



Sant Jordi Especial

«I have spent many days in Andorra and it is a place that inspires you to create stories»

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Journalist and writer, Joaquín Abad is quite a legend in the world of information. Director of some of the most important media in the history of Spain, for years he has focused many of his novels on the Principality of Andorra. Examples of them are «El Andorrano», the best-selling book in the entire history of the country, or «El secreto bajo Engolasters», his last great success.

–How did the world of journalism come into your life?

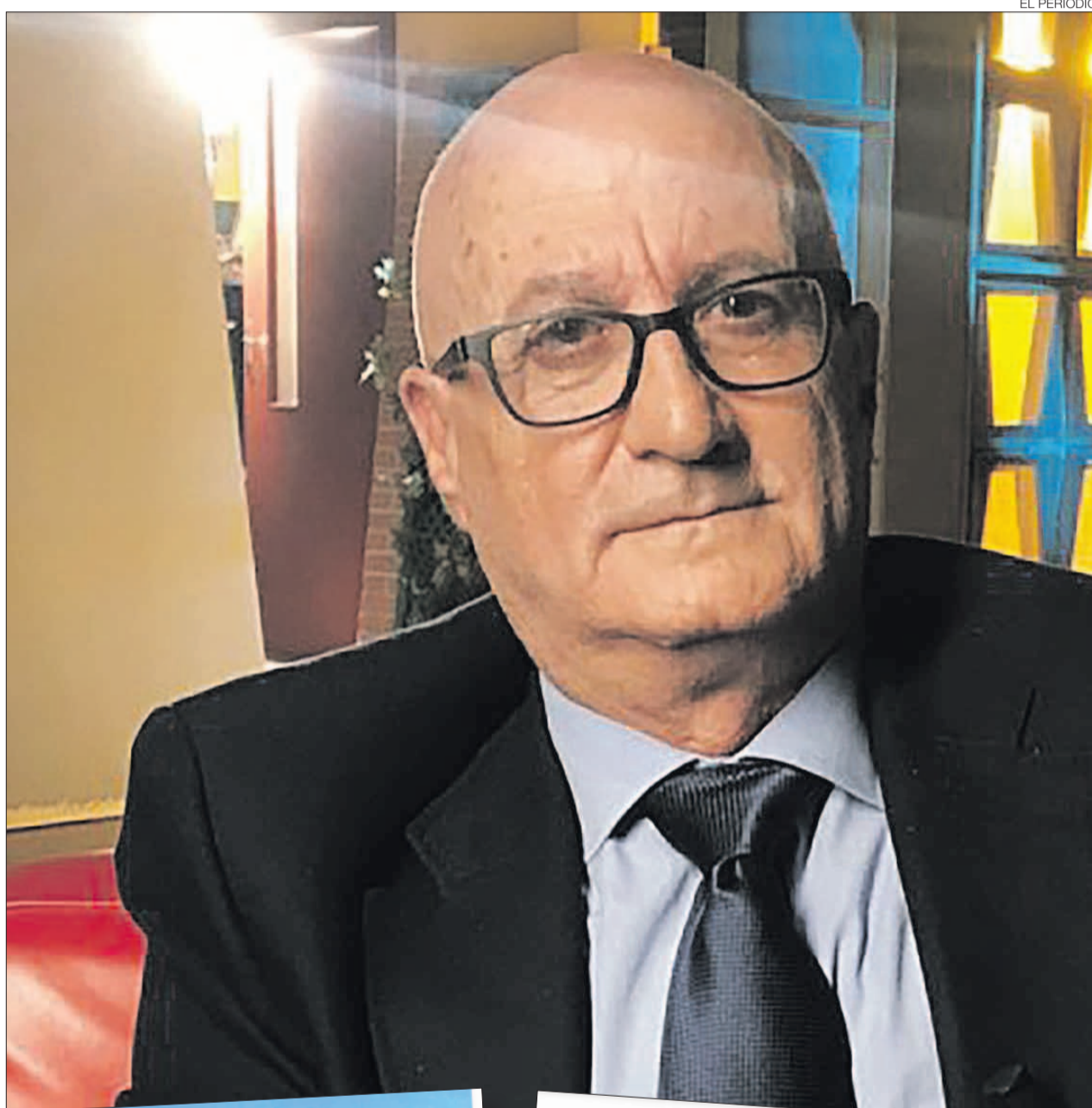
–As a student, in my last year of high school, I started writing a newsletter that was really quite successful. It was read by students as well as several professors and this made me, when looking for opinions to study at university, end up opting for journalism. Then came the university internships in the media and that was when I finally made up my mind, because I loved them.

–One of the most important events of your career was your time as director of the newspaper «La Crónica de Almería». What do you remember about this time, where you even received several death threats?

–We are talking about the year 1982, so it was not long before Spain had started the democratic process and UCD had already been governing for some time. In general, it was a very beautiful time, where I could verify that freedom of expression and information was exercised in a transparent and satisfactory manner. Despite this, it also had its negative side, as I ran into the mafia. This meant that I had to live constantly in fear, in addition to being forced to go with a securityguard, experiencing several attacks on my life, having my rotary printer burned... It was living slowly but surely, as you rightly say. In fact, it was at that time when I got to know Andorra, as the Civil Guard recommended that I hide in a place where the mafia could not find me and Andorra seemed to me to be the ideal place. My stay here made me, at the same time, also start to inform myself about various news of the country.

–This fact make you write the book «Descubriendo a Juan Asensio». What motivated you to take this step?

–In those days I was already living



EL PERIÒDIC

in Madrid and working in digital journalism, but suddenly one day I saw that a television channel in my country was talking about this man. They were posing as Teresa of Calcutta, honestly. The fact of seeing how they whitewashed his image with impunity and shamelessness made me ashamed and it was at that moment that I decided to write everything I remembered having written in La Crónica de Almería. We were the ones who raised the whole issue of the mafia and Juan Asensio, otherwise everything would have gone unnoticed.

–After experiencing such an event, did you reconsider leaving journalism aside at some point?

–Obsoletely no. The Civil Guard already told me, as long as I was extracting information and disturbing, I would be alive. If I fell asleep or decided to put it aside, that's when they would come for me. The only way to keep the mob on edge and to get their foot in the door is precisely by harassing them, as well as constantly extracting information. If we, as journalists, do not do this, they become more and more emboldened to the point of being even more powerful than the system that governs a city or a country. Their tentacles grow larger and people reach a point of fear and respect that makes them completely invulnerable.

–You have also been working in other newsrooms of other media, where the legendary «El Caso» stands out. How it was to be part as a director of a medium of this caliber?

–As director of La Crónica de Almería, the director of El Caso, Eugenio Suárez, called me and offered me the possibility of joining as a new director. At that time I was already tired of Almería because of everything I had suffered, since because of the mafia I had reached a point where I had no life. That's why I didn't hesitate to take on this new challenge and that's when I got to know the whole thing from the inside. In El Caso, all its great journalists went at the worst possible time to the worst possible place, where no one else would go, and from there they wrote a chronicle or a news story in a way that no one else was doing at that time. I learned a lot, especially how to novelize an event so that it is much more decent and sellable.

–But writing continued to be a very important part of your life.

–Of course. Since I started with the internship at the University it was my turn to write and I did it very easily. It wasn't a difficult task for



► Above, journalist and writer Joaquín Abad. Below, two of his greatest novelistic successes: «L'Andorrano», the best-selling book in the history of Andorra, and «El secreto bajo Engolasters», his last published book.

me and I think anyone who has worked in any medium or is currently doing so can say that. For us, writing articles or books is not complicated.

–We can't no to talk about «El Andorrano», the best-selling book in the history of Andorra. What motivated you to write this novel?

–As I told you, I discovered Andorra because of my escapades to hide from the mafia. The whole country fell in love with me and after a while I started going there for personal enjoyment. I spent many winters and summers with my family there and we always stayed in El Serrat, where its owner became a friend over the years. In the summer of 1987, he told me that some corpses had appeared with their hands tied with wires, which later turned out to be the Jews who had passed through the mountains of the country during the war. Little by little I became informed about all this part of the story that was unknown to me, but it still took me a long time to get the novel out. It didn't come out until 2018, more than thirty years since I first heard about it. I wrote it without any pretensions and I did not even expect that it could be published by the editorial line of Andorra, since it leaves certain surnames in the country in a very bad place.

–Did you expect all the success that it took at the time and that, today, it still continues?

–To be honest, no. It is already in

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its fourteenth edition and just this week I sent a box with several volumes to a bookstore. It's been an incredible success, but I don't know if it's deserved. In the end, the only thing I did was what I was already doing when I was writing reports for the newspapers, with the difference that I decided to write «L'Andorrano» as a novel to avoid possible demands from those above.

–What does all the recognition that this phenomenon brought you mean to you?

–At my age, I take it normally. I saw that I really did touch a subject at a given moment that no one had previously touched, despite the fact that everyone knew it and talked about it privately. That is why leaving it written in a book, with a title and then sold in bookshops, was truly repulsive for all of Andorra. I'm sure that anything I've done so far or will do in the future will no longer have the same impact, but that doesn't take away from the fact that it's a huge personal satisfaction. Of course, I was excited, among other things because there were a lot of people who were annoyed by it, but after being the director of a medium for seventeen years and the director of a weekly seminar... there are few things that surprise me.

–Then came the next two parts that make up the entire trilogy, «Y la luz llegó a Andorra» and «Andorra Connection». Did you always imagine it

would be a trilogy?

–The second part was born as a result of a visit I made to the Engolasters area, I had not planned it for anything. The same thing happened with «Andorra Connection», which took shape after I received a file with several cases of money laundering. From there I started putting heads together and many people say it's the best thing I've done in a long time. It seems to me that it is very well documented, but as a personal satisfaction I like the fourth novel more, «El virus Andorrano», set shortly before the end of World War II. And if not also the last of all, «El secreto bajo Engolasters», which haven't nothing to do with all the previous ones I've been bringing out. It is a fantastic fiction, which focuses on the fight between angels and demons in the valley of Engolasters.

–Why this interest in Andorra? Do you feel you have some kind of emotional tie to the country?

–I have spent many days in Andorra and it is a place that inspires me to create stories, such as the Engolasters area when it was still a valley before it flooded. Andorra in general has a certain magic and writing these kinds of stories in any other town in Spain is not the same, I think. It makes a lot more sense to do it here.

–You have also recently published «Las putas de Franco» and continues to serve as editor of the newspaper mil21. Do you have any new pro-

jects on the horizon?

–On a journalistic level, I am currently involved in a Congress in Madrid, where we are dealing with the whole subject of artificial intelligence. My last three books have revolved around this topic, as it seems to me that it is a tool that can help you a lot on a professional level. In addition, in a month or so I will start writing a new novel that will be related to «Las putas de Franco» and where I will deal with the figure of a minister of Suárez's dictatorship and subsequently of democracy, which had a lady who handled the whole issue of prostitution. He was a well-known minister, who was even versed in the Spanish Constitution.

–And perhaps the most difficult question of all... journalism or writing? What would you prefer?

–Journalism is work, research, writing, being faithful to what a witness has told you, recording, taking photos... on the other hand, I think that writing is a matter of imagination. If you have a lot of imagination you will write many books, otherwise you will only write a couple and that's it. The truth is that I enjoy much more writing reports and information, since it has a different power, you have it in your hands. I have seen how, if you knew how to do it well, you could extract all the information you wanted from different figures of power and charge them. ≡

POLITICS

Marsol will be Minister of the Presidency and Education, general trustee

Concòrdia could obtain a secretariat from the syndicate

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On Tuesday afternoon, the councilors of the Democrats met to define the composition of the next legislature at the General Council. The Acció councilor, Marc Magallón, and the one for Ciutadans Compromesos,

Carles Naudi, also met with them.

The orange party's decision was that Carles Enseñat will be the next syndic general, while Conxita Marsol will join the Government as Minister of the Presidency. Two decisions that come hand in hand, since this step forward by Marsol or Codina in the Government will mean that Liberals for Andorra will be able to count on one or two councilors in the General Council, an unexpected decision for many. If in the end it is

only Marsol who takes the step forward, those from Espot would only cede one councilor to those from Cabanes and would maintain the absolute majority with fifteen councilors plus the representative of Acció. This liberal councilor would be Víctor Pintos, leaving out Marc Galabert. Following this line, it remains to be seen if Concòrdia ends up getting a secretary of the union, a fact that some Democratic councilors already take for granted. ≡



►► Carles Enseñat and Conxita Marsol.

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