



# MERCEDES

*Formica*

## Mercedes Formica-Corsi Hezode

*Pioneering lawyer and defender of women's rights*

**Cádiz, 1913 - Málaga, 2002**

Mercedes Formica entered the Faculty of Law in Seville in 1932. She was one of the first women to study Law and work as a lawyer in Spain. She combined her professional activity with a fertile literary career. Her most prominent books include *Bodoque* (1945), *Monte de Sancha* (1950), *La ciudad perdida* (1951), *A instancia de parte* (1955), *Visto y vivido 1931-1937*, *Pequeña historia de ayer* (1982), *Escucho el silencio* (1984), *Memorias* (1984) and *Espejo roto y espejuelos* (1998).

As a lawyer and also from the platform of her books, she stood out as a defender of women's rights and stated her critical position regarding the legal status of women during her day. In *A instancia de parte*, she writes: 'the law is a trap for us women to fall into'.

She was educated by professors at the Institución Libre de Enseñanza and was a personal friend of García Lorca, which did not stop her from being a member of José Antonio Primo de Rivera's Falange from 1933 to 1936, that is, from the ages of 20 to 23. She soon distanced herself from this political party, especially after Franco unified Falange members and traditionalists in 1937, which she described as a 'monstrous amalgam'. Around the same time, she expressed her feelings about the war with expressions like 'no end will justify this bloodshed'.

In an article published in *ABC* in 1953, Formica criticised the Civil Code's unfair treatment of women and warned about the difficulties of wives 'who are going through the hardship of requesting a separation'. Her comment captured the attention of the international press. In July 1956, a Madrid court found in favour of a woman she was representing and forced her husband to leave the home.

That was the starting signal of a major reform of the Civil Code which Formica had been calling for a long time and which was approved in 1958. In fact, this amendment is popularly known as the *re-Formica*. It ushered in the disappearance of the 'woman's deposit' during separation, which forced the woman to leave the family home and be 'deposited' in an external home, always under the watch of a 'depository'. The concept of 'husband's domicile' also vanished, as it was replaced by 'conjugal domicile'.

She was ahead of her time as both a jurist and a writer, and worked within the Franco regime to combat discrimination on the basis of sex.

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