



MARÍA

Soteras

María Soteras Mauri

First working woman lawyer in Catalonia and example of repression on the basis of sex

Barcelona, 1905 – Mexico City, 1976

María Soteras Mauri was the first woman who joined the Bar Association of Barcelona as a working lawyer, on 30 September 1927, and she remained a member until 1929. In 1932 she married Antoni Vilalta i Vidal, a fellow lawyer and member of the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, who became a Barcelona city councilman with prominent public responsibilities. A little over two months after the Civil War started, María and her family went into exile first in Brussels and then in Mexico.

But in July 1939, María was charged by the Provincial Court of Political Responsibilities of Barcelona, which accused her and her husband, a member of the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Republican Left of Catalonia) political party, of sowing 'leftist propaganda and being enthusiasts of red ideas', etc.

The same proceeding was met with proof and testimony that María had never belonged to any political party and had never been involved in any political activities; she was merely married to Antonio, who had. Even the prominent legal historian Ferran Valls Taberner sent the court a letter of indemnity in favour of María, yet nonetheless, on 15 December 1939 María was fined 300,000 pesetas, disqualified from holding any public office for ten years and confined to the Balearic Islands for five years.

Living in Mexico, she paid much of the economic sanction and was pardoned of the other parts of the sentence in 1952. In the repressive proceeding, María always appeared as the 'wife of' and was condemned for her husband's political actions. In fact, the pardon proceeding did mention the lack of proof of María's political activity and evidence and documents in her favour. For this reason, as the 'wife of', we can conclude that she was a victim of repression on the basis of sex, because she was a woman and because she was the wife of a republican politician.

References:

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