antonio González Pacheco, the member of the Brigada Político Social known as Billy the Kid, of the so-called “Argentine complaint”, whose objective is the purging of responsibilities for the crimes committed under the dictatorship. To this end, Chato undertook to break the overwhelming silence of the institutional world about these crimes and decisively contributed to making the documentary [The Silence of Others](#) possible. [3]

If I had to summarize Chato's personality traits, I would highlight the way he created a comradely atmosphere in those circles in which he moved. He was a friend of his friends, as on more than one occasion we could hear from Miguel Romero, Moro, one of his best “colleagues” (a term that both used). And on a political level, I would say that

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he had a great nose for detecting important issues. And he immediately thought in terms of action, in which he showed indestructible tenacity. He has left us, but his cause is still pending. And new hands will join us to get out of the sanitary, economic, social and climatic impasse in which capitalism plunged us, in what is already a global civilizational crisis.

29 March 2020

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[1] Other articles in Castilian can be found on *Viento Sur* "[In memoriam José María Galante Chato](#)".

[2] See Miguel Romero "[The Trotskyism of the Liga](#)".

[3] See *The Guardian* 8 June 2018 "[Franco's cruel legacy: the film that wants to stop Spain forgetting](#)".