Of Fascist Heroes and Martyrs: Death and Violence in the Falange Española[1]

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The early years of Francoism saw the rise to power of the Falange Española. A fascist and minority party in the times of the Second Republic (1931–36), the Falange grew rapidly and exponentially after the outbreak of the war, attracting youth and rural workers, and providing the rebel army with a sizeable militia. The military support from fascist Italy and Nazi Germany further increased the popularity of the Falange, seen as the harbinger of a new era. Despite the pre-eminence of the army, Falange still achieved a comfortable and central position within the Francoist state, otherwise imposed from above through the Unification Decree of April 1937, which combined the Falange and the Carlist movement.[2] As such, it contributed much to the dictatorship, from the structuring of the vertical unions to the establishment of a network of capillary organisations that regulated the population's relations with the state. The Falange also contributed a whole rhetoric built around the concept of the National-Syndicalist revolution, the re-emergence of the Imperial Spain, and the myth of "*El Ausente*" ("the Absent one"), centred on "martyred" founder of the Falange, José Antonio Primo de Rivera. Yet, this chapter will focus on a usually assumed but disregarded aspect of the Falange; the centrality of violence to the Falangist movement and how it fed into the construction of the regime during the defining years of the Spanish Civil War. It will explore the influence that the French thinker Georges Sorel had over the organisation and its founders and how that translated into the Falangist war experience. This, in turn, will help to explain not only Falangist repression, but also the pull that the organisation had over the youth during the war. Vitalist violence was both a precondition and a consequence of Spanish Fascism.

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[2] *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (BOE), 20 April 1937.

And while its usefulness would wear out as soon as the consolidation of the dictatorship became a priority, it left an undeniable mark on the Francoist regime.

Sorel and the Ideological Origins of Falangist Violence

The 1930s saw the culmination of a culture of political violence in Spain. In this period, the insurrectionist and defensive violence characteristic of the nineteenth century was replaced by that of the political militia, which aimed to establish a new and alternative political and social order.[3] Historians have explained the role of violence in the Second Republic as a phenomenon involving both revolutionary and antidemocratic parties as well as state forces.[4] Particularly important to this process was the exaltation of the youth as an agent of political change and novelty, which was common in interwar Europe.[5] It is, therefore, not surprising that Fascism has been described as a generational revolt.[6] Both the adoption of a Sorelian approach to violence, which aimed to replace the bourgeois state with a radical new project, and the exaltation of the youth were key to the experience of violence and political mobilization of Spanish Fascism. Yet, to better understand the centrality of both factors, it is necessary to look at the movement's founders and the impact of their approach to violence on the movement itself. We are referring here to the Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista (JONS) and the Falange, later fused into the FE de las JONS, which contributed heavily to an escalation of violence that illustrated the rejection of parliamentary politics in interwar Spain.

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[3] Julio Aróstegui, "Introducción: La militarización de la política durante la II República", *Historia Contemporánea*, no. 11 (1994): 17, 26.
[4] Eduardo González Calleja, "La necro-lógica de la violencia sociopolítica en la primavera de 1936", *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 41, no. 1 (2011): 37-60; Aróstegui, "Militarización de la Política"; and Fernando del Rey, "Dossier. violencias de entreguerras: Miradas comparadas" *Ayer* 88, no. 4 (2012): 13-27.
[5] Sandra Souto Kustrín, "El mundo ha llegado a ser consciente de su juventud como nunca antes", *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 34, no. 1 (2004): 179-215 and Sandra Souto Kustrín, "Taking the Street: Workers' Youth Organizations and Political Conflict in the Spanish Second Republic", *European History Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2004): 131-156.
[6] Bruno Wanrooij, "The Rise and Fall of Italian Fascism as a Generational Revolt", *Journal of Contemporary History* 22, no. 3 (1987): 401-418.

French revolutionary syndicalist George Sorel published his seminal work *Reflections on Violence* in 1908, a book in which he advocated for the use of violence and myth in the class struggle. His work was not as broadly read in Spain as elsewhere in Europe, but his theories did gain some traction, both among the right and the left, contributing to an increasingly antidemocratic climate and to a vindication of the moral character of violence.[7] Yet, it is important to note that Sorelian violence, which was key to Spanish Fascism, was not shared by most parties on the radical Right, who espoused more traditional views of violence.[8] In this sense, no other founder embraced Sorel more than Ramiro Ledesma Ramos. An underemployed university graduate, Ledesma founded the JONS in 1931, a revolutionary movement which did not ask for votes but for "daring and valuable minorities." As its manifesto continued: "We search for young militant groups without hypocrisies when confronted with the shotgun and the discipline of war, civilian soldiers to demolish the bourgeois anachronistic structure of pacifist militarism. . . We will triumph and we are the Spanish truth."[9] As Sorel, Ledesma defended the need for a revolutionary elite that would not only destroy the bourgeois and liberal state but replace it with something radically new. In so doing, Ledesma advocated a vitalist notion of violence, understood as the direct action that would prompt the revolution through the mobilizing force of the unifying myth of the nation. He took fully on board Sorel's conceptualization of myths as "means of acting in the present", images that can intuitively invoke a suite of feelings and ideas, a whole doctrine even, capable of guiding the masses' direct action against the bourgeois state.[10] Violence was

[7] David Soto Carrasco, "La ragione violenta di Ramiro Ledesma Ramos. Fascismo e pensiero conservatore in Spagna", PhD diss., (Università di Bologan, 2012), 116, 126 and Pedro Carlos González Cuevas, "Políticas de lo sublime y teología de la violencia en la derecha española", in *Violencia Política En La España Del Siglo XX*, ed. Santos Juliá (Madrid: Taurus, 2000), 105-143.
[8] Eduardo González Calleja, "La violencia y sus discursos: Los límites de la "fascistización" de la derecha española durante el régimen de la Segunda República", *Ayer*, no. 71 (2008): 85-116.
[9] "JONS manifest", *La Conquista del Estado*, 14 March 1931.
[10] Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 116-117.

not a tactic here, but an ideological necessity,[11] because only violence could create a new morality.[12] It would be only through violence that the true essence of the nation would manifest itself: "A people is more sincere when they fight than when they vote."[13] It cannot come as a surprise that practically every issue of the weekly *JONS* recommended Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* as essential reading for all members.

This kind of violence -- in Ledesma's view, the only modern way of doing politics -- was the preserve of the youth because, as many other fascists, he saw the revolution as a generational clash that replaced and nullified the class struggle.[14] The aim of the JONS was to liberate Spain from the older generation. *Jonsistas* despised this older generation for having acquiesced to the post-imperialist reality, following the loss of its colonies in Cuba and the Philippines in 1898, and refused to participate in the Great War, thus squandering Spain's opportunity to take, once more, centre stage in the international arena.[15] For the JONS, both 1915 and the establishment of the Second Republic in 1931 were missed opportunities for the channelling of the Spanish youth to the service of a historical and imperialist national destiny.[16] Not coincidentally, one of the main faults that Ledesma found in the Republic was, precisely, that it had not been established through violence. It was by turning away from this creationary violence that the older generation had become "disloyal to Hispanic blood and servant of the foreign."[17] Like in Italy, fascism seemed to attract those among the youth who considered war a defining and fundamental experience in which they

[11] Ferran Gallego, *El evangelio fascista : La formación de la cultura política del franquismo (1930–1950)*, (Barcelona: Crítica, 2014), 107.
[12] Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, 206-212; *La Conquista del Estado*, 27 June 1931; and Roberto Lanzas [Ramiro Ledesma Ramos], "La violencia política y las insurrecciones", *JONS*, 3 August 1933.
[13] *La Conquista del Estado*, 28 March 1931.
[14] Soto Carrasco, "La ragione", 127 and Miguel A. Ruiz Carnicer, *El Sindicato Español Universitario (Seu) 1939-1965: La socialización de la juventud universitaria en el franquismo*, (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1996), 19.
[15] *La Conquista del Estado*, 21 March 1931, 11 April 1931.
[16] *La Conquista del Estado*, 10 October 1931 and *JONS*, 1 May 1933.
[17] *La Conquista del Estado*, 21 March 1931.

had not been able to participate.[18] For this reason, Ferrán Gallego considers the political culture of the JONS to be, among the different iterations of Spanish fascism, the closest to the veteran culture of the Great War.[19] If, as Zeev Sternhell has stated, the Great War "proved the validity of the ideas expressed by Sorel, Michels, Pareto and Le Bon, namely, that the masses need a myth, they only want to obey, and democracy is merely a smokescreen", then the Spanish case suggests that one did not need to take part in the war directly to heed the lesson.[20]

It is important to note, however, that while Ledesma borrowed many essential elements of his worldview from Sorel, he considered more carefully than him what should replace the liberal state and the role that violence should have in it. On this, and surely benefitting from his knowledge of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, he was, like Mussolini, wary of the same radicalized masses he aimed to lead. Unsurprising, therefore, that the young fascist came to advocate a less spontaneous and more disciplined and insurrectional form of mass violence. Only this discipline could guarantee the revolution.[21] Consequentially, the state born out of this revolution would be a totalitarian state in which violence would ensure compliance with the highest values and essence of the *Patria* (Fatherland).[22] Only violence, before, during, and after the conquest of the state could ensure that Spain fulfilled its own historical destiny.[23]

The soon co-leader of the JONS, Onésimo Redondo, shared with Ledesma the same exaltation of the youth and the same fascination with the morality of violence espoused by

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[18] Wanrooij, "Rise and Fall", 406.
[19] Gallego, *Evangelio fascista*, 109. See also Ángel Alcalde, *War Veterans and Fascism in Interwar Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 218.
[20] Zeev Sternhell, "Fascism", in *Comparative Fascist Studies. New Perspectives*, ed. Constantin Iordachi (London: Routledge, 2010), 57.
[21] *La Conquista del Estado*, 27 June 1931.
[22] *La Conquista del Estado*, 24 October 1931 and *JONS*, September 1933.
[23] Roberto Lanzas, *¿Fascismo En España?: Sus Orígenes, Su Desarrollo, Sus Hombres* (Madrid: La Conquista del Estado, 1935), 15-24.

Sorel, who he read attentively. While Redondo was not as keen as Ledesma to encourage the JONS' members to embrace violence directly -- in fact, the first and only time he engaged in direct action ended in his death -- he constantly justified it exalting *jonsista* violence as inherently holy and moral: "Ours [our violence] will be just and will be holy, because it's employed in service of Spain. Moreover, the youth need to be invigorated by physical struggle, without which all creationary energy disappears. Youth violence is necessary, it is fair, it is convenient."[24] Both Ledesma and Redondo contributed greatly to the justification of violence: "Any patriot has the right to kill, on the street, the enemies of the *Patria*."[25] More importantly, this language would be assimilated by the Falange and eventually integrated in the rhetorical corpus of the Francoist regime, contributing to the justification of repression and the violent legitimation of the dictatorship.[26]

Ironically, the most famous of Falange's founders, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, was the less willing to embrace fully Sorel's approach to violence. Although he had read the work of the French thinker, his approach to violence relied more on a Catholic interpretation of natural law.[27] As such, he talked more of "surgical", defensive violence, which could only be justified when employed in service of justice and the fatherland.[28] Yet, while he continued to minimize the violent character of his movement, there was something Sorelian in the way he justified the use of violence at the service of "a national, totalitarian, and unitary principle." As he wrote to Torcuato Luca de Tena, when you say that all violence is bad, "that reveals

[24] Matteo Tomasoni, "Onésimo Redondo Ortega. Vida, obra y pensamiento de un sindicalista nacional (1905–1936)", PhD diss., (Universidad de Valladolid, 2014), 380-83, 388.
[25] Tomasoni, "Onésimo Redondo Ortega", 385 and *La Conquista del Estado*, 27 June 1931.
[26] See Miguel Rivas Venegas, "Hacia una 'Lingua Novi Imperii': Retórica visual y lenguaje de la violencia del fascismo español y Primer Franquismo (1931–1945)", PhD diss., (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2018).
[27] "José Antonio en la cárcel Modelo", *Fotos*, 9 November 1938 and González Cuevas, "Políticas de lo sublime", 128.
[28] Ian Gibson, *En busca de José Antonio* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1981), 51 and "Los nueve puntos iniciales", *F.E.*, 7 December 1933.

that you're still thinking about instruments and not profound realities."[29] In fact, José Antonio's reticence to embrace violence fully was the product of both an initial belief in a legal path to power and seeing his movement reduced to a riot squad at the service of the Right.[30] A contradictory attitude, given that he had already accepted the financial support of the right even before the official foundation of Falange, an agreement that was further extended in August 1934 in exchange for a strengthening of the party's militias.[31] Yet, when it came to actual violence, his reticence to let Falangists react in kind to violent attacks on their members gained the party the nickname "*Funeraria Española*" (Spanish Funeral Home).[32] José Antonio's qualms about violence, however, were not necessarily shared by Falangists themselves, mostly middle-class youngsters, whose radicalization begun in the university.[33] There, the Falangist student union (SEU), launched in December 1933, was involved in multiple clashes with the leftist FUE, which they aimed to destroy. It was the students that took the lead in openly and violently confronting the Left, performing, over the first four months of the SEU's existence, twenty violent actions.[34] Only after some attacks resulted in the death of members, José Antonio agreed to respond to the attacks, entering, still hesitantly, a path towards the increasing radicalization of the party. He made this decision in the midst of the Falange's fusion with Ledesma's JONS.

This fusion, in March 1934, contributed greatly to the radicalization process. The event itself led to a skirmish with leftist forces, which ended with one dead and several

[29] José Antonio Primo de Rivera, *Obras completas. Edición del centenario* (Madrid: Plataforma 2003, 2007), 320-21.
[30] José Antonio accused the Right of wanting to "take advantage of the fighting spirit of my boys." Ibid., 1685.
[31] Ibid., 329, 674-675.
[32] Ibid., 457, 473.
[33] Joan Maria Thomàs, *Lo que fue la Falange: la Falange y los falangistas de José Antonio, Hedilla y la unificación, Franco y el fin de la Falange Española de las Jons* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1999), 67-68.
[34] Miguel A. Ruiz Carnicer, "El Sindicato Español Universitario (Seu) del distrito de Zaragoza durante la Guerra Civil (1936–1939)", *Revista de historia Jerónimo Zurita*, no. 53-54 (1986): 51-58.

injured.[35] Moreover, the death of Matías Montero (one of the SEU's founders) in February 1934 and the death of two other Falangists in March, eventually led to the creation of a special squad, the *Falange de la Sangre* (Falange of the Blood) -- later on the *Primera Línea* (First Line) -- led by José Antonio Ansaldo.[36] Its establishment did not follow a strategic approach to the conquest of the state; rather, it illustrated a strong and internal demand for more violence.[37] The assassination of young socialist Juanita Rico later that year confirmed the shift towards a more vitalist and *jonsista* embrace of violence initiated by the new organization.[38] As a consequence, the government banned groups from displaying flags, emblems, or insignias, and fined those who disobeyed.[39] Still, tensions grew between José Antonio and party leaders such as Ansaldo and Ledesma, who wanted to increase the violent character of the movement. More importantly, this desire for more violence was not confined to the leadership, as confirmed by José Antonio's need to respond publicly to a student's complaints about risking his life just to sell a literary and elitist publication.[40] The fact is that, regardless of José Antonio's qualms about violence, the Falange's militants felt attracted to the movement by the risk and adventurism of its confrontations with the Left. Between 60 and 70 percent of the Falange's members were minors, which is particularly telling if we take into account that, before the creation of the *Falange de la Sangre*, the SEU was the most violent section of the organisation.[41] The violent inclinations of the Falangists were clear in

[35] Eduardo González Calleja, "Camisas de fuerza: Fascismo y paramilitarización", *Historia Contemporánea*, no. 11 (1994): 67.
[36] Stanley G. Payne, *Franco y José Antonio, el extraño caso del fascismo español: Historia de la Falange y del Movimiento Nacional (1923–1977)* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1997): 197.
[37] Lanzas, *¿Fascismo en España?*, 161.
[38] Gallego, *Evangelio fascista,* 226-227.
[39] Souto Kustrín, "Taking the Street", 140.
[40] *FE*, 19 April 1934; Primo de Rivera, *Obras completas,* 548-549.
[41] Sancho Dávila y Fernández de Celis, *José Antonio, Salamanca y otras cosas* (Madrid: Afrodisio Aguado, 1967), 50.

Seville, where between 65 and 68 percent of new members chose to serve in the *Falange de la Sangre*.[42]

To Ledesma's vitalist and moral view of violence, José Antonio added an articulation of Falangism as a lifestyle based on an "ascetic and military approach to life."[43] This way, the vitalist violence which impelled members to risk their lives in service of a unifying myth or ideal was given an even higher meaning through José Antonio's interpretation of death as an "act of service." In words of SEU founder Manuel Valdés Larrañaga, "it was a movement that involved danger that gave a certain heroic aura to those that served in it. . . For youth to feel united and attracted by a historical movement, such movement has no other choice than to offer a profound historical suggestion, that is, to call upon a generation to fulfil a great historical adventure. This was, specifically, what the Falange and the SEU offered."[44] Many members were attracted to Falange by a promise of heroism, risk, and adventurism, which was only enhanced by the cult of death and the Christian sense of martyrdom with which José Antonio had approached the first casualties of the movement.[45] The risks they shared as Falangists strengthened their bond, while the vindication of the moral character of violence made by their leaders provided them with an encouraging sense of righteousness.[46] As noted by Juan Saéz Marín, the limited ideological training of the Falangist rank-and-file only highlights the fact that the definition of the Falange as a lifestyle was not a metaphor, but a reality.[47] This militancy that partook in an intuitive direct action guided only by a unifying and mobilising myth was precisely the kind for which Sorel had advocated.

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[42] José Antonio Parejo Fernández, "De puños y pistolas. Violencia falangista y violencias fascistas," *Ayer* 88, no. 4 (2012): 137.
[43] Primo de Rivera, *Obras Completas,* 349.
[44] Manuel Valdés Larrañaga, "Sobre la juventud y la fundación del SEU", Archivo General de la Universidad de Navarra (AGUN) /011/149.
[45] Thomàs, *Lo que fue,* 67-68; Parejo Fernández, "Puños y pistolas", 129.
[46] González Calleja, "La Violencia", 90.
[47] Juan Saéz Marín, "Asociacionismo Juvenil en España hasta 1936–39", *De juventud* 7 (July 1982): 68.

The confrontation between Ansaldo and Primo de Rivera ended with the expulsion of the former, while serious disagreements between José Antonio and Ledesma regarding both the role of violence and the path to power ended, by 1935, with the withdrawal of the latter. Ledesma could not understand why, instead of taking advantage of the situation created by the Socialist-led uprising of October 1934, which centred on Asturias, José Antonio preferred to offer Falange as a paramilitary force to the government.[48] José Antonio interpreted the expulsion of Ledesma and Ansaldo as a victory over those who wanted to transform the movement into a criminal organisation.[49] Ironically though, soon after, the Falange and Primo de Rivera himself became increasingly violent. This radicalization was particularly noticeable among Falangist students who led the most violent actions of 1935, such as the attack on the allegedly Jewish-owned SEPU department store and shootings around the working-class neighbourhoods of Madrid.[50] Meanwhile, without fully discarding the legal route to power, José Antonio veered towards insurrectionism. By 1935, Primo de Rivera and the Falangist leadership were advocating a coup against the Republic.[51] While this radicalisation owed much to Ledesma, it was highly motivated by Primo de Rivera's inclination towards militarism, which he had inherited from his father, General Miguel Primo de Rivera, who had been Spain's dictator from 1923 to 1930. Moreover, after the Asturias uprising, José Antonio had become increasingly convinced that the Falange needed the Spanish Army to succeed. Although increasing contacts with the military were unfruitful at first, the electoral setback experienced by the Right and the victory of the Popular Front in the February 1936 elections made an alliance with the Falange an increasingly attractive

[48] Lanzas, *¿Fascismo en España?,* 204-205; Alejandro Lerroux, *La pequeña historia de España 1930–1936* (Barcelona: Mitre, 1985), 201-02; and Souto Kustrín, "Taking the Street", 145.
[49] Cited in Enrique de Aguinaga and Stanley G. Payne, *José Antonio Primo de Rivera* (Barcelona: Cara & Cruz, 2003), 215.
[50] Ruiz Carnicer, *El sindicato*, 58.
[51] Francisco Bravo Martínez, *José Antonio: El hombre, el jefe, el camarada* (Madrid: Ediciones Españolas, 1939). 159-65.

political option to the Right.[52] The Falange's pull over the discontented and radicalised youth of other right-wing organisations manifested itself in the noticeable influx of young members from the JAP (Juventudes de Acción Popular), a Catholic young organisation, over the early months of 1936.[53] This pull would lead to the exponential growth of the party in the first months of the Civil War.

During the months that followed the elections, the Falange's increased violence came accompanied by an equally increasing government pressure over the party. By the beginning of July 1936, the Falange accepted responsibility for at least seventy political assassinations since its foundation. In fact, falangist-led violence took central stage over the first months of 1936, particularly after José Antonio ordered the militarization of the SEU. During this period, the Falange became the most deadly political organisation. Most of the violence, however, responded to acts of provocation and retaliation and was not a concerted strategy to conquer the state.[54] Unsurprisingly, the Popular Front government banned the organisation and incarcerated its leaders. Yet it reorganized into subversive cells, destined to support a military-led coup d'état.[55]

Despite these connections, there was no predetermined path from the expansion of political violence during the Second Republic to the outbreak of the Civil War. It is important to note that, in the case of the Falange, this linear connection was the product of a propagandistic retelling of the story that aimed to consolidate the image of the Falangists as the first among the fallen for the *patria*. In words of the Falangist Francisco Bravo, it was during the Republican period that Falangists learned to die in order to learn how to kill (justly, he would add). It was this willing sacrifice that, according to him, granted them a

[52] Gibson, *En busca de José Antonio*, 124-30.
[53] Eduardo González Calleja and Sandra Souto Kustrín, "De la dictadura a la República: Orígenes y auge de los movimientos juveniles en España", *Hispania* 67, no. 225 (2007), 92.
[54] González Calleja, "Necro-lógica de la violencia", 37-60.
[55] Stanley G. Payne, *Falange. A History of Spanish Fascism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), 103.

leading role in Spain's salvation.[56] This discourse was central to both the Falange's newfound position in Franco's dictatorship and the consolidation of the regime in the early 1940s.

Falangist Violence and the Spanish Civil War

Much has been written about the Falange's role, or lack thereof, in the military coup of July 1936, and José Antonio's attempts to prevent his movement from entering into an asymmetrical power relationship with the army. However, by 1936, the Falangist militias made up 56 percent of the total volunteer forces at the service of the rebel army and 75 percent by the end of the conflict.[57] Now the calls to violence, to revolution, and to the salvation and rebirth of the nation took on a very real form that continued to attract willing combatants. Between 18 July 1936 and April 1937, most new recruits -- between 50 and 70 percent depending on the location -- chose to serve in *Primera Línea*. Most of them were young; 70 percent of them had never before belonged to any party.[58] According to official estimates, over the course of the war, the Falange established 116 *banderas* (battalions) comprised of over 200,000 men.[59] It is important to note, however, that the influx of new recruits was not exclusively due to the desire to join the Falange but to other factors such as pressures to enlist,[60] a desire of avoiding reprisals and redeem a leftist past,[61] or simply

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[56] Francisco Bravo Martínez, *Historia de la Falange Española de las J.O.N.S.* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1940), 39-40.
[57] González Calleja, "Camisas de fuerza", 77, 79.
[58] Parejo Fernández, "Puños y pistolas", 141.
[59] Milicias nacionales, Falanges y Requetés, Archivo General Militar de Ávila, Censo-Guía de Archivo de España e Iberoamérica, http://censoarchivos.mcu.es/CensoGuia/fondoDetail.htm?id=577090 [accessed 11 February 2021].
[60] A complaint addressed to the President of Pamplona's Carlist Circle mentioned a group of Falangists in the village of Betelu who threatened people to force them to join the party while "our beloved *requetés* risk their lives and shed their blood fighting for God and the *Patria*", 19 August 1936, Archivo Real y General de Navarra (ARGN), Junta Central Carlista de Guerra (JCCG), 51178.
[61] James Matthews, "Our Red Soldiers': The Nationalist Army's Management of its Left-Wing Conscripts in the Spanish Civil War 1936–9", *Journal of Contemporary History* 45, no. 2 (2010), 350. Several complaints addressed to the Junta Central Carlista de Guerra mentioned communists joining Falange, ARGN, JCCG, 51178.

earning merits in the emerging new order.[62] Still, available evidence suggests that most joined willingly.

The war led to the exponential and uncontrolled growth of the Falange, largely motivated by a relaxation of entry requirements. Following José Antonio's orders, aimed at circumventing the Popular Front government's ban, anyone who wanted to join only needed to tell another member, who would proceed to communicate the new addition to the leadership.[63] Yet the party faced further challenges. By the end of 1936, the Falange had lost its key leaders, all of whom had been either executed or assassinated over the previous months, and most of its central and provincial heads were in prison.[64] This left a power vacuum that the interim head of the party, Manuel Hedilla, was unable to fill. Over the first nine months of the war, the power structures of the party became increasingly factionalized, which allowed more autonomy to the local heads and made Hedilla's control over the party more difficult.[65] In this context, and given that the Falange's main leverage, vis-à-vis the military leadership, was its paramilitary contribution to the war effort, Hedilla attempted to improve the military training of the militias. He established two training centres in Seville and Salamanca, but made sure that recruits could not reach higher grade than sergeant,[66] and that Falangist militias on the frontlines were exclusively led by the military.[67] Here he followed in José Antonio's footsteps, dismissing the use of the militias for a Falangist-led political takeover and subordinating its forces to the military. In any case, any attempt to use the militias in this way would soon become impossible, due to the militarisation of the

[62] Mercedes Fórmica, cited in Aguinaga and Payne, *José Antonio Primo de Rivera*, 81.
[63] Primo de Rivera, *Obras completas*, 1416.
[64] Manuel Valdés Larrañaga, AGUN, 011, 149.
[65] Mercedes Peñalba Sotorrío, *La Secretaría General del Movimiento : Construcción, coordinación y estabilización del régimen franquista*, (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2015), 33-34.
[66] Payne, *Falange,* 143.
[67] Manuel Hedilla and José Luis Jerez Riesco, *La Falange del silencio: Escritos, discursos y declaraciones del II Jefe Nacional de la Falange* (Madrid: Barbarroja, 1999), 55.

militias in December 1936.[68] The measure was readily accepted by Hedilla, but not by other heads who feared, not unfairly, that this would ultimately separate the rank-and-file from the political leadership of the Falange.[69] But the military preferred auxiliaries to allies.[70] As such, it made good use of the Falange, not only on the frontlines, but in the rearguard. In fact, the Falange's contribution to the repressive drive of the regime is key to understanding how its approach to violence contributed to the establishment and consolidation of Francoism.

In the well-known process of extermination of the Left, Falangists were usually the executors, carrying out the killings ordered by the rebel authorities.[71] Falangists committed individual and mass killings of leftists in all Spanish regions under rebel control. To give a mere example, in Guareña (Badajoz), the Falange was central to the repression, which resulted in fifty-five shot and sixty-eight executions. In the summer of 1936, the Falange and *Requetés* (Carlist militia) leaders in Seville were asked to send twenty militiamen each to participate in the repression of Llerena, "given their aptitude for 'arrests, searches […] and chasing down people on the run.'"[72] Furthermore, a report on Badajoz described the repression as conducted by "Falangist squads led by the most daring, the most vengeful, even true bastards who conducted an infinite number of executions, sometimes out of their own initiative, others following orders from so-called Tribunals."[73] Falangist participation in the repression was not confined to those in *Primera Línea*. In Melilla, for example, those in *Primera Línea* were in charge of vigilance and security, those in *Segunda Línea* were in

[68] BOE, 22 December 1936.
[69] José Antonio Parejo Fernández, "Entre la disciplina y la rebeldía: Miranda versus Sancho Dávila (1936-1938)", *Historia y política*, no. 22 (2009): 193-94.
[70] Ramón Salas Larrazábal, *Los datos exactos de la Guerra Civil*, (Madrid: Ediciones Rioduero, 1980), 92.
[71] Julio Prada Rodríguez, *La España masacrada: La represión franquista de guerra y posguerra* (Madrid: Alianza, 2010), 132-39.
[72] Miguel Alonso Ibarra, "Civil War, Total War, Fascist War: Rebel Violence and Occupation Policies in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939)", in *Fascist Warfare, 1922-1945: Aggression, Occupation, Annihilation*, eds. Miguel Alonso, Alan Kramer, and Javier Rodrigo (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 77-78.
[73] Report on the Falangist repression of Badajoz, Regional Inspector José Tomás Valverde, 16 October 1939, Archivo General de la Administración (AGA), 17.10, 51/20522.

charge of the security of official buildings and access checkpoints, and other members were integrated into the Civil Guard. Here repression was further increased by the drive of local heads to secure the Falange's political power. Moreover, the impact of the first repressive wave in Melilla led many leftists to join the Falange out of fear, many were like "tuna, blue on the outside, red on the inside".[74] It was also common for Falangists, as well as members of the Civil Guard and other forces, to shave women's head, most often as a way to punish their male relatives who had escaped persecution or for having rejected their sexual or romantic advances.[75] It was during the war that the discourse of a cleansing and purifying violence made by Ledesma and Redondo, and internalized by Falangists, took on a practical reality.

The Falangists' ideological penchant for violence was instrumentalized also to underpin other repressive structures as well as wartime mobilization. By November 1936, 408 Falangists were working hand-in-hand with the security services, and often prison oversight was entrusted to Falangists.[76] It was frequent as well for Falangists to force people to donate to Auxilio Social, the Francoist social services organisation. That was the case in Valle de Lana (Navarre), where two Falangists threatened those who refused to contribute with a fine.[77] In cases throughout the rebel-controlled territory, people who refused to donate were not only fined but labelled as "Jews."[78] Often armed Falangists "encouraged" men to join the Falange's ranks while preventing their entry into any other organisation, particularly the *Requetés*. In Arcos de la Frontera (Cádiz), fighters who had transferred from the Falange to the *Requeté* were arrested and punished by the Falangist authorities, while others were

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[74] María Elena Fernández Díaz, "Violencia política y represión. Melilla después del Alzamiento: el campo de concentración de Zeluán", PhD diss., (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2015), 50, 54-57.
[75] Julio Prada Rodríguez, "Escarmentar a algunas y disciplinar a las demás: Mujer, violencia y represión sexuada en la retaguardia sublevada," *Historia Social*, no. 87 (2017), 67-83 and Ángel Alcalde, "Wartime and Post-war Rape in Franco's Spain", *The Historical Journal* (forthcoming).
[76] Sheelagh M. Ellwood, *Prietas las filas: Historia de Falange Española (1933–1983)* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1984), 80-81.
[77] ARGN, JCCG, 51189.
[78] Michael Seidman, *The Victorious Counterrevolution: The Nationalist Effort in the Spanish Civil War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 120.

denied their discharge so they could not join the Carlist forces.[79] Some falangists stated they had been ordered, or better yet, highly encouraged, not only to recruit leftists but to force them to join.[80] This is not surprising given the belief that Spanish prisoners could be re-educated, the need for combatants, and the Falange's desire to bolster its own numbers to strengthen its position within the emergent regime.

During the war, oversight of Falange itself was often haphazard, as proven by the constant attempts by authorities in and outside the party to control the Falangist repressive drive. Hedilla himself ordered provincial heads to strengthen their control and to avoid punishment without prior confirmation of their political background and permission from the military authorities.[81] In a memorandum from September 1936, Hedilla warned about the danger of the Falange becoming forever stained with a criminal reputation.[82] As we have seen, the authorities' approach to repression was often contradictory, trapped as they were between the drive to purify the body of the nation and the need to harness the population's support for the new state. In Navarre, for example, the *Junta Carlista Central de Guerra* (Central Carlist Council of War) tried to rein in the violence and prevent vengeful actions by ensuring that only those fully committed to the movement were allowed to carry weapons.[83] This implied that a true Carlist, or a true Falangist, was unable to give in to his lower impulses, a belief certainly based on an assumption of the morality of the cause, but not one matched by reality. The military authorities also faced this contradiction. While the repressive drive coincided with military objectives, when, around March 1938, they tried to

[79] Report outlining several incidents in Arcos de la Frontera, 21 December 1936 and Provincial *Requeté* Delegate to the Chief Inspector of Militia Forces, Jerez, 21 January 1937, AGUN, Manuel Fal Conde, 187.
[80] Aurora Artiaga Rego, "Voluntarios para un golpe, soldados para una guerra: Las milicias rebeldes de Primera Línea en la Guerra Civil", *Ayer*, no. 111 (2018): 48.
[81] Hedilla and Jerez Riesco, *Falange del silencio,* 58.
[82] Prada, *España masacrada*, 132-37.
[83] AGRN, JCCG, 51185, 51178.

rein in the violence, for fear of fostering opposition among the population, it was extremely hard to do so.[84]

The rebel army did its best to both use and control the Falange, deploying them in the frontlines and the rearguard as necessary while establishing tight control over the party. Both the militarization of the militias and the Unification Decree of 1937 were key to this process. Within this context, the army's attempts to rein in the violence in 1938 was a crucial development towards the establishment and consolidation of the regime. In this process, as Miguel Alonso has stated, "Fascistization helps explain the high levels of violence in the Civil War, the nature of that violence, and the conduct of the insurgents."[85] This also reflected how the employment of an uncontrolled and vitalist violence could become a problem. While this kind of violence was extremely useful for the destruction of the liberal state, it was much less so for the consolidation of the new state. This, however, was not exclusively due to the power of the army, which was built into the Falange itself. Ledesma had already considered the danger that uncontrolled militias could pose to the revolution, anticipating the channelling of violence within the totalitarian state, while José Antonio's codification of Falangism as a militaristic lifestyle placed discipline and sacrifice at the centre of the Falangists' actions. This would facilitate, in most cases, the military's control over the party. Violence, therefore, was central to both the Falange and the Francoism as a whole, provided it was not employed against them. In this context, the dynamic pull of Sorelian violence could only be maintained and channelled by the right myth, usually in the form of imperialistic expansion. In the case of the Falange, it was, most notably, through the Blue Division that sent thousands of Spaniards to fight against the Soviets on the Eastern Front

[84] Alonso Ibarra, "Civil War, Total War", 83-84.
[85] Ibid. 88.

during the Second World War and through the promise of an ever-pending national-syndicalist revolution.

While, as we have seen, the Spanish Civil War was not the first time Falangists shed blood for their cause, it is important to note that for a majority, who only joined during the war, the conflict was their first experience of violence. As war is a "transformative phenomenon" through which identities are shaped and reshaped, it is important to explore how this violent experience was rationalized through their memoirs.[86] Despite the glorification of violence and war of the pre-war period, the Civil War proved that it was easier to long for war when one had not yet experienced it. The actual experience of war did not fit with the Falangists' expectations and often gave way to selfish and individualist behaviours rather than heroic feats.[87] Yet this is, unsurprisingly, rarely portrayed in memoirs. Some memoirists actually address, rather briefly, their initial shock and inexperience but, more often than not, just to highlight their own courage and masculinity. Prudencio Doreste, for example, highlighted how quickly he got used to the devastation and dangers of war. For him, the real enemies were disease and lice; bullets and Republican attacks were no more than a nuisance.[88] This initial shock also served to amplify the value of their sacrifice, particularly in a context in which risking one's life was a precondition of their Spanishness: "He who feels his Spanish blood burning in his veins cannot remain indifferent to this war of salvation."[89] In this sense, some memoirs highlighted the sublime quality of war violence and of their own patriotic mission.[90] Upon describing his motivation to join the war effort, Doreste noted: "I revered, as something sublime, that patriotic feeling which had overtaken me." He believed that answering this call and joining the Falange had imbued him with a

[86] Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 389.
[87] Miguel Alonso Ibarra, "El Ejército sublevado en la Guerra Civil Española. Experiencia bélica, fascistización y violencia (1936–1939)", PhD diss., (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2019), 186-87.
[88] Prudencio Doreste, *Ocho meses de campaña* (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Tip. "Diario", 1938), 19, 29.
[89] José Antonio Martínez Barrado, *Cómo se creó una bandera de Falange* (Zaragoza: La Académica, 1939), 48.
[90] Alonso Ibarra, "Ejército sublevado", 166.

high sense of sacrifice and a masculinity typical of his race.[91] The transformative character of war was here clearly stated.

Falangist combatants' memoirs often highlighted their disposition to go into combat, but more interestingly they sometimes also portrayed the vitalist, creationary, and moral character of violence. A Falangist priest, Salvador Torrijos Berges, praised the "spirituality" of frontline fighters: "that 'spirituality' that conveys morality, virtue, work, discipline, sacrifice, the absence of vice is the same that must reign, at all times, in the rearguard".[92] Another Falangist described the revolutionary and vitalist character of the war in these terms: "Revolution is sedition, which brings with it commotion, turmoil but never banditry, crime, looting, rape, and every other despicable act that can be carried out. . . Revolution is faith in an ideal, that is why it's carried out… Revolution obeys an authority; it is under control… Revolution is not plain anarchy."[93] There was a desire here to contrast the legitimate violence of the Falange to the enemy's illegitimate and chaotic violence. Moreover, Falangists did not succumb to their feelings or desire for revenge, they channelled their impulses through a violence waged at the service of the nation: "our impulse, which could have revealed itself in a brutal form, returning blow for blow, is contained and awaits, disciplined, our orders."[94] The same channelling of vengefulness into righteous violence was described by Doreste when retelling the actions of Carmen, a young woman, upon the execution of those who had killed her father and brothers: "Then, Carmen, with great serenity and heroic gesture, without contracting a single muscle of her face, straight and curt as a faithful representation of Justice, ordered: fire! And she saw, insensitive, how the bodies of those who had brought,

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[91] Doreste, *Ocho meses*, 2.
[92] Salvador Torrijos Berges, *Mis memorias de la Guerra* (Zaragoza: M. Serrano, 1939), 111.
[93] Cited in Miguel Alonso Ibarra, "Ex-combatientes. Un análisis del fascismo español a través de las memorias de los soldados de Falange", in *Claves del mundo contemporáneo. Debate e investigación: Actas del XI Congreso de la Asociación de la Historia Contemporánea*, eds. Teresa María Ortega López and Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco (Granada: Comares, 2013).
[94] Ibid., 18.

forever, desolation and tragedy into her house, fell, never to rise again."[95] This kind of action, of course, was only acceptable in her case, because no men in her family were alive to take revenge. But Falangist memoirs were not only about justifying the war, they were also a way to claim pride of place to the Falange, portraying Falangists as the first to risk their lives for the *patria*. In this sense, Martínez Barrado proudly noted both his condition as *camisa vieja* (old guard) and how he had been among the first to join the war effort. Consequently, he believed that only the Falange and *Requeté* had the right to have militias in the rear-guard. [96] Falangist memoirs and publications traced, in this way, a direct line between those who had risked their lives before the war and after, portraying Falangists as quixotic madmen who risked everything to liberate their Dulcinea (the *patria*) from captivity.[97]

Conclusions

Through the war, the Falange's vitalist view of violence fused seamlessly with the military view of masculinity and the religious justification for the war, and it did so because these elements fed into each other, allowing a recasting of the Civil War as a defensive and sacrificial war against an imagined invader. In fact, the Falangist ethos already comprised these elements, as shown in the Falangist fixation with the manly idea of the warrior-monk, which had much in common with the rebel army's conception of masculinity.[98] All this allowed for the construction of a myth, the war as Crusade against the Anti-Spain, to which fascist and traditional Catholic rhetoric contributed equally. While the Falange's actual relations with the Church would prove often difficult over the years, rhetorically, Falangist palingenetic nationalism fused easily with the religious justification for the war. Not in vain, the Falange's initial program had called Spaniards to a Crusade for the rebirth of the nation.[99]

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[95] Doreste, *Ocho meses*, 42-43.
[96] Martínez Barrado, *Cómo se creó,* 14, 20, 68.
[97] Eduardo Duncan, "Don Quijote y Sancho en el frente de Madrid", *Fotos*, 27 March 1937.
[98] See Alonso Ibarra, "Ejército sublevado", 151-55.
[99] Primo de Rivera, *Obras completas,* 382.

In this way, the Falange contributed not only a vitalist and moral understanding of violence to the discourse, but a much-needed social aspect in the form of the ever-pending national-syndicalist revolution. It is also true that not everyone in the Falange accepted the term "Crusade" to refer to the conflict, but these qualms had a lot to do with the politics of the post-war period when the strength of the Crusade myth threatened to side line, even prevent, the fulfilment of the Falangist revolution.[100] Like the Sorelian myth, this discourse allowed combatants to see themselves as "an army of truth fighting an army of evil" in a way that justified the elimination and exclusion of the other.[101]

After the war, however, while the mobilizing myths of the Crusade and the ever-pending national-syndicalist revolution would be maintained as instruments for the legitimation and consolidation of the regime, all violence was channelled through the state. While ex-combatants were now portrayed as warriors in need of a well-deserved rest,[102] the Falange saw its militias tightly placed under the control of the military, transforming, by the early 1940s, into a recruitment channel for the Army.[103] Falangist attempts to recover direct control over the militias failed.[104] However, the Falange's original contribution, not only to the war effort but to the ideological consolidation of the regime, granted it a predominant place within the institutionalized, single-party FET-JONS. This organisation became a transmission belt between state and society and, in the early years of the regime, the only

[100] On the Falangist rejection of the term crusade see Ismael Saz, *España contra España: Los nacionalismos franquistas* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2003).
[101] Jack Roth, "The Roots of Italian Fascism: Sorel and Sorelismo", *The Journal of Modern History* 39, no. 1 (1967): 33.
[102] Ángel Alcalde, "El descanso del guerrero: La transformación de la masculinidad excombatiente franquista (1939–1965)", *Historia y Política*, no. 37 (2017), 177-208.
[103] Peñalba Sotorrío, *Secretaría General,* 225-26.
[104] Draft for the reorganization of F.E.T. y de las J.O.N.S., AGA 9 (17.02) 51/18956.

channel for the participation of the people in the construction and development of the New State.[105]

As has been demonstrated, the Sorelian approach to violence played a key role in the development of the Falange and its evolution as a fascist party. Sorel's influence not only helps explain the Falange's role in political repression or the pull that the organisation had over the youth, but also serves to draw a direct line between the pre-war and post-war Falangists' experience, portraying them as the vanguard of the true Spain. As such, violence served to gain them an important role in the recently established dictatorship. However, it is also clear that this kind of violence had its limitations. As this chapter has shown, its usefulness in the destruction of the Republican state wore out once the new Francoist state begun to emerge. The militarization of the militias, the Unification Decree, the reining in of repression by 1938, and the post-war neutralization of the falangist militia all attest to this.

Nevertheless, while Sorel's influence was significant, it is important to remember that fascism cannot be reduced to a single ideological entity.[106] In this sense, it is also important to note that Spanish fascism had not fully developed before the war. In this sense, historians like Gallego and José Antonio Parejo Fernández are right to point out the centrality of the Spanish Civil War to the development of Spanish fascism.[107] However, this view, particularly in Parejo's case, seems highly indebted to the brutalisation theory that the experience of war made the politics of interwar Europe more violent, which, despite its intuitive validity, has been highly difficult to demonstrate, as Ángel Alcalde has noted.[108] I would argue, however, that the predisposition to vitalist, creationary, and cleansing violence of the Falange's rank-

[105] The Unification Decree defined the FET as a mediator between state and society. Its mission was to communicate the people's spirit to the State and communicate to the people the political will of the state. BOE, 20 April 1937.
[106] Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 215.
[107] Gallego, *Evangelio Fascista* and Parejo Fernández, "Puños y pistolas", 125-45.
[108] Ángel Alcalde, "La tesis de la brutalización (George L. Mosse) y sus críticos: Un debate historiográfico", *Pasado y Memoria: Revista de historia contemporánea*, no. 15 (2016): 17-42.

and-file, already noted in the pre-war period, as well as the Sorelian approach to violence of its founders, show that war brutalisation was not necessary for fascism to emerge. Moreover, the Falangist frustration with Spain's older generation, characteristic of pre-war Falangism, had a lot in common with the frustration of many young Italians who had not experienced the Great War but wanted to. The desire to take part in war, rather than the experience of brutalisation, was both a pre-condition and a consequence of fascism. As such, the Spanish Civil War was central to Francoism and to the Falange's access to a not insignificant share of power, but while the war was central to the development of Spanish fascism, it was not its origin.

Finally, given that violence and civil conflict were midwives of the new regime, the contribution of the Falange to the establishment and consolidation of Francoism, particularly early on, cannot be understated. Falangist vitalist and moralist violence, when fused with the discourse of the Crusade and the Anti-Spain -- shared by others within the right -- strengthened the emerging dictatorship's exclusionary character and facilitated the de-humanization of the enemy. Moreover, this rhetoric translated into very practical actions, as demonstrated by the Falange's prominent role in the repressive process. Thereafter, the Falange became a physical and vivid reminder of the repression, of the state-violence, which, as anticipated by Ramiro Ledesma, ensured compliance with the highest values and essence of the *Patria*. The central role that the Falange came to have in the early years of Francoism only highlights even more the fundamental contribution of Spanish fascism to the political culture of the dictatorship.

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