

## *The anti-Franco student movement's contribution to the return of democracy in Spain*

### *La contribución del movimiento estudiantil antifranquista al retorno de la democracia en España*

**Sergio Rodríguez Tejada**

e-mail: [Sergio.Rodriguez@uv.es](mailto:Sergio.Rodriguez@uv.es)  
*Universitat de València. España*

**Abstract:** This paper analyzes the role played by the student movement in the restitution of democracy in Spain. Taking as a starting point the situation of university under the Franco dictatorship, and how (and why) students were dealt with, the major features that set the student movement apart from other kinds of activism in that time are described and linked to the unique effects that it had on the status quo, with a special stress on its ability to generate the kind of cultural change required for overcoming the atmosphere of resignation and consent that helped to keep the government in power. The way in which culture, personal issues, and politics got intertwined is shown as a key trait of student mobilization, clarifying the broader, varied influence that the protest exerted on the Spanish society as a whole. The specific nature of student politics under a dictatorship are also tackled, considering its consequences for facing the challenge posed by Franco's death. By then, the student movement had become completely subsidiary to left-wing parties and therefore got beheaded as they set mobilization aside to increasingly focus on high politics. As a result, the student movement itself faded out during the central years of the transition. Nevertheless, though it left the scene just before the constitutional process started, it had previously sown many of the seeds that made change possible.

**Keywords:** student movement; counterculture; university; Franco's dictatorship; transition; Spain.

**Resumen:** Este artículo analiza el rol desempeñado por el movimiento estudiantil en la recuperación de la democracia en España. Partiendo de la situación en la universidad durante la dictadura franquista, y de la manera especial en que se trataba a los estudiantes, se describen las principales características que hicieron que el movimiento estudiantil fuese diferente de otras clases de activismo, y se ponen en relación con los efectos únicos que tuvo en el statu quo, con especial hincapié en su capacidad para generar el tipo de cambio cultural requerido para superar la atmósfera de resignación y consentimiento que contribuía a mantener al gobierno en el poder. La manera en que se interrelacionaban en su seno cultura, cuestiones personales y política se revela como un rasgo clave de la movilización estudiantil. Y se clarifica la influencia más amplia y variada que la protesta ejerció sobre la sociedad española en su conjunto. Se aborda también la naturaleza específica de la política estudiantil bajo una dictadura, considerando sus consecuencias para afrontar el reto planteado por la muerte de Franco. Para entonces, el movimiento estudiantil había llegado a depender completamente de los partidos de izquierda y, por tanto, quedó descabezado cuando éstos abandonaron las movilizaciones para centrarse cada vez más en la alta política. Como resultado, el movimiento estudiantil como tal desapareció durante los años

centrales de la transición. Sin embargo, aunque dejó la escena justo antes de que el proceso constitucional comenzase, previamente había sembrado muchas de las semillas que hicieron el cambio posible.

**Palabras clave:** movimiento estudiantil; contracultura; universidad; dictadura franquista; transición; España.

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## 1. Introduction

The political impact of university student movements is often a bewildering issue. To start with, conceptual vagueness is especially misleading in that matter, so it is important to clarify what we are talking about. Like other social environments, particularly those ones enjoying some kind of privilege, universities generate esprit de corps among their members and, at the same time, put up with—in different degrees of tolerance—some dissenters within them, either scattered or gathered together in little groups of limited influence. However, as a result of certain circumstances, both factors—comradeship and uprising—join together making discontent mainstream for a while, in a way that most undergraduates from one or several campuses take part as such in collective actions with common declared aims, which they somehow think to be their concern as students. When such a situation happens, we usually call it a student movement, a reality that must be distinguished from other related occurrences, such as a minority politicization among learners, the participation of some (or many) of them in campaigns under any social identity different from studenthood, a prevailing university—but not specifically student-based—unrest, and the transfer of former student activists to other movements.

Even if well defined, there are additional hindrances to deal with. As many other primarily non-power-seeking protests, their degree of influence in government changes that at best benefit third parties is easily a butt of discussion (Gamson, 1975; Burstein *et al.*, 1995; Giugni *et al.*, 1999; McAdam *et al.*, 2001). Likewise, neither the well-off backgrounds commonly associated with higher education, or the pervasive, romantic association between youth and rebellion allow to jump to conclusions about their leanings, since undergraduates can be followers of opposing doctrines and either supporters or agents of dissent under different political regimes, including unforgiving dictatorships (Boren, 2001; Kassow, 1989; Kotek, 1996; Zhao, 2001; McDougall, 2004; Connelly & Grüttner, 2005; Junes, 2015). Besides, the youth of their members and the personal grievances they frequently express are hardly in keeping with a narrow, traditional notion of politics as strictly ruling affairs conducted by (male) adults. As a result of such a view, student mobilizations are sometimes depicted as trivial, more related to rambling concerns and juvenile recklessness than to any sensible,

pondered agenda. When their importance is considered, it is not unusual to undervalue their activities as a mere passing, formative period for leaders-to-be, a simplification that largely matches the extended elitist appreciation of university as the breeding ground for the establishment heirs (Natsis, 2002).

Actually, there is a grain of truth in that insistence in the ephemeral, training nature of student commitment. On the one hand, the short-term identity shaped during the transient stay on campuses, and inherent in any youth-based activism, only reinforce the rise-and-fall pattern of social movements in general, whose long-lasting effects are liable to be underestimated just because quite often they are only noticeable after the clamor itself has come to an end (Tarrow, 1994). For the same reason, the early-gathered organizational experience of those young activists is more likely than the average to spark off further involvements in other –no longer student-based– causes (McAdam, 1995). On the other hand, some of the assets helping a political career can already become apparent –and be enhanced by education and practice– in the college years. Even when scholarships and other compensatory measures really take effect, what has not often been the case, upper and middle classes are overrepresented among undergraduates. As a result, university youths benefit, on the whole, from more funds and useful contacts than people of lower social origins, advantages that add to the fluency in the use of formal language and other intellectual resources provided or reinforced by higher education. Moreover, the more limited the access to colleges, the more the status bestowed on students, turning the elitist praise mentioned above into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Therefore, the family name and the prestige of university as institution interact to confer a standing that is especially valuable for carving out a future for oneself, but also for dealing with both mobilization and repression.

In short, besides more available time than employees, student togetherness is normally defined by young membership, relatively high social status, and a privileged relationship with the official culture; traits that make a good foundation for political action in the present and in the future (Rodríguez Tejada, 2014). Nonetheless, that general edge often enjoyed by undergraduates can or cannot be effective depending on the historical circumstances, since these ones could offer different opportunities –in kind and degree– for particular involvements in politics for both individuals and groups. Apart from being always relative, those chances are seldom settled and, in a certain extent, are affected in turn by the action of people –in that case students– themselves (McAdam, 1996; Meyer & Minkoff, 2004; Johnston & Noakes, 2005).

Having these points in mind helps to better assess the part played by the student movement in the restitution of democracy in Spain, what is the purpose

of this paper. After a brief left-wing-leaning democratic republic (1931-1936), and a failed far-right coup that resulted in a bloody civil war (1936-1939), a military dictatorship headed by Francisco Franco subjugated the country for all but four decades (1939-1975) (Preston, 1996, 2013; Richards, 1998; Casanova *et al.*, 2002). Although his coming to power was largely due to the aid granted by the Nazi Germany and the fascist Italy, when the Axis was defeated in World War II, the *Caudillo* was able to maneuver in order to adapt and survive as an awkward American satellite in the new circumstances of the Cold War (Garcés, 1996; Viñas, 2003; Molinero & Ysàs, 2008). In fact, despite the presence of contention against the government in different social spheres within that long period, the autocratic rule only got officially changed after the dictator himself had passed away by natural causes (Ysàs, 2004; Cazorla, 2010; Del Arco *et al.*, 2013). Even then, popular mobilizations failed in overthrowing the government and a reformist agenda prevailed over both left-wing expectations of breaking with the recent past and the outright rejection of any allowance by the most extremist stalwarts of the regime. Therefore, a give-and-take deal was made between a dominant faction among the regime officials and the major leaders of the political opposition, allowing a full, broad amnesty, free elections, and a new constitution. However, it also supposed for the dissenters to accept that there would be an important degree of both institutional and staff continuity among politicians, army and police officers, intelligence agents, judges, and officials in general, including the previously appointed new head of state; as well as impunity for the political crimes committed to impose and preserve the dictatorship until the end (Colomer, 1995; Woodworth, 2001; San Martín, 2005; Díaz Fernández, 2005; Balfour, 2005; Encarnación, 2007, 2008, 2014; Alonso & Muro, 2011). For many years, this so-called Spanish political transition has been extensively praised as exemplary by many scholars, commentators, and politicians, who considered it to be a down-to-earth solution that avoided a new civil war (Tusell & Soto, 1996; Tusell & Queipo de Llano, 2003; Palomares, 2004; Soto, 2005).

This largely top-down account, though, is not necessarily the full story. Interestingly enough, Franco's death happened to coincide with a broader change of context in southern Europe, since the other two far-right dictatorships in the region –Portugal and Greece– came to an end just one year before, what suggests that external factors –Soviet decadence, European integration, and American geopolitical interests mainly– were of great importance, just as they were in Latin America in the same period with opposed consequences (Schmitz, 1999, 2006; Suri, 2003; Ganser 2005). In the three countries, other mechanisms different from popular upheaval seemed to be decisive to bring out the turning point –a left-wing coup in Portugal, a wild foreign policy in Greece, the dictator's decease in Spain– but still the weight of grassroots mobilization in those processes

remains largely undervalued. In the Spanish case, not only the pressure put on the establishment was essential to force their members to negotiate and make concessions on core issues that, such as the scope of the amnesty or the social content of the constitution, would otherwise have been settled in a far narrower way. Popular activism also generated a powerful drift on its own, a cultural and political change from below on campuses, in factories, in neighborhoods, and elsewhere, that was already underway long before the end of the dictatorship and that, in many aspects, went far beyond its supposedly institutional expression some years later. On the other hand, a bottom-up account of the way in which democracy was restored does not imply to shut our eyes to the fact that things could have been different, or to leave out the factors and mechanisms that led to that particular result (Morán, 1992; Carrillo-Linares, 2006; Gallego, 2008).

Taking as a starting point the situation of university under the Franco dictatorship, and how (and why) students were dealt with, the major features that set the student movement apart from other kinds of activism in that time will be described and linked to the unique effects that it had on the status quo, with a special stress on its ability to generate the kind of cultural change required for overcoming the atmosphere of resignation and consent that helped to keep the government in power. The way in which culture, personal issues, and politics got intertwined will be shown as a key trait of student mobilization, clarifying the broader, varied influence that the protest exerted on the Spanish society as a whole. The specific nature of student politics under a dictatorship will be tackled, considering its consequences for facing the challenge posed by Franco's death. Finally, the contribution of the student movement to the restoration of Spanish democracy will be discussed, including the particular circumstances in which it actually operated.

## **2. When Franco pretended to be the leader of the youth**

From the beginning of Franco's rule, colleges were especially targeted for both repression and advantage. Professors were intensively purged, while many students were forced to drop out of colleges. Vacant chairs and special degrees were granted to faithful candidates, who therefore would have a personal interest in defending the new situation in the years to come. Moreover, already during the civil war and also after the victory, universities were politically used as tokens of the cultural restoration –in fact, a quite blunted, denominational, traditionalist version of the «high» culture– imposed by Franco, a propagandist argument that hardly disguised the genuine anti-intellectualism professed by the dictator and most of his servants. This role of window dressing was aimed to improve the regime's image abroad, but it also contributed to extol the Caudillo's

figure in Spain as a patron of culture and, from the late fifties onward, as a promoter of technocratic efficiency and development. However, disputes among the new rulers were soon apparent on campuses, since higher education became a battlefield where National-Catholics and Falangists contended for controlling what they both thought to be the major regime's leadership school. The former ones counted on more sympathies among the faculty, while their rivals obtained the supervision of undergraduates by means of the Spanish University Union (SEU). That organization was given exclusive powers on public order within university premises in 1942, and its membership was made compulsory by the Spanish University Organization Act one year later. In the internal quarrels of the regime, its senior leaders used their convening power on students as an asset to gain political influence. That practice persisted after the SEU was transformed in a service-providing union, since it never stopped being a fascist organization that tried to politicize undergraduates using any available means, especially social activities and cultural promotion (Claret, 2004; Saz Campos, 2003; Ruiz Carnicer, 1996; Rodríguez Tejada, 2009, 2014).

As many other Spaniards after the civil war, most students were sick of political propaganda and reluctant to Falangist activism. But they were amenable to any intercession of the SEU with the faculty or the government on their behalf, even if, knowing the usual double-dealing behavior of the official organization, they did not expect too much from it. Similarly, despite how limited it was, the welfare supplied by the SEU was very useful for lower-middle-class youths. Undergraduates also benefited from exclusive advantages for attending either the male military service or the female social service, both of them compulsory. Union-sponsored cinema, theater, concerts, art exhibitions, travels, were among the few opportunities of having access to foreign, avant-garde influences, particularly in provincial towns. In the dearth and gloominess of the forties and the early fifties, such proposals were very appealing and, in fact, drew attention beyond the campuses themselves. In the same way, volunteer working camps were created in order to both break the snobbish image of university students, and let them know the poverty of slums and rural areas. SEU activists took advantage of the attention that those situations generated for setting out their own criticisms against both the establishment and the leftist dissidence, an old fascist strategy that was quite an oddity in postwar Europe. This way, a *modus vivendi* was tacitly established so that students made use of those facilities, while the official union could claim to have their support (Rodríguez Tejada, 2010b).

That trend was only reinforced when Catholic organizations, including student-based ones, entered the fray for the support of the young at the turn of the forties by offering aid, culture and social experiences alike, since rivalry encouraged new audacities in those matters. Denominational membership

was, in addition, a legitimate way of expressing social and personal concerns by means of praying, retreats and participation. Religion was an umbrella –and an alibi– for many different activities, including the proselytizing efforts of the regional nationalisms, such as the Catalan and the Basque ones. At the same time, the presence of innovative, resourceful lecturers –an increasing fact in the fifties– was both an attractor and an incentive for keen students, especially those ones entertaining dissenting ideas on their own. Moreover, although university life was obviously male-biased and female students were often treated with paternalistic disdain, they still enjoyed relatively better opportunities in that protected environment, if compared with the average social pattern of sexist discrimination promoted by the dictatorship itself (Rodríguez Tejada, 2004).

Several reasons can be adduced to explain the special treatment given to university students under Franco's rule. There was an old, well-established tradition of indulgence that led to intentionally spoil upper-class male youths for a while as a part of their education, making them connoisseurs of worldly affairs such as bohemian life, carousing, brawling, and premarital sex. Together with unisex practices like absenteeism and spurious protests, those «posh» customs were officially, but unsuccessfully, banned by the SEU and persisted for a long time. However, they were more acceptable for the establishment than the subversive leaning that undergraduates had shown in the past. Student mobilizations had created problems to different Spanish governments decades ago (González Calleja, 2009), but their role had been especially important wearing down the dictatorship of the general Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923-1930). The organization that had led this challenge, the School University Federation (FUE), had later become the main left-wing student union during the democratic republic and, together with its nationalist partners in Catalonia (FNEC) and in the Basque country (EIA), was repeatedly the target of attacks by both the SEU and Franco himself, as a symbol of the supposedly degeneration of the university (Ben Ami, 1991; Figueras, 2005).

The Caudillo, who learned a lot from his predecessor's mistakes, was well aware of the potential menace that college upheaval represented for his own administration and pretended not to notice discontent there, as long as it was hot air, or it came mostly from factional conflicts within the coalition in power. Nevertheless, any serious attempt of spreading open criticism against the government was systematically stamped out, as happened in the late forties, when several underground student groups trying to revive the former unions were disbanded by the police in Madrid and Barcelona. Actually, as far as possible, full-frontal conflict on campuses was also warded off because, for a long time, Franco wanted to be seen as the leader of a young, new Spain. He claimed to had been the youngest general in Europe and, already during the civil war, used the sacrifice

of the right-wing students who volunteered to the front, the so-called «Brevetted Officers» (*Alféreces Provisionales*), to enhance his own leadership (Preston, 1996; Aguilar, 1999). As Mussolini and Hitler also did, he gloried in many «spontaneous» youth demonstrations of support, and the SEU, as a part of the Youth Front (FJ), was entrusted with the task of promoting and showing the adherence of university students. No matter how critical they could be with the government in private, SEU activists exerted themselves in doing their duty to both improve their organization and their own political careers (Rodríguez Tejada, 2010b).

That apparent honeymoon between the dictator and the young peaked in 1953, when a National Student Conference held in the University City of Madrid –closed by Franco himself– drew up a Student Statute to confer an active role on undergraduates both in colleges and in the Spanish society as a whole. Even though this document was mostly a scrap of paper, its enactment –together with other rhetorical declarations on the same matter– reaffirmed a traditional student identity that included the right to be treated in a preferential way by the authorities (Ruiz Carnicer, 1996; Rodríguez Tejada, 2010b). However, the relationship between the dictatorship and the students got completely changed in the years to come. Just as the Caudillo had feared, other activists different from the Falangists would be able to capitalize on those conditions to activate a broad dissenting mobilization. In fact, the Conference was the last time in which Franco could show off the support of the university youth.

### 3. Student discontent comes to light

Anyway, such pretensions to student allegiance were mostly based on the assumption that silence gives consent rather than on real facts. Complaints against youth indolence were common in the 1950s among adult observers, indicating a hint of anxiety about what was going on with them. As the time went by, there was an ever-widening generational gap between the establishment and the newcomers that had little or no personal memories from the trauma caused by the civil war and its aftermath. Apart from the politicized few, either for or against Franco, most undergraduates were largely unconcerned about the autocratic nature of the government and were inclined to give the police the benefit of the doubt when someone was arrested. Nonetheless, detachment from official indoctrination and refusal to restrictions imposed from above were equally widespread among the young, if only because such authoritarian eagerness interfered with their expectations of more personal freedom and enjoyment. They were far more interested in the novelties coming from abroad, an influence that rocketed as long as the country was increasingly opening up to



foreign investment, mass-media products, and tourism (Rodríguez Tejada, 2009; Pack, 2009; Towsend, 2009; Crumbaugh, 2009).

At the same time, SEU activists showed worrisome signs of unrest on their own, as happened when, along with many other students, they joined the largely spontaneous boycott against the Barcelona streetcars in 1951. Falangists, however, were quick in changing sides for fear that the protest could result in a serious upheaval against the government (Fanés, 1977; Colomer, 1978; Richards, 1999). That schizoid behavior was displayed again in 1954, when the union staff tried to justify police brutality against the traditional demonstrations that they themselves had led to condemn the British presence in Gibraltar. However, some militants were frustrated enough to show their resentment to Franco at the annual tribute to José Antonio in 1955, and it was not the last time that it happened. There were also discreet contacts between SEU mavericks and an independent group of students that were promoting cultural activities on their own in the University of Madrid. Those talks ended in the writing of a critical manifesto that caused a political turmoil, the assault of the campus by members of Franco's guard, and the breakdown of the SEU. The situation only worsened when police discovered that the independent activists were actually members of the Communist Party (PCE), Franco's foremost *bête noir*. Three ministers were removed from office and, for the first time since the civil war, a state of emergency was declared for a while (Lizcano, 1981).

Considering the already spiteful nature of the dictatorship, this measure was largely a theatrical gesture to reassert government's authority. And it is quite revealing that a simple student statement could have triggered off such a crisis. Disproving the appearance of control, the more autocratic the political order, the more angst felt about any potential challenge to its power and, consequently, the more overreacting the response against the targeted enemy, especially if the menace came –like a stab on the back– from the supposedly secure halls of ivy. However, in a period in which the Spain of Franco was trying to be accepted internationally, and the Opus Dei technocrats were gaining power against the Falangists by proposing a new development policy devised to attract foreign investment, it was clear the need of coping with discontent on campuses in a more practical way. The postwar pattern mainly based on loyal activism was abandoned, and the SEU was progressively transformed from above into a mere structure of representation that was expected to sidetrack and harness student complaints. Falangists were still asked to help, but public order on campuses was entrusted back to both the academic authorities and the police –a new situation that was legalized in 1959– creating this way a motive of confrontation between faculty and students in the years to come (Rodríguez Tejada, 2010b).

That combination of policing and appeasement was soon put to the test. On the one hand, the events of 1956 had a strong demonstration effect. Together with the boycott of 1951, they encouraged PCE senior leaders to both devise the «National Reconciliation Policy» and to promote underground groups of sympathizers on the main campuses, which backed the communist mobilization campaigns in the late fifties as far as they could (Rodríguez Tejada, 2010a). At once, other little groups of dissenters clustered together, and some of them –such as the University Socialist Group (ASU) and the Popular Liberation Front (FLP) – gave themselves a formal name to gain confidence and show earnestness. The reality effect of acronyms had already been a symbolic resource for anti-Franco students in the postwar period, and it would become common from now on. The historical FNEC was revived indeed by Catalan nationalists and leftists. Further student protests –linked to new streetcar boycotts– took place in Barcelona and Madrid in 1957, causing the police and Franco’s Guard to assault the university of Barcelona. On the two major campuses, the diverse organizations tried to concert their activities by means of University Coordination Committees (CCU). Anyway, in spite of the fact that they adopted a lot of precautions, all clandestine groups were disbanded as soon as their activities got noticeable for the police, and –independently of their respective ideas– they were presented to the public as part of the communist conspiracy, in a manner not too much different from how their predecessors had been dealt with in the forties. In both cases, the resistance strategies put into practice –based on narrow recruitment, secret action and political issues unconnected with everyday life– were not enough to prevent them from isolation and surveillance (Mateos, 1991; García Alcalá, 2001; Puig, 2008; Álvarez Cobelas, 2004; Rodríguez Tejada, 2002).

The need of a change of strategy became obvious for the activists who picked up the baton. Trying to avoid the stereotypes exploited by the authorities, political groups stepped back and promoted independent unions instead, such as the Inter-School Commission in Barcelona and the Spanish Democratic University Federation (FUDE) in Madrid, aimed to gather together anyone who wanted to put an end to the monopoly of the SEU. Nevertheless, they stuck to old procedures at first, since the new unions were equally clandestine and persisted in confronting the dictatorship head-on, as happened when dissenting students called for campuses to join a campaign in support of the Asturian miners on strike in 1962, obtaining little success. As a result, there was a new wave of arrests against the political organizations, with the most openly politicized ones –PCE and FLP– being the most affected, whereas lower-key groups and the independent unions themselves were just ignored by the police. Repression thus acted as a selection process, forcing dissenters to adapt their approaches to what was possible to do on campuses. This change was mostly based on their own experience, although it was

encouraged by the guidelines issued by the PCE senior leaders to their rank and file, after confirming the potential of popular unrest to make things awkward to the government. Instead of attempting to draw the rest of students into their own anti-Franco positions, democratic activists opted to pay attention to everyday problems on campuses in order to promote petitions and mobilizations asking the authorities for a solution, just like the Worker's Commissions were doing in the labor movement (Rodríguez Tejada, 2010a; Treglia, 2012).

Students of diverse leanings –leftists, regional nationalists, Catholic Youth members, and some monarchists– took advantage of the Falangist decline to infiltrate the official union by running in the student ballots, which had been progressively expanded until giving undergraduates the opportunity to vote for a chamber of representatives in each university school, which in turn elected a school delegate. SEU senior officers were still designated from above. Despite their mutual differences, the election campaigns and the subsequent proposals of those critical activists were mostly based on civic commitment, ethical arguments, and democratic procedures, rather than on partisan disparagement. That compared favorably with the sectarian, dictatorial tone that students knew so well and loathed so much. Therefore, Falangists lost a lot of ground on major campuses and more populated schools, that is, where the number of nonconformists was enough to confront them. Once in office, the new representatives used their legal posts to denounce the ineffectiveness of SEU leaders on meeting undergraduate grievances. Moreover, they did their best to take over the whole set of social and cultural activities that Falangists had managed in the past, with the same agitprop purpose but with a different political orientation. In sum, they made an effort to be academic, ethical and style role models for their classmates. Thanks to that, the initial minority of anti-Franco militants started to set the standard and to be broadly recognized by the rest. They became more exposed to police control but, in return, their behavior as brave, disinterested spokespeople who were prepared to take the cost of protesting on themselves gave them the protection of solidarity and the influence to call for undergraduates to act together, because they had gained their confidence first. This way, it was possible to break the spiral of silence that had contributed to keep dissenters isolated for a long time (Rodríguez Tejada, 2002, 2009; Scott, 1992; Noelle-Neumann, 2001).

#### **4. What only a student movement could do**

An important asset for anti-Franco activists to win the trust of their fellows was the very fact that they all identified with the international pop culture that flooded Spain as much as other countries in the sixties (Thomas, 1997; Marwick, 1998). Being an indirect consequence of the consumerism boosted by the new

order-and-progress policies of the dictatorship, that influence made the chasm between the establishment and the young even wider. By contrast, dissenters and the rest of students shared a common interest in the new ways of thinking, feeling and behaving that were coming in; in exploring alternate looks and outlooks; in knowing the latest craze; in enjoying male and female relationships beyond any formal straitjacket. Indeed, some student activists combined their organizational tasks with their creative skills as pop singers, with roles similar to those of Joan Baez and the first Bob Dylan in the USA. Foreign anthems, banned songs, and marginalized languages became symbols of the whole movement, as happened when the Valencian songwriter Raimon and other members of the Catalan-speaking *Nova Cançó* were welcomed as heroes on Madrid and other campuses. Likewise, some young left-wing artists, such as the groups Crónica and Realidad, began their careers making posters, journal covers, and record jackets for their comrades. In sum, the student movement expressly vindicated any cultural reference –from critical intellectuals to new youth icons– sidelined by the narrow canon of the dictatorship, and therefore their members could use them as passwords or symbolic identifiers that help them to recognize each other in a reliable way (Batista, 2005; Gámez, 2009; Vergniolle, 2009; Rodríguez Tejada, 2008, 2009).

On those bases, collective rights were easily linked to personal freedom, mostly because they both were denied together by the government, the Catholic Church, and the traditional family alike. That contribute to explain why –as a result of a kind of external economies of participation– it was worthwhile to get involved in matters that could be very compromising when living under an autocratic regime. Both movement's actions –assemblies, sit-ins, demonstrations, performances, and meetings– and student leisure –on campus, in outings, in the increasingly common student apartments, and elsewhere– gave the participants the chance to experience, even if in the part-time way of young people still dependent on their families, a sense of free will that was inconceivable in other milieus. Young women in particular, even though far more controlled by their families than their male comrades and still clearly underrepresented among student leaders, played a key role as everyday activists, gaining a liberty that they had never enjoyed since the end of the civil war. As the sixties went by, the movement itself became a countercultural lab, a freedom zone where young people could think up and put into practice new experiences under a shelter (Rodríguez Tejada, 2004, 2009).

Those new opposition strategies combining underground politics, everyday union activism and individual self-fulfillment were so successful that dissenting organizations grew in number and expanded to other schools and campuses. In spite of some disagreement among them, mainly related to

ideological and territorial rivalries, most groups got coordinated in a Student Democratic University Confederation (CUDE) in 1964. They claimed for a democratic and egalitarian university, revived the student rights once promised by the government and demanded that the official union was turned into an independent, representative, and participatory structure. That ambitious agenda had to be promoted by means of formal petitions, non-violent mobilizations, and the repudiation of SEU leaders when possible. Actually, just when progress in the institutional front seemed to have reached some gridlock, the violent, indiscriminate response given to public protests fueled student indignation. Young people who had not harbored serious complaints against the government until then –often because their families fit the do-not-meddle-in-politics stance encouraged by the regime– suddenly confirmed on their own that they were really living under a cruel dictatorship. Moreover, several lecturers started to give their support to student claims and, in some cases, agreed to chair free assemblies and to head peaceful marches at their own risk, as happened in 1965 when four professors who were trying to intercede with the police were battered in Madrid and summarily dismissed later. A wave of sympathy blazed up on campuses, additionally spurred when direct accounts of the facts –transmitted through personal bonds between undergraduates– exposed the crude manipulation of the Spanish press, which either ignored or seriously distorted the facts, presenting respectful actions as wild riots. In fact, both righteous anger and solidarity became major mechanisms for knitting the different sites of protest close together into a single student movement (Colomer, 1977; Álvarez Cobelas, 2004; Hernández Sandioca *et al.*, 2007; Rodríguez Tejada, 2009).

At the same time, the cabinet dithered over the best way of dealing with university unrest, which happened to attract a great deal of attention from the foreign press. The first impulse was always to resort to both violence and surveillance (Batista, 1995; Delgado, 2005; Zorzo, 2005; Vega, 2011; Sabio, 2011), but they restrained themselves from adopting full-blown the lethal measures that had helped to establish and strengthen the dictatorship, inasmuch as international circumstances were very different now, and the regime was knocking on the European Common Market's doors (Senante, 2002). Moreover, university activists were still better treated than their working-class counterparts, and several actions were taken to try to appease student discontent. Nonetheless, those efforts got wrecked because they proved to be absolutely insincere, if only because they were just intended to save time. After having persuaded moderate student leaders that their proposals would be taken into consideration, the authorities suddenly changed the rules of the game by dismantling the SEU. Student participation was said to be granted by means of an independent, non-political federation of Student Professional Associations (APE). However, the

APE were tightly supervised by the Ministry of Education, now controlled by the Opus Dei. In the fall of 1965, deans were ordered to impose the APE, even by forcing undergraduates to be candidates but, except on some little campuses and schools with no dissidence, the new structure was either infiltrated or boycotted from the beginning. Thus, little had been gained with the abolition of the SEU, which was considered to be a great victory for the student movement and therefore encouraged protests further: it had been the only institution of the dictatorship destroyed from below (Colomer, 1977; Nicolás Marín & Alted Vigil, 1999; Álvarez Cobelas, 2004; Rodríguez Tejada, 2009).

Meanwhile, most student activists agreed in going beyond the CUDE model once the Falangist union was gone. The alternative to the APE was both put forward and enacted for the first time in Barcelona, the campus where dissent had won more support. A new Student Democratic Union (SDE) would be created in order to be a truly independent, plural, federal, and participative organization for all Spanish undergraduates. As a first step, a formal meeting was called in March 1966 to found the SDE branch in the University of Barcelona (SDEUB). Representatives from other campuses, and from both foreign and international student unions, were there to give solemnity to the event. However, the police barged into the place—a monastery protected by the Church privilege—and made a lot of arrests (Crexell, 1987). The broad sympathy that the so-called *Caputxinada* aroused home and abroad caused further alarm in the government, with different factions blaming each other. Franco himself reminded them that was «necessary to maintain unity at any price» to face student dissent (Preston, 1996, pp. 897-899). Police surveillance increased, while the APE were partially reformed and renamed as Student Associations (AE) in 1966, with even worse ballot results than before (Rodríguez Tejada, 2009).

A Permanent Committee of Spain Students (OPEE) was created to both coordinate dissenters and represent the SDE project abroad. At the same time, most AE representatives—increasingly disappointed by the government dealings—agreed to celebrate a public, joint meeting in Valencia with SDE supporters by the end of January 1967. The authorities expressly denied the permit asked for by the delegates and did their most to stop them, but the so-called first Coordinating and Preparing Meeting (RCP) for the future SDE National Congress took place anyway. Except for some exceptions—small denominational colleges—all campuses voted to support the RCP, and most of them sent representatives. For the first time since the civil war, Spanish students spoke with a single voice, insisting in their claims for self-organization, full rights, democratic university reform, and college co-management. After a permanent harassment, the police burst into the place and arrested almost everyone, although agents had to deal with a non-violent but quite willing resistance, that included the invocation of

verses of Miguel Hernández –a well-known left-wing poet who died in jail after the war– to explain their own determination, a gesture that summarized what made the student challenge so special, and therefore so puzzling for Franco and his underlings (Rodríguez Tejada, 2009).

Moreover, protests grew further throughout the country, and many professors and intellectuals signed a petition to intercede in their behalf. All those facts put more pressure on the authorities, who reacted with more punishment. The young activist Rafael Guijarro fell into the void and died when supposedly fled from the police in Madrid, a hideous warning that allowance for students was over. A general expulsion was enacted in Barcelona, causing male activists to be called to the draft, a measure repeatedly applied since then. In Valencia, a wild police charge into the university hospital caused the dean a heart attack. Academic rules were tightened, while a new state of emergency was declared in the Basque provinces. Later RCPs were systematically persecuted, while the SDE branch in Madrid was violently cornered since it was constituted in April 1967. Franco seriously worried that students could be a «bad example to other sectors, especially workers», just when they joined together in the May Day marches of that year (Franco Salgado-Araujo, 1976, p. 517). Hence, they all were equally trampled by the riot police. One month later, the SDE was officially illegalized, proving that the open, democratic strategy developed until then had reached a dead end.

## 5. The revolutionary turn

Beyond ideological differences, a broad consensus based on self-organization and solidarity had fed huge student mobilizations throughout the country over the last few years. However, stubborn, worsening repression made obvious that the dictatorship would never accept any substantial change. A bitter deception arose on campuses. While the rank and file lost heart, many activists slid into radical positions, causing the whole SDE project to be dropped. The two political groups leading the movement –PCE and FLP– came to a long crisis that caused several splits. Even Christian Youth members and other previously moderate leaders embraced far-left ideas. They all became strongly influenced by the international protest framework of the late sixties, made up by myths such as the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the *Che* Guevara, the Vietnam war, and the 1968 French May. The previous aim of university democratic reform was replaced with the purpose of destroying what was viewed now as a capitalist instrument. Professors were not allies anymore, since they were accused to be accomplices of the dictatorship. Ceremony disruptions, critical trials, chair occupations, and popular impeachments were taken from abroad and used on major campuses (Elbaum, 2002; Rodríguez Tejada, 2009).

In addition, Spanish activists –like their partners in other countries– were fed up with being beaten when protesting and tried out new mobile tactics or «jumps» (*saltos*), from concerted «flash demonstrations» to more partisan «commandos» (Gitlin, 1987; Schildt & Siegfried, 2006; Klimke & Scharloth, 2008; Bhambra & Demir, 2009; Klimke, 2010). In addition, some militants started to respond violently to police and far-right aggressions, whereas groups like Euskadi and Freedom (ETA) opted for full terrorist actions. All those practices became widespread in the seventies. Only PCE members kept the former strategy, promoting delegate ballots, public protest, and unity of action with the critical lecturers, especially the temporary ones («*profesores no numerarios*» or PNN). Many of those PNN had been student activists and were trying to organize a movement on their own. However, many undergraduates, if no participated, at least «understood» actions against both the police and the faculty, especially if the latter mostly suffered symbolic attacks. After years of indiscriminate repression, and under an increasing radical atmosphere, «moderate» became an insult (Rodríguez Tejada, 2009).

Repression and unrest fed each other in an endless spiral. New repressive measures were passed in 1968, but they had limited effect. Franco expressed in private his fears that, as had happened in times of Primo de Rivera, public opinion could interpret as «weakness» that student protests had not being stopped yet (Franco Salgado-Araujo, 1976, p. 525). The ministers of Government and Education were dismissed for not doing enough about it. But after seeing how the worker-student unity of action had put French president –the also general De Gaulle– in an awkward situation, the *Caudillo* became still more uneasy that something similar was possible in Spain, where the PCE was working hard to get it. As a result, a new state of emergency was decreed in the Basque provinces, while military jurisdiction was restored on public order issues. Additional sanctions were ordered, while new campuses were planned in both the outskirts of the major cities and provincial towns, hoping to relieve overcrowding, as well as moving protests away. Even the AE were tried out again with no success. Finally, a specific intelligence service, the National Counter-subversive Organization (OCN), was founded to infiltrate and boycott student dissidence by all available means, including the financing of far-right squads and the cooperation with other –Spanish and foreign– agencies (San Martín, 1983; Casals, 1994; Rodríguez Tejada, 2014).

In January 1969, enraged far-left activists raided the rector's office in Barcelona. The campus was closed and the official press, the military, and the extreme right demanded revenge. Three days after, the suspicious death of the young FLP militant Enrique Ruano in Madrid –very similar to Guijarro's in 1967– was presented as a suicide by the police (Domínguez Rama, 2011). A great protest broke out on the campus, and there were violent clashes with the



riot police, including police gunshots, student barricades, stone throwing, and some workers helping the students. Universities were closed, while another state of emergency was imposed for three months throughout the country. Despite international solidarity, hundreds of students and other dissenters were arrested, and diverse critical books and songs were banned, reminding what the Colonels had done in Greece two years before. Shaggy, hippie-like appearance became dangerous, as several foreign journalists, unfortunately for them, realized too late. Vice-president admiral Luis Carrero Blanco endorsed protests to an international communist conspiracy and explained that the state of emergency was necessary to avoid that –as had happened in France– Spanish students were «poisoned in body and soul». However, intelligence reports insisted that protests had real causes and thus some reforms were necessary to cope with them. Therefore, repression was also used to pave the way for a General Law of Education (LGE) that should help the government to retake the initiative. This largely propagandistic, technocratic reform was rejected by the student movement and the rest of the opposition, because they distrusted that any real change could ever come from the old dictatorship (Rodríguez Tejada, 2009).

At first, dissidence vanished from campuses, so it seemed that heavy-hand measures had finally worked. However, it proved to be delusion when government's extremism and far-left activism fueled new student mobilizations. In the last months of 1970, several ETA members were court martialed and requested death penalty. The so-called Burgos Trial arose a vast wave of solidarity both home and abroad. The announce of the event coincided with the visit to Spain of US President Richard Nixon, confirming radical views about the need of fighting dictatorship and imperialism together. A new kind of everyday, low-key organizations, the so-called class committees (CC), were created in Barcelona to better promote participation from below (Colomer, 1978). In spite of both a new state of emergency in the Basque provinces, partially extended to the rest of Spain later, and further academic penalizations, assemblies, jumps, and other actions mobilize thousands of students for months and, in fact, contributed to deter the government from carrying out the threat. Those protests also revealed striking changes in the nature of the 1970s student movement. Politicization became mainstream among undergraduates in a degree hardly seen in the sixties. Surely, some youths still went to university just to get an education, but they became an oddity as far as leftism set the tone on campuses. Despite constant repression and overcrowding, unrest figures increased fast. At the same time, larger campuses were partly replaced as protesting focuses by the less battered, smaller ones. That succession contributed to make repression more efficient, since they were smashed one by one; but, at the same time, such a permanent upheaval never let the government rest (Fernández Buey, 1991; Rodríguez Tejada, 2009).

In addition, the PCE gave ground to student groups that positioned themselves to the left of the hegemonic party. They were created out of new foundations, but also from rifts –in the PCE or its own splits, in ETA, and in the FLP, which actually fell apart– and subsequent fusions (Roca, 2004; Laiz 1995). For them, Marxism-Leninism in its diverse variants –including Trotskyism, Maoism and Luxemburgism– became a major source of inspiration, first because it provided them organizational skills –after all, it had being conceived to fight another dictatorship– but also because it ensured a genuine role for them as «professional revolutionaries» side by side with workers. Their major asset on campuses was to develop the Class Committees model further, as a successful alternative to the commissions of delegates still advocated by PCE activists. The latter indeed had to work within the CC for a while on some campuses. Since 1972, successive University General Meetings (RGU) helped to coordinate national protests against the LGE. They were soon attended by representatives of a second student movement that was growing in high schools, fueled by the announcement of a selective university entrance examination, which was perceived as a way to hinder lower-class youths from accessing to higher education. The RGU advocated collaboration with the rising PNN movement, and also promoted solidarity against the harsh treatment –including torture and murder– given to labor mobilizations, although undergraduates also faced the music: the young José María Fuentes was shot to death in Santiago in December 1972 during a night out, what indicated that studenthood itself had turned into a dangerous status in that period (Rodríguez Tejada, 2009)<sup>1</sup>.

## 6. Hoping the best, prepared for the worst

CC-RGU activism chalked up a win, since it was able to debunk the official pretense of quieting down criticisms against the LGE, driving the government formed by Franco's right-hand man Carrero Blanco in 1973 to resort to further extreme measures, such as putting off the start of that academic year until January, or ordering a new general expulsion in Valencia. However, both repression and rivalries caused the movement to run out of steam. The competition dynamic that had helped to enliven the protest for a while became a hindrance when disputes spurred partisan speech and siphoned off more and more effort from unitary action. Militants were immersed in an emergency atmosphere that made them to assume that their personal involvement, even their sacrifice, would be decisive to tip the balance between an endless dictatorship and a hopeful, revolutionary future. Each group to the left of the PCE thought itself to be right and set itself

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<sup>1</sup> Un subinspector de policía, condenado por homicidio. *ABC*, 13/July/1973.

apart from the competitors that did not share its approach. They wanted to stop being just «student parties» and tried to enlist workers, what made sense from a Marxist point of view, but from any practical assessment too, since no political change could be induced from the narrow boundaries of campuses only. Academic sanctions contributed for many old-hand activists to drop out of university in order to take jobs in factories and moved to lower-class neighborhoods, but most of them also had in mind the well-known Maoist motto that was necessary to be «like a fish within water» to promote mobilization. Their previous training was decisive to kindle new focuses of protest, by using the same helpful strategy that had won broad support on campuses. That particular brain drain, although necessary, was harmful for the student movement itself, since campuses became a recruiting backyard that was mostly entrusted to short-experienced newcomers, just when participation was ebbing away again (Rodríguez Tejada, 2009).

That trend only got reinforced after Carrero Blanco was assassinated by ETA in December 1973. Repression against opposition intensified and students got their share too. In January, the far-left activist José Luis Cancho was thrown out of a window while being tortured by the political police in Valladolid, but he was lucky enough to survive, so neither the «accident» or the «suicide» versions applied this time<sup>2</sup>. Despite the vague promises of change made by the new prime minister José Luis Arias Navarro in February, police brutality, far-right assaults, and new academic penalizations were the major responses to a student movement that mostly smoldered on peripheral campuses. Just one month later, the anarchist student Salvador Puig Antich was garroted after having being involved in the death of a police subinspector, causing a bitter exchange of reproaches between leftist activists for not having doing enough to save him (Escribano, 2001). At the same time, both the Carnation Revolution in Portugal and the poor health of a eighty-two-year-old dictator set a new political scenario in which opposition forces focused on positioning as best as possible at the end of the dictatorship (Cervelló, 1995). Emulating the successful Assembly of Catalonia, existing since 1971, the PCE headed a Democratic Board (JD) in July 1974 to try to lead the process.

When the AE were updated in October as a part of the pretended liberalization, the PCE made a U-turn and promoted infiltration instead of boycotting, hoping to control as many delegates as possible to have an additional asset to create JD branches on campuses. The final aim was to coordinate delegates and RGU to force the government to negotiate. Most far-left groups, though, rejected the AE and criticized PCE «reformist» policy, while either stuck to the previous CC

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<sup>2</sup> A report of the facts with some documents at <http://www.ultimocero.com/no-olvidamos/memararon-porque-pensaban-que-me-hab%C3%Adan-matado>. (Last access 15/March/2015).

strategy or tried out anti-capitalist councils, with similar poor results. Both sides still agreed in defending unity of action with the high-school movement –which was struggling to stop the first entrance examination, set for June 1975– and the willing PNN strikes to consolidate their jobs. In the next months, the revival of protests on campuses –encouraged by a broader JD campaign– was responded with fierce violence by the police, while academic sanctions and closings hit Valladolid and other campuses. In addition, a new state of exception in the Basque provinces caused an increasing death toll. However, the threesome campaign failed in achieving its major aims. The JD was just ignored by the government. Entrance examinations were taken anyway, despite the call for boycotting them. Besides, undergraduates were limited the number of examinations they could take in each subject before being expelled from college, putting additional pressure on protesters. To make matters worse, the PNN proved to be uncertain allies when they went back on their implicit compromise of facilitating «political passing grades» as a measure of solidarity with students. At least, student activists had suggested something like that to persuade their fellows to mobilize in the previous months, so they lost credibility, already damaged enough by partisan disputes. Moreover, political organizations drew increasing attention as the Platform for Democratic Convergence (PDC) was created by the Socialist Party (PSOE) and other force –including some far-left parties– to compete with the JD. Nevertheless, new anti-terrorist legislation was passed, and protests, home and abroad, were unable to stop the execution of five activists accused of armed rebellion in September (Valdelvira, 2006; Rodríguez Tejada, 2009).

The death of Franco boosted the drift toward both party-centered action and street violence, insofar as the opposition tried to use mobilizations to force the still dictatorial authorities to resign and accept some kind of provisional government. However, the establishment were prepared to use the surveillance and repressive apparatus –both formal and informal– to impose a compromise favorable to their own interests. At the same time, both sides were divided by internal conflicts that hampered joint action, although, in the end, anti-Franco forces lost out more than their rivals from partisan rivalry. In the meantime, campuses continued to be political battlefields, since they were preferred places for left-wing activities and therefore were targets for both police and far-right disrupting interventions. Many professors kept dubious about democratic compromise –proving the long-lasting effects of loyal recruitment– but others, together with the PNN, tried to set a new tone in the faculty. Quarrels and distrust among the student sections of left-wing parties persisted, particularly about delegate elections. JDE forces promoted independent ballots and even made an attempt to revive the former SDE, but leadership disputes messed it up. The CC got torn apart when their promoters adopted divergent strategies: either joining the PDC or committing

themselves to diverse degrees of violent action. Only the RGU remained as an all-party coordination, notwithstanding the constant tension among the attendants. Both delegates and RGU appealed to undergraduates to mobilize, together with workers and other social groups, in order to force the downfall of the dictatorship, what actually was hardly a specific student issue. Once more, though, campuses were major focuses of unrest, and students made up a large part of the grass-roots protests (Valdelvira, 2006; Carrillo-Linares, 2011). Nonetheless, the campaign failed in forcing the government's hand, mainly because it was confronted with a terrorizing deterrence that expanded civil casualties (Fraser, 1976).

Giving up the challenge, JD and PDC forces joined together in Democratic Convergence in March 1976, preparing themselves to accept the compromise offered by the so-called «liberal» faction of the former Franco coalition. Even though contention lingered, mostly associated to Basque separatism and little far-left groups, major opposition parties progressively set mobilizing strategies aside in favor of high politics, including a student movement that had become completely subsidiary to political parties. In the late seventies, many undergraduates took part in popular mobilizations, and some of them were wounded or killed in diverse circumstances, as a result of the indiscriminate violence of both the police and paramilitary extremism. As a matter of fact, young left-wing and regional nationalist activists suffered a disproportioned share of the casualties in that low-intensity conflict, which persisted well into the eighties (Woodworth, 2001; Grimaldos, 2004). Nevertheless, despite isolated protests, the student movement itself faded out during the central years of political change, until briefly rekindling against the University Autonomy Bill promoted by the already democratic center-right government in 1979 (Ugalde, 1980; Fouce, 2002). Complaints about that decline, remembrances of the good old times, and appeals to rebuild a joint, national student union were commonplace, suggesting how deep the depression was. But student mobilizations themselves were no more the focus of symbolic challenge that they had represented during much of Franco's rule.

## 7. Conclusions

Similar to its counterparts in Portugal (Caiado, 1990; Garrido, 1996; Reis Torgal, 1999; Carrillo-Linares & Cardina, 2012; Accornero, 2013) and Greece (Samatas, 2004; Kornetis, 2013), the Spanish student movement was one of the most important collective agents in promoting the restoration of the democratic freedoms that the Franco dictatorship had snatched away in the thirties. Making the most of the opportunities opened –against their own will– by the powers that be in order to adapt and survive in postwar Europe, student mobilizations played a key role in both exposing the regime's official self-presentation as a

peace-and-order guarantor and eroding the official institutions. Student activism was able to undermine and destroy the compulsory union imposed by the single-party by taking advantage of the internal conflict among the different pro-Franco factions and, in turn, stirring it up almost without intending it. Mobilizations on campuses ram-raided the dictatorship's window dressing that university was, questioning the passive stance of the faculty and, for a while, imposing a public, extralegal representation system. Even though undergraduate dissidence was discarded as a direct threat for the establishment by an observer so qualified as the US government (Garcés, 1996), students frontally rejected the circulation-of-elite fate that predestined them to be the heirs of the freak regime they had been born under. Helped partially by the obvious contradictions existing within the brainwashing they were given, undergraduates themselves fought a symbolic, but significant, turf war on campuses, turning them into freedom zones where indoctrination was replaced by political and vital self-education. At the same time, that contention contributed to train them in organizational skills, as well as in the practice of a kind of a participative democracy never seen since Franco's victory. This way, what was supposed to be a school of autocracy became a school of citizenship for the future members of the educated upper and middle-classes.

In addition, the ability for remaining conspicuous transformed student protests in a sort of public address system that caused a broad social effect beyond campuses, contributing decisively to adapt and amplify the consequences of Spain's international realignment from both a cultural and a political point of view, since both ends entwined together in the nature of the student movement. What made it different from other focuses of unrest was precisely its ability to take and combine different cultural references: hallowed high-culture (either official or marginalized), influences of pop consumerism, and prescribed rules of behavior. They all became part of its own cultural toolkit, breaking this way the established boundaries between educated knowledge and practical training, as well as between symbolic icons and everyday action. Moreover, since the dictatorship made a permanent issue of cultural affairs in their diverse versions, and the student movement itself could only resort to them to grow up, they necessarily got politicized, shaping a special kind of political culture on its own that transcended particular ideologies.

Actually, the radicalization process that led many activists to adopt extreme positions in the turn of the sixties –although supposing a partial return to a more traditional definition of politics, and the self-imposition of hard renunciations– can be seen as a variation of a broad culture-making process to which both the exotic Mediterranean hippie communities also belonged (Usó, 2001). Both of them were based on different types of cultural revolution, a way to improve a personal commitment that was thought to be essential to gain a different future

from the one planned by the establishment (Braunstein & Doyle, 2002; McMillian & Buhle, 2003). Maoist-inspired practices like public (self)criticism –notwithstanding the weird they could seem, and the oppressive they could be– had also a facet of self-help meetings, a sort of group therapy for aiding them to go, as much as possible, through the cultural and political detox supposedly needed to produce real change. Indeed, far-left groups tried out their own version of communes, in which material property was shared, and selfishness contained (Rodríguez Tejada, 2009, II, pp. 239-240).

Partly as a result of such potential of adaptation, former student activists could contribute to very different anti-Franco causes, such as the PNN, the neighborhood, and the labor movements (in the late case mostly through proletarianization), but also to the new social movements that developed in the late 1970s, such as the feminist, the pacifist, and the ecologist ones, which involved a critical reevaluation of the previous extreme politicization experience. In sum, although the student movement left the scene just before the constitutional process started, it had previously sown many of the seeds that made change possible.

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