

He tenido la suerte de vivir esa época  
MEMORIA DE JUAN QUERO, LABRADOR, PASTOR Y ESCRITOR

I was lucky enough to live those times.  
MEMORIES OF JUAN QUERO, FARMER, SHEPHERD AND WRITER,  
WITNESS OF A CENTURY OF HISTORY IN THE LANDS OF TARIFA

Beatriz Díaz and Juan Quero

### THE VALUE OF YOUR TESTIMONY

I was looking for different testimonies of life that would bring out to light the history and sociology of our people, and several roads led me to you, Juan. Between September and November 2004, that autumn in which I began to settle down in Tarifa, we had several encounters in the quietness of your flowery garden at your house in Facinas. It was a routine to place the tape recorder between us, as a most needed crutch for our own memory. Although you don't like this device (I know you prefer to speak with hands, pencil and eraser as your only tools), it helped us to register so many details and detours!

You shared with me your experience as a lad, working with your father or enjoying your new position as a young land owner; you passed through a fratricidal war that nobody wanted; you supported your family in the years of manhood, working at the roadside inn, walking the land as a shepherd... Those were the times, too, when your passion for reading and writing was born. You have a wonderful ability to link your experiences with the key historical events that crossed through your century and that framed your people's life: the Spanish labor hand in Gibraltar in the first half of the century, the impact of the Second Republic in the awakening of the Andalusian lands, the reactions and the programmed repression after the military coup of 1936, the rationing and the black market during the post war era and the crisis of the land that led to the migration flow of the sixties.

On this journey into your land in the twentieth century, you open our eyes too to the unfair situation of land ownership and management. A land whose owners (with or without the right to be) used the political power for decades; and you show the harsh work conditions that marked the lives of so many citizens from the Tarifa region. No doubt, this is one of the most valuable parts of your testimony.

Juan, through your words many people will confront their own past, half buried perhaps under oblivion or enforced silence. Others, we shall recognize our grandparents as the true protagonists of a century of history, a picture that might be essential to understand a dizzying present that threatens to run over us all.

As the writer you are, you told me about your concern because you kept changing again and again the pencil's path, obsessively looking for new ways of expression. I wish you could live it as a virtue, as an essential quality to create, writing. If the art of writing is somewhat painful, it is precisely because it constantly needs to review and rewrite itself in order to feel satisfied with the work. And this is why, in turn, writing is so creative and personal. This is what it meant for me working with you, Juan, and I think this work will bring something to you too, to your family and to our community.

Beatriz Díaz Martínez  
Tarifa, September 2006