Toma La Calle: An Analysis of The Influences Behind the Anti-Franco Student Protests of February 1956 at the University of Madrid

Department of History Honors Program
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
The School of Arts & Sciences

Written under the Direction of:
Professor Temma Kaplan
Department of History

By:
Ian B. Gabriel
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Introduction

During the first two weeks of February 1956, thousands of students at the University of Madrid publically protested against Generalissimo Francisco Franco’s dictatorship and its total control over the Spanish university system. Franco authorities and groups of pro-government students violently suppressed the demonstrations, detaining protestors and temporarily closing the university. The regime’s press cited the quelling of the protests as evidence of their failure, but the events had a significant impact. While they did not depose Franco, they forced him to fire important members of his administration and confirmed the growing unpopularity of his regime among Spanish youth. The uprising also marked the first time that students, most of whom were members of the middle and upper classes, had gathered en masse to challenge the authoritarian regime that had ruled Spain since 1939. Historians focusing on the Franco regime usually cite this uprising as the beginning of the student opposition movement that would continue to be an important and robust source of resistance to the government until 1975, when Spain began its transition to democracy following the dictator’s death.

The primary activists in the uprising were a small group of intellectual students from various backgrounds. Its most influential members were Enrique Múgica, a law student from San Sebastián; Ramón Tamames, a law student and the son of a famous surgeon; Javier Pradera, a law student and the grandson of a famous conservative leader who died in the Civil War; Miguel Sánchez Mazas, a philosophy student and the son of an important fascist ideologue; Jesús López Pacheco, a philosophy student and young poet; and Julián Marcos, who studied both law and philosophy. These students felt that the government’s dominance over the university made higher education expensive and
inaccessible to most Spaniards, limited post-graduation job opportunities, and impeded intellectual development. They shared this sentiment with a majority of university students, but were distinct from the student mass because they converted their views into militant political action. But what was the inspiration behind their action? What were the forces that turned these philosophy and law students, some from pro-regime families, into the radical leaders of the first major anti-Franco youth uprising? What characteristics and qualities did these students possess that the rest of Spanish students did not?

This thesis attempts to provide answers to some of these questions by examining how University of Madrid rector Pedro Laín Entralgo, poet and former fascist ideologue Dionisio Ridruejo, and Spanish Communist Party leader Jorge Semprún influenced the radical students. Simultaneously, each of these older men, who underwent their own crises of conscience regarding Franco and other party leaders, personally interacted with the student leaders, guiding them towards political activism. Laín instituted his own form of liberalism at the University, which allowed the students to organize intellectual symposiums. Ridruejo, once a member of Franco’s administration, turned against the regime and participated in a new poetry movement, which exposed the students to censored and subversive poets. And Semprún attempted to emphasize the importance of the Communist student fight against Franco, which introduced the students to organized militancy. Without their help, it seems unlikely that the uprising would have occurred.
Chapter 1

A Stifling Syndicate: Student Discontent and the SEU

Beginning in the 1950s, young people in Spain, especially university students, became increasingly dissatisfied with the state of their country. These students were born during or just after the end of the Civil War, so they lived their entire lives under Franco’s oppressive rule. Unlike many older Spaniards who sympathized with Franco’s movement, many of the students were unconcerned with the ideological conflicts of the war. But they were concerned with how Franco’s authoritarian government negatively impacted their life at universities, and how student life and freedom in other countries trumped theirs. These students were restless, lacking the older generation’s emotional attachment to the Civil War and the Falangist movement.¹ By the mid-1950s, a number of clandestine newspapers including España Libre reported that the majority of Spanish university students opposed the Franco regime and wanted social and political change.² In 1955, University of Madrid psychology professor José Pinillos conducted a study called “Social Attitudes in the University” to gauge student opinion of the Franco regime. The study revealed that 74 percent of students believed that Spanish politicians were

¹ Note: The Falangist movement, or the National Movement, refers to Spain’s only official political organization during the Franco dictatorship. Originally, the term referred to the nationalist Falangist party (Falange Española Tradicionalista) that José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the son of the former dictator, founded in 1933, during the Second Spanish Republic. In 1934, the Falangist party merged with Ramiro Ledesma and Onésimo Redondo’s 1931 movement, Juntas of National-Syndicalist Offensive (JONS), to form a single organization often abbreviated as the FET and the JONS. Franco assumed control of the Falangist ideology after the Civil War and altered it slightly to emphasize Catholicism and Spanish nationalism. Under Franco, the Falangist movement became the corporatist structure that organized all workers, students, and economic sectors of the country.

² Cosme de Asclepios, “Soltando amarras los universitarios españoles,” España Libre, Febrary 12, 1956, 1.
incompetent and ignorant; 90 percent believed that the military was incompetent and useless; 70 percent believed that the church had no place in politics; and 67 percent believed that theirs was a generation without authentic and dedicated university professors. According to the same study, only 20 percent of Spanish university students believed that the present government could solve these problems.³ The average Spanish student seemed restless and worried about the future.

By early 1956, students transformed their restlessness into political activism. On February 1, 1956, a group of students at the University of Madrid circulated a petition. Students Enrique Múgica, Ramón Tamames, Miguel Sánchez Masas, and Jesús López Pacheco, and non-student Dionisio Ridruejo, wrote and edited the “Manifesto to the University Students of Madrid,” on behalf of their organization University Congress of Young Writers.⁴ The writers argued that, as students, they had the right and the obligation to find a solution to the problems that plagued the university. They addressed their remarks to “The Government of the Nation, the Ministers of National Education, and the Secretary General of the [Falangist] Movement,” in order to give voice to the Spanish university students who believed that the government’s control of the university system did not satisfy their educational desires.⁵ The authors of the Manifesto expressed student dissatisfaction with basic aspects of their university life: what they were learning in the

⁴ Note: In Spanish, the Manifesto’s title was “Manifiesto a los universitarios madrileños” and the organization’s name was “el Congreso Universitario de Escritores Jóvenes.” From this point onwards, I will refer to the Manifesto as the “Manifesto” and the organization as the “Congreso de Escritores.”
⁵ “Manifiesto a los universitarios madrileños,” in Jaraneros y alboratadores… ed. Roberta Mesa, 65.
universities, the costs of attending school, and the lack of jobs available to them when they finished their degrees. The Manifesto harshly criticized Spanish universities and called for the democratization of the system, including the right to directly elect student representatives that would work with the government to create policy to improve those aspects of student life.

Franco exercised his control of higher education with the Spanish University Syndicate (SEU). The SEU was the government organization that dominated all aspects of university education in Spain, and also the Manifesto’s primary target. José Antonio Primo de Rivera originally created the SEU in 1933 to inject Falangist propaganda into the university. The theory behind Primo de Rivera’s version of the syndicate was that young people had historically been the first group to mobilize behind fascist movements, as was the case in Italy and Germany. So, as a way to create a pro-Falange student movement, Primo de Rivera created the SEU, which also included high school students. But unfortunately for Primo de Rivera, his Falange was not in power under the Second Spanish Republic. Thus, other student organizations that did not subscribe to the politics of the Falange, like the Republican University Scholastic Federation (FUE), existed.

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6 Note: In Spanish, Sindicato Español Universitario.
8 Note: The Second Spanish Republic refers to the government of Spain between 1931, when King Alfonso XIII abdicated the throne, and 1939, when Franco’s Nationals won the Civil War and assumed control of Spain. Primo de Rivera’s Falange was a party that he created during this period, and although it slowly gained membership, it never garnered majority support.
9 Note: In Spanish, Federación Universitario Escolar. The term “Republican” refers to the Republican faction, a collection of political parties and organizations who supported the Second Spanish Republic. The Republicans would lose the Spanish Civil War to Franco’s Nationals.
But once Franco came into power, he adopted the syndicate, making slight changes to its statutes in 1943 to better fit his regime’s program. These changes included making participation in the SEU obligatory, which meant that to be a student in Spain was to be a member of the SEU. Franco’s version of the SEU, according to his regime, was supposed to benefit students. According to the first article of the SEU’s statutes from 1937, two of the SEU’s primary functions were to “create, maintain, and promote mutual services that assisted students and protected their rights, improving their social status within the university,” and to “make education affordable to all qualified Spaniards.” These seem like positive efforts on behalf of the government to improve student life. Surely students would not be opposed to a system that sought to improve their rights and provide financial assistance. But the SEU was deeply contradictory, and its overall goal was not to protect the rights of students, but to protect the longevity of the National Movement. The same article of the official SEU statutes that professed a concern for student rights also stated that the syndicate’s purposes were to extol “professional intellectualism within a deeply Catholic and Spanish framework” and to foment “the syndicalist spirit amongst students.” It also deemed the SEU as the “sole and obligatory syndicate” of education. The SEU’s obligatory quality and single ideology seemed to be more of a violator of student rights than a protector because students had no choice but to

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10 “Estatutos del Sindicato Español Universitario de Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las J.O.N.S,” 1937, 1-2. Original quotes: “Crear, mantener y promover servicios mutuales y de asistencia y protección a los derechos estudianîles, mejorando su condición social dentro de las normas univeristarias,” and “Hacer asequible la enseñanza a todo español capacitado.”


adhere to the syndicate’s rules. Because the Franco regime effectively chose what Spanish university students learned, academic alternatives to the SEU’s rigid curriculum did not exist. The SEU’s stated goal of fostering intellectualism amongst its students could never succeed so long as the government allowed only one ideology.

The SEU’s contradictions became even more institutionalized in 1943 when Franco issued the University Organization Law (LOU), which outlined his changes to the SEU that adapted the syndicate to his regime.\textsuperscript{13} The law integrated the SEU with the Falange by making the Falangist movement the fundamental doctrine of the university system. Its goal was to group all university students together under one organization and to fuse the ideology of National Movement with student activities and institutions.

Students did not learn about liberal philosophers or literature in their classes, and the SEU censored much of the curriculum. The SEU even designed certain courses, especially those with political subject matter, so that they would agree with the Falangist doctrine. The LOU went so far as to specifically enumerate the courses that each department could offer.\textsuperscript{14} This strict educational code did not allow for much flexibility, as breaching the law meant harsh disciplinary action.

Much of the stifling nature of the SEU and the LOU came from professors who Franco’s government appointed. The government expected professors and administrators to uphold its laws and to indoctrinate rather than educate students. Article 33 of the LOU said that the primary role of professors was to spread the spirit of the FET and the JONS, and to strictly follow the hierarchy of appointed members of the SEU. The head of the

\textsuperscript{13} Note: In Spanish, the law was called “Ley de ordenación universitaria.”

\textsuperscript{14} “Ley de ordenación universitaria,” in Jaraneros y alboratadores… ed. Roberta Mesa, 359-360.
SEU appointed the chiefs of each university district, who in turn appointed the rectors of
each university, who then appointed the deans and professors of the departments.\textsuperscript{15}
Professors who spoke freely and criticized government policies faced dismissal. In 1956
most of the university professors in Spain were associated with the National Movement.
In fact, as early as 1944, five years after Franco had won the Civil War, \textit{Les Temps
Modernes}, in Paris had explained that half of all the professors at the University of
Madrid had been hired since the end of the Civil War.\textsuperscript{16} This meant that the remainder
were either comfortable with the Falangist doctrine prior to the Civil War, or that they
modified their views to fit with the movement. Falangist professors saturated the
university system in 1956, and contributed to student discontent. In the Manifesto, the
students complained that this system provided only a mediocre education.

The dim academic perspective was also related to the emphasis on the Catholic
faith in Francoist society. The third article of the LOU outlined the fundamental role of
Catholicism in education. It said that Catholic sentiment must be the inspiration for
university education, as is the tradition with Spanish universities, and must accommodate
its teachings to the dogma and morals of Catholicism and the canonical law.\textsuperscript{17} It is
understandable that students would be unhappy under a system for which the Catholic
dogma formed the basis for education across the entire country. A theistic foundation for
education seriously compromises many academic fields, especially those in the sciences,
as conservative religion and science are often incompatible. If, for example, a science

\textsuperscript{15} “Ley de ordenación universitaria,” in \textit{Jaraneros y alboratadores}… ed. Roberta Mesa,
367-368.
\textsuperscript{16} Ana Alcalá, “Le mouvement étudiant dans L’Espagne de Franco,” in \textit{Les Temps
\textsuperscript{17} “Ley de ordenación universitaria,” in \textit{Jaraneros y alboratadores}… ed. Roberta Mesa,
359.
student subscribed to the ideas of Darwinian evolution, he or she would have been out of place studying in a setting where the professors took the Catholic notion of creationism as fact.

The rigidity of the SEU caused significantly negative consequences for Spanish students. The most debilitating problem was that university graduates had very little opportunity to use their degrees. According to the LOU, the Franco government’s educational code and mission statement issued in 1943, one of the goals of the university was to prepare students for administrative jobs, technical professions, teaching positions, and scientific occupations. But many students earned degrees in other fields that did not offer many jobs. Because the authoritarian and syndicalist state often controlled the quantity of and types of jobs that could legally exist, students who earned degrees in faculties like law, philosophy, politics, and other humanities experienced great difficulty in finding employment after they graduated. The government placed graduates in jobs within the state bureaucracy, so there were more positions available for administrative and technical jobs. Given the amount of students graduating from college, there was a shortage of available positions, and students often waited years for the government to place them. In this time between graduation and job placement, graduates lived marginally and relied on their parents for financial support. In a letter to the clandestine newspaper *Amistad* in 1956, a student at the University of Oviedo tells the story of his friend who graduated with a degree in veterinary medicine and waited two years before the municipal veterinarian inspector (a government official) gave him a job. The Oviedo student jokes that if it were not for the financial support of the veterinarian’s father, his

friend would have had more than enough time to die of starvation with a degree that had
not even afforded him a pack of cigarettes.

The second consequence of the problem of the lack of positions in Spain was that
thousands of university graduates emigrated to France, the United States, and Mexico,
where they could find jobs that corresponded to their degrees. In the Manifesto, the
writers called these voluntarily exiled Spaniards some of the country’s best graduates.
Even though part of the mission statement in the University Organization Law of 1943
was to produce graduates who could contribute to developing the Spanish economy, the
economy had stagnated.19 The student protesters felt trapped in their country and were
angry that their futures were bleak.

Even though the SEU claimed one of its goals was to make university education
affordable, the reality was that university education was hardly accessible to the average
Spaniard. The Manifesto argued that tuition was too high, and so were the costs of
dormitory housing, textbooks, and health insurance, which placed a large financial
burden on the families of the students. One New York Times article from 1959 said that
up to 95 percent of the 17 to 23-year-old university students in Spain came from the
social elite.20 But given the Manifesto’s call for affordability, it appears that even the
wealthy struggled to pay for university costs. The fact that most students were from the
same economic class also speaks to the lack of diversity within the university system.

Miguel Ángel Ruiz Carnicer, in his chapter on universities during the Franco era,
aptyly characterizes the LOU as totalitarian, but casts doubt on the law’s impact by

19 “Ley de ordenación universitaria,” in Jaraneros y alboratadores… ed. Roberta Mesa,
359.
20 Benjamin Welles, “Spain’s Students Are Angry Young Men,” New York Times,
October 11, 1959, 47.
arguing that government never fully enforced the law.\textsuperscript{21} He says that government control
over the university existed because of the flooding of the teaching staff with pro-Franco
ideologues, the strict hierarchy that dominated student life, and the presence of the
SEU—not because of the LOU.\textsuperscript{22} But this analysis is not entirely accurate. Even though
these things may have existed before the LOU, the law crystallized and unified these
elements of control into one official legal decree. The LOU explicitly called for pro-
Franco professors, promoted university hierarchy, and officially made the SEU
mandatory. By arguing that the government did not implement the LOU, Ruiz Carnicer
effectively contends that the law did not affect students. But the 1956 University of
Madrid protests, which came thirteen years after Franco issued the LOU, show that the
law had a significant effect on students because their Manifesto expressed grievances
with the policies of university control that the LOU legalized and institutionalized.

At the end of the Manifesto, the writers laid out specific demands for solutions
that they believed would solve the problems of the university. One such demand was the
call for the convocation of a representative student organization called the National
Student Congress.\textsuperscript{23} This organization would have had representatives from every
Spanish university, and those representatives would have been elected through free
elections, monitored by a body of professors. The elected representatives would have
acted as the voice of the student population in every university district, and would have
collaborated with the SEU to make rules and regulations that did not adversely affect the

\textsuperscript{21} Ruiz Carnicer, \textit{Universities Under Dictatorship}, 127.
\textsuperscript{22} Ruiz Carnicer, \textit{Universities Under Dictatorship}, 127.
\textsuperscript{23} Note: In Spanish, the proposed congress was called the “Congreso Nacional de
Estudiantes.” This Congress is not to be confused with the Congreso Universitario de
Escritores Jóvenes, to which I refer as the “Congreso.”
students. The Manifesto also called on the ministers to act with expediency so that the National Student Congress could form and develop quickly. The dissident students then mass-produced the Manifesto and distributed it throughout the departments of the University.

In their book about the Spanish student movement, Elena Hernández Sandoica, Miguel Ángel Ruiz Carnicer, and Marc Baldó Lacomba describe how, in 1954, the SEU, aware of its lack of support amongst students, began to attempt to improve its image. According to the authors, the SEU, through its various publications, emphasized its effectiveness in addressing student concerns and told students that protesting and starting their own organizations were unnecessary because the syndicate was committed to helping students. These attempts were obviously unsuccessful, as the formation of the Congreso de Escritores and the 1956 protests indicate, and the authors argue that the SEU’s failure was a result of the psychological maturity of students at the time. While it may be true that Spanish students in the 1950s were mature enough to see through the SEU’s empty promises, it seems that the syndicate’s failure to galvanize student support also came from its own ability to reconcile its policy with its action. In other words, the SEU outlawed student organizations, like the Congreso de Escritores, because it believed that these organizations sought to undermine the Falange. But in some cases, as is the case with the Congreso de Escritores, these student organizations were not absolutely incompatible with the SEU’s policy. As Dionisio Ridruejo points out in a 1956 letter to the government, “many young Falangists, Catholics, monarchists, etc. felt the same about

the Congreso as the [students who organized it]” which suggests that government support for the Congreso de Escritores would have satisfied the desires of even those students who supported the SEU.\textsuperscript{26} Clearly, the subversive character that the Congreso de Escritores eventually assumed contradicted the SEU’s exclusive and mandatory ideology, but Ridruejo’s letter suggests that the syndicate could have originally supported certain aspects of the Congreso de Escritores without contradicting its own mission, which would have likely decreased the student need for subversive action. Ridruejo writes that organizations like the Congreso de Escritores, whose ultimate goal was the free exchange of opinions and discussion, were “an absolute necessity” in a country so focused on violence, demagogy, messianism, and political corruption.\textsuperscript{27} And as Hernandez et al argue, the psychologically mature student body of the time recognized this need. But ultimately, the SEU was responsible for its negative image because by outlawing all organizations other than itself, it squandered what Ridruejo calls its best “opportunity to do something useful for university students.”\textsuperscript{28}

On February 7, 1956, students from the Law Department attempted to hold elections for their own student representatives, following the instructions of the Manifesto that the Congreso de Escritores students had distributed a week earlier. But the SEU soon heard about these elections, and ordered their termination. In response to the SEU’s cancellation of the elections, thousands of students began to protest in the streets.

\textsuperscript{26} Dionisio Ridruejo, \textit{Casi unas memorias: con fuego y con raíces} (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1976), 354. Original quote: “Por otra parte, muchos jóvenes falangistas, católicos, monárquicos, etc. sintieron por el Congreso la misma ilusión que los ‘elegidos.’”

\textsuperscript{27} Dionisio Ridruejo, \textit{Casi Unas Memorias}, 353. Original quote: “es una necesidad absoluta.”

surrounding the university.\textsuperscript{29} They had read and signed the Manifesto, and Gay’s
cancellation of the Law Department elections was the spark that ignited the public
demonstrations that continued for the next three days. The Manifesto was thus a
fundamental document in the development of the student movement, and it was effective
for various reasons. Firstly, it expressed student dissatisfaction with the regime in a
written document. This allowed the Congreso de Escritores students to mass-produce and
distribute their Manifesto, which would be impossible with a verbal complaint. Secondly,
the Manifesto compiled student grievances and included no references to oppositional
political organizations or specific people. This gave the Manifesto a certain air of
legitimacy because it appeared to represent the views of students in general, not just the
views of a biased group. And thirdly, the Manifesto was effective because it doubled as a
petition. This made it possible for large numbers of students to easily involve themselves
in a cause that only a few students initiated. Without the Manifesto, the 1956 University
of Madrid uprising would not have occurred.

\textsuperscript{29} Hernández et al, \textit{Estudiantes contra Franco}, 125-126.
Chapter 2

Laín and Liberalism: A Foundation For Dissidence

In his work on the history of the Franco era, Ramón Tamames argues that over the course of the early 1950s, Spain experienced a profound transition towards liberalism, and that this transition set the climate for the 1956 University of Madrid protests. He does not define what he means by “liberalism,” but it seems that the term signifies two related but distinct ideas. Firstly, liberalism refers to the gradual increase of politically moderate officials within Franco’s traditionally conservative administration. By the early 1950s, Franco appealed to foreign nations, especially the United States, to provide aid to the struggling Spanish economy. But ever since the Civil War, the international community had viewed Spain as fascist system similar to Hitler’s Germany and Mussolini’s Italy, and had even boycotted trade with Spain through a 1946 UN resolution. So, in order to convince foreign nations to give Spain aid, Franco began to

30 Ramón Tamames, La república, la era de Franco (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1973), 508. Note: This is the same Tamames helped organize the 1956 protests, but the book is not his personal memoir. It is a historical analysis of modern Spain, which includes a discussion of the protests for their historical significance. Only once, in a footnote, does he mention that he participated in the protests.
31 Note: The economic slump came from Franco’s autarky, an economic strategy based on self-sufficiency and isolation in which domestic industry and agriculture replaced foreign imports. Unfortunately for the Spanish people, the autarky failed, as Spanish agriculture and industry were not able to produce enough to feed the populace and maintain the economy.
32 Hamilton, Thomas J. Poland Prods U.N. to Isolate Franco. New York Times. 1946. Note: There is much debate as to whether Franco’s regime was fascist or authoritarian. Linz (1964), in his major article on totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, argues that the limited pluralism that existed in Franco’s government did not entail true fascism, and that the only true fascist systems were Mussolini’s Italy and Hitler’s Third Reich. Tranfaglia (1989) calls Franco a fascist, but also recognizes the ideological differences between Franco and Mussolini. Saz Campos (2004) argues that Franco’s regime was fascistized,
appoint officials who were not extremely conservative to government positions. The appointment most relevant to the 1956 University of Madrid protests was that of Joaquín Ruíz-Giménez as the Minister of Education in 1951. Ruíz-Giménez was a moderate who sought to “liberalize” the university by deemphasizing the Church and promoting intellectual diversity within the University, and was responsible for the appointment of Pedro Laín Entralgo as the rector of the University of Madrid. Laín proved to stray even farther from Franco’s conservatism when he began to support student arts and culture organizations outside of the SEU. His relationship with the student organizers of the 1956 protests was critical to the development of their radicalism.

Tamames’ use of the term “liberalism” also seems to refer to Spanish liberalism, which saw a revival in Spain in the 1950s. Liberalism in this sense was an intellectual movement and political doctrine that was completely incompatible with Franco’s strict regime. While the primary tenets of Franco’s National Movement were traditionalism, Catholicism, and authoritarianism, liberalism advocated for freedom of the individual and limited state intervention in social, economic, and cultural life. It also promoted social reform and change, championing openness towards new ideas and willingness to discard traditional values. Students increasingly identified with the liberal doctrine and its main proponents, especially José Ortega y Gasset.

meaning that certain sectors of his government were more fascist than others. Nevertheless, outside of Spain, most people considered Franco a fascist.


34 *Real Academia Española*, s.v. “Liberalismo.” Note: The Oxford English Dictionary’s definition is roughly the same but also includes that liberalism advocates for reform tending towards social equality and democracy.
Laín embodies the relationship between these two senses of liberalism. His political moderatism, which made him a good candidate for rector under Ruíz-Giménez, came from his adherence to the liberal doctrine. But Laín was not always a liberal. Born in 1908 in the province of Teruel, Laín joined the Nacionales during the Civil War and later, with Dionisio Ridruejo, founded a Falangist publication called Escorial in 1940. An intellectual at heart, Laín became a professor of the History of Medicine at the University of Madrid in 1942, and joined the Real Academia Española in 1953. When Ruíz-Giménez chose him for the job as rector, Laín was still a loyal to the National Movement, albeit a moderate, but by 1956, when the protests occurred, he began to experience a moral conflict with his political affiliation. In his autobiography, he writes that “the radical inability of the [Francoist] system to revise and exceed its original political, social, and religious agenda,” was clear to him, and that the “stubborn, arrogant, and boastful nature of the regime,” was what hindered this revision. He says that the conservatism of the regime “robbed [him] of [his] sense of self,” and that his “official collaboration with a system from which [he] felt so separated, pricked [him] morally.” Laín, who was originally loyal to Franco, began to stray from the regime.

It seems that his moral rift with the Franco administration drove him to support the causes of liberal students. Laín’s most direct connection to organization of the 1956

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36 Pedro Laín Entralgo, Descargo de conciencia (1930-1960) (Barcelona: Barral, 1976), 440-441. Original quote: “la radical incapacidad del sistema para revisar y rebasar sus originales propuestos político-sociales y político-religiosos; más aún, el empecinado, arrogante, jactancioso cultivo de esa incapacidad.”
37 Laín Entralgo, Descargo de conciencia, 440-441. Original quote: “me roba mi yo; la colaboración oficial con un sistema del cual, en mi intimidad, me siento tan separado, me pincha moralmente.”
University of Madrid protests was his patronage of the Congreso de Escritores. José Álvarez Cobelas, in his work on university opposition to Franco, writes about Laín’s role in the 1956 protests. Álvarez paints Laín as a victim of manipulation, arguing that the members of the Congreso de Escritores tricked the rector into supporting their organization by neglecting to inform him of their anti-Franco position. But this analysis of Laín’s role is incorrect. Laín was no fool—he was a philosopher, a scientist, and a critic of the church—and he had become increasingly opposed to the Franco regime since his appointment as rector. Laín’s moral conflict with his involvement with the regime weakens Álvarez’s argument. His relationship with the Congreso de Escritores was not the result of manipulation—it was more of a manifestation of his growing disillusionment with the Francoist system.

An investigation of the foundation of the Congreso de Escritores further contradicts Álvarez’s position. In 1954, Ramón Tamames and Enrique Múgica, among others, proposed the establishment of a poetry discussion group called *Encounters Between Poetry and the University*. They went to Laín for approval, and he did not object to the group’s activities. He had already gained a reputation for supporting the liberal activities of students after he allowed for a small student protest against the British occupation of Gibraltar earlier in the year. The poetry discussion group grew into the Congreso de Escritores, for which the members went again to Laín for approval. Julián Marcos Martínez, another founding member of the Congreso de Escritores, indicated in

39 Note: In Spanish, this organization was called “Encuentros entre la poesía y la Universidad.” From this point onwards, I will refer to this organization as “Encuentros.”
40 Lizcano, *La generación del 56*, 95.
his police interrogation that the Congreso de Escritores “sought the most help possible from certain people whose collaboration [with the Congreso] would favor and strengthen the Congreso,” and that Enrique Múgica often met with such people to garner support.41 In one such meeting, Múgica went to Laín, who, according to Marcos, “not only favored the Congreso’s goals, but also gave a donation, through Múgica, of then thousand pesetas…which came from the funds of the University…”42 Laín allocated funds for a new student organization even though the SEU was the only student organization that could legally exist. This was undoubtedly illegal, and Laín was fully aware of this fact. He calls his support of the Congreso de Escritores “a good test to see whether or not the SEU was capable of adapting … to modern times.”43 Laín’s support of the Congreso de Escritores was not coincidental, accidental, or the result of manipulation as Álvarez maintains. Laín consistently allowed for and actively supported liberal student organizations, with known communist sympathizers like Múgica and Tamames, to operate, even though he was supposed to be a functionary of the Franco government.44

Later, when the Congreso de Escritores members began to distribute their Manifesto, they went, for a third time, to Laín. According to the police interrogation of Ramón Tamames after he was arrested for protesting, the members of the Congreso de

42 “Acta-declaración de Julián Marcos Martínez,” in Jaraneros y alboratadores, ed. Roberto Mesa, 221. Original quote: “quien no solamente favorecía los fines de tal Congreso, sino que entregó un donativo por conducto de Múgica de diez mil pesetas… que este donativo fue de los fondos de la Universidad.”
43 Laín, Descargo de conciencia, 418. Original quote: “Buena prueba para saber si el SEU era o no era capaz de adaptarse con inteligencia y flexibilidad a tan minuscule, pero tan expresivo ‘signo del tiempo.’”
44 “Nota informativa sobre grupos activos de comunistas y institucionalistas en la Universidad de Madrid,” in Jaraneros y alboratadores, ed. Roberto Mesa, 30-35.
Escritores went to Laín’s office with a copy of their Manifesto and a sheet full of signatures for his approval. Laín read the document and suggested that the students give copies to the deans of the various university departments.\textsuperscript{45} The Manifesto was an explicitly oppositional document as it called for serious university reforms and harshly criticized Franco’s control over higher education. How, then, could Laín have been unaware of the Congreso de Escritores’ subversive motives, as Álvarez suggests? This type of dissidence—one where a formerly loyal member of the regime actively allowed others to take liberal action—shows how liberal sentiment pervaded the conservative homogeneity of 1950s and provided a basis for significant subversive activity.

To fully understand the pervasion of liberalism in the 1950s, which applied to both Laín and his students at the University of Madrid, one must examine the influence of José Ortega y Gasset, Spain’s most important purveyor of liberalism. When Ortega died on October 18, 1955, he became a symbol of dissidence among students. Two days after his state-held funeral, a large group of students from the University of Madrid held their own memorial service for the philosopher. Members of the Congreso de Escritores including Enrique Múgica and Ramón Tamames organized the memorial service, which attracted thousands of students. At the service, the organizers read passages from Ortega’s works and recited their own speeches about the great loss of their new liberal hero. Many attendees held wreaths of flowers and signs that read “Ortega. Liberal Spanish philosopher.”\textsuperscript{46} This reaction from the students is particularly noteworthy because Ortega had been relatively inactive since 1946, when he returned to Spain after a

\textsuperscript{45} “Acta-declaración de Ramón Tamames Gómez,” in Jaraneros y alboratadores, ed. Roberto Mesa, 177.

period of exile.\(^{47}\) He was likely afraid of castigation by the Franco regime for his liberal ideologies, and thus did not produce much material in the last ten years of his life. This means that he was not a contemporary of the students that supported him and read his material. Nor was Ortega openly critical of Franco in his public life or academic work. It seems that it was not, then, the works that he produced in the 1950s that inspired a sense of civil disobedience amongst students, but his death, which caused people to remember what he stood for. At the memorial service, one of the members of the Congress, Julio Diamante, cried out in a moment of silence: “It’s about time that the old man did something!” referencing Ortega’s long period of inactivity.\(^{48}\) Ortega thus became a symbol of dissidence even though he was not a dissident at the time of his death.

Liberalism appealed to people who felt oppressed by Franco’s dictatorship because it proposed a system that would give them rights and freedoms that they did not receive from the Franco regime. For this reason, liberalism was a fundamentally oppositional doctrine.

And while Ortega was more of a symbol for the students than a teacher, his philosophies directly influence Laín’s views. Ortega’s influence on Laín is especially evident in an essay that the rector wrote two months before the 1956 University of Madrid protests. The essay, circulated around the SEU and the Falange, contains Laín’s analysis of the youth of the day, and attempted to explain why they seemed restless and worried. In the essay, Laín highlights the fundamental difference between the student mass and the intellectual student minority. He writes that the student mass was

\(^{47}\) Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes*, 84.
\(^{48}\) Lizcano, *La generación del 56*, 121. Original quote: “Ya era hora que el viejo sirviera para algo.”
“unsatisfactory in terms of their intellectual desires and activities,” and that their primary concern was not intellectualism, but “real participation in public life, and the opening of the professional horizon.”\footnote{Pedro Laín Entralgo, “Sobre la situación espiritual de la juventud española,” in Jaraneros y alboratadores, ed. Roberto Mesa, 46. Original quote: “La masa de nuestros estudiantes universitarios, insatisfactoria en cuanto a sus apetencias y actividades intelectuales…participación real en la vida pública y apertura del horizonte profesional.”} This description of the mass, or the majority, of Spanish students paints them as politically inactive and concerned only with the basic interests of a university student. Laín describes the minority of university students as “deeply and diversely worried,” and that their concern was “intellectual, political, social and religious, and demanding, petulant and somewhat messianic in its regard.”\footnote{Pedro Laín Entralgo, “Sobre la situación espiritual de la juventud española,” 47. Original quote: “la minoría…hállase, sin duda, profunda y diversamente inquieta. Tal inquietud es intelectual, política, social y religiosa, por lo que toca a su contenido, y exigente, petulante y un poco mesiánica en lo que a su forma atañe.”} Laín’s assessment of the student minority is that they were intellectually concerned and restless, and that they demanded intellectual, political, and social justice, which is the opposite of his description of the student mass. He calls minority somewhat “messianic” because they held the “belief that they and only they are the ones who have been called to, in the future, solve all of the problems that exist today in our nation.”\footnote{Pedro Laín Entralgo, “Sobre la situación espiritual de la juventud española,” 48. Original quote: “solo ella es la llamada a resolver en el futuro todos los problemas que hoy descubre en la vida nacional.”} It seems then that the members of this student minority were particularly well equipped to become radicals, unlike the mass. Laín’s analysis of Spanish youth is a direct reflection of Ortega’s philosophies. In his most famous work, Revolt of the Masses, Ortega also distinguished between the mass and the minority, but his distinction applies to people in general, not just students. He wrote, “Society is always a dynamic unity of two component factors:
minorities and masses. The minorities are individuals or groups of individuals which are specially qualified. The mass is the assemblage of persons not specially qualified,” which is essentially what Laín said about Spanish students.\(^{52}\) In order for social change to occur, argues Ortega, first the intellectual minority must rupture the status quo, and then the mass must follow suit. It seems that the student organizers of the protests occupied the intellectual minority, and the rest of the students who signed the Manifesto’s petition occupied the mass. As a supporter of the Congreso de Escritores, which was an intellectually motivated organization, Laín backed the intellectual student minority about which he writes in his essay, thus encouraging their instigation of social change. It appears that Ortega’s concept of the minority vs. mass affected Laín’s policy towards his students, and consequently the 1956 University of Madrid protests.

The connection between Ortega’s theories and the 1956 University of Madrid protests is especially evident with the examination of Ortega’s theory of generations. In the early 20\(^{th}\) century, when Ortega was active, Spain faced a cultural identity crisis—it had lost the last colonies of its once vast empire to the United States and it lagged behind the rest of Western Europe in modernization, science, and intellectualism. Once a widely respected and influential society, Spain had become insignificant and inferior to the new powers of Western Europe. According to Robert Wohl in *The Generation of 1914*, Ortega was deeply troubled by the Spanish cultural decline and argued that Spanish revitalization required serious social change through the reemergence of intellectualism and the

cultivation of a generation of young educated elites to initiate social reform.\(^{53}\) Using his theory of generations, which said that older generations directly affect the ideals of the younger generations through education (or lack of education), Ortega explained that Spain’s substandard cultural status meant that the previous generation had not stressed the importance of intellectualism and science.\(^{54}\) According to Ortega, intellectualism, or development of the mind, came from the consideration of multiple intellectual systems or academic diversity. And because he believed that social reform required a reemergence of intellectualism, it became his generation’s duty to repair the mistake of his predecessors and educate their subsequent generations with various intellectual systems to cultivate their brains and thoughts.\(^{55}\)

A juxtaposition of Ortega’s generation theory with the 1956 University of Madrid protests produces considerable overlap. The generation of 1956 (Pablo Lizcano’s name for the University of Madrid protestors) lacked effective older teachers and intellectuals. The generation that came before them subscribed to the narrow academic perspective of the monolithic Franco regime and the SEU, and thus did not emphasize various intellectual systems in its education of the younger generations. In the face of the SEU’s single school of thought, young people began to demand reform by publically demonstrating. These attempts at social change came from a group of young, educated elites, just as Ortega had encouraged. An intellectual revival in the form of poetry inspired and fueled the young generation’s grievances with the dictatorship that denied

them freedom of expression and intervened in their academic, cultural, political, and personal lives. According to Wohl, Ortega believed that liberalism as an idea would not be enough to produce social change, but its conversion into a political program would.\textsuperscript{56} This conversion, a form of political action, applies to the 1956 protests because the students converted their anti-Franco ideas into political activism. It seems that while the 1956 University of Madrid protesters came from various political parties (some communist, some socialist, some Falangist, some just students), they were all proponents and operators, consciously or not, of Ortega’s liberalism. Thus, it appears that the student opposition movement is an extension of Ortega’s liberalism. Wohl’s work not only analyzes Ortega’s early 20\textsuperscript{th} century liberalism, but it also unintentionally describes the circumstances of the origins of the Spanish student movement.

Mangini argues that Ruíz-Giménez’s team, which included Laín, was not able to carry its intended liberalization of the University.\textsuperscript{57} But Laín’s support for liberal student organizations, most notably the Congreso de Escritores, shows that Laín was, in fact, able to inject some sense of liberalism into his students. Through Francoist Spain was a deeply religious, conservative, and slow-moving society that stifled alternative thought, intellectual progress, and personal freedoms. Liberalism’s goal, thus, was to oppose this stasis with quickly moving societal change, and the 1956 University of Madrid protests are an example of this social change.

\textsuperscript{56} Wohl, \textit{The Generation of 1914}, 129.
\textsuperscript{57} Mangini, \textit{Rojos y rebeldes}, 55.
Chapter 3

Ridruejo and Poetry: Expression as Dissidence

In her article in *Les Temps Modernes*, Ana Alcala argues that the radicalization of students in the 1950s was the result of an increased focus on political and social discussion in the form symposiums and publications within the university.\(^{58}\) It is true students became increasingly socially and politically aware in the 1950s, but Alcala overlooks the role of poetry as a catalyst of this political attitude and resulting dissent in the university. In 1953, the students who would eventually organize the 1956 University of Madrid protests created Encuentros, the poetry discussion group mentioned in the previous chapter. This group invited oppositional poets to the university to recite their poems. Its members were poetry writers and readers who understood art as a way to express radical, anti-Franco political views and professional radical poets sought out these students as audiences for their work. Many scholars also cite the socioeconomic status, the radical family history, and the liberal tendencies of the student organizers of the 1956 protests as the reasons for why they rebelled. But they overlook the fact that these students were artists and intellectual students interested in anti-Franco poetry, and this interest contributed to their rebellious activity. This is not to say that family history and economic status had nothing to do with the students’ willingness to take risks. But it seems that poetry was an equally important factor in inspiring radicalism.

Young poets strengthened the development of the Spanish student movement. In a 1956 interview with the Paris-based communist magazine *España*, famed exiled Spanish poet Rafael Alberti claims that “poets have always been at the forefront of all liberating

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\(^{58}\) Alcala, “Le mouvement étudiant dans L’Espagne de Franco,” 126.
movements.” In the same interview, Alberti also speaks specifically of the role of the young and called upon “the young poets, the students, and the intellectuals to let themselves be carried away by their interest [in defeating Franco], the only way that it will be possible for wounded Spain to one day fight back.” The events of the February 1956 at the University of Madrid support Alberti’s statements because many of the organizers of the 1956 University protests viewed themselves as poets. In a 1956 article by exiled Spanish poet Gabriel García Narezo in the clandestine publication España Popular, the author idealizes student and young poets for their ability to express the pain of the entire society and channel “through underground streams the passion and drama” of the times. So, through poetry, young intellectuals could subtly, combatively, and clandestinely express their radical political views.

A crucial figure, both in exposing the student leaders of Encuentros to poetry and helping them organize, was Dionisio Ridruejo. Born in 1912 in the province of Castilla y León, Ridruejo was a poet and political figure associated with both Primo de Rivera and Franco. Originally attracted to the ideas of Primo de Rivera’s Falange, which included syndicalism as an alternative to capitalism and state socialism, Ridruejo helped write the official Falangist hymn, Cara al Sol, in 1935. In 1938, Franco named Ridruejo the Minister of Propaganda for the Nationalist side of the Civil War, and for the

59 “Tres respuestas y un mensaje de Rafael Alberti,” España, April 5, 1956, 1. Original quote: “Los poetas han sido siempre la avanzada de todos los movimientos liberadores.”
60 “Tres respuestas y un mensaje de Rafael Alberti,” España, April 5, 1956, 1. Original quote: “Yo pido a los jóvenes poetas, a los estudiantes, a los intelectuales, que se dejen arrastrar por su interés superior, el único que hará posible que la España peregrina vuelva un día a latir junto a ellos en el corazón de nuestro patria.”
61 Gabriel García Narezo, “Sobre poesía española de hoy,” España Popular, February 24, 1956, 2. Original quote: “Sirve para canalizar, a lo largo de cauces subterráneos, la passion que nace ante el drama que rodea al poeta en España.”
Movement that continued under Franco’s control after Primo de Rivera’s death in 1936.\textsuperscript{62} Ridruejo held this post until 1940, when he voluntarily decided to leave. As Minister of Propaganda, Ridruejo worked closely with the Minister of the Press, José Antonio Giménez Arnau, to organize the art, film, and theatre worlds into something that would promote the tenets of the Franco’s movement. According to Ridruejo, he believed that the Falangist idea of national syndicalism, by which institutions like the university took on some of the roles of the government, could be applied to the arts. Thus, instead of placing the responsibility of propaganda on the government, Ridruejo proposed an arts syndicate that would produce pro-Falangist propagandist material. But eventually, Ridruejo tired of Franco’s vision and repudiated the violence and militarism associated with Franco’s regime, and he resigned his post. In 1942, Ridruejo traveled to Russia and Germany to fight with the División Azul, a Spanish military unit that helped the axis powers during the Second World War. His time in the military inspired him further to criticize the violent Francoist system. Upon his return from Russia, Ridruejo wrote a card directly to Franco in which he expressed why he no longer supported the regime. He writes, “Everything has gone to the worst extremes. Before, we lived in a disorganized state, but now the sincere Falangist has lost the hope that seemed to have existed only months ago…To continue living silently and in conformity as a functionary of the Regime is an act of hypocrisy.”\textsuperscript{63} Ridruejo felt that as a true follower of Primo de Rivera’s Falange, he could not support Franco, who had betrayed the Falange.

\textsuperscript{62} Ridruejo, \textit{Casi Unas Memorias}, 129.

\textsuperscript{63} Ridruejo, \textit{Casi Unas Memorias}, 237. Original quote: “Todo ha ido llegando a los peores extremos. Vivíamos antes en estado de mal arreglo, pero ahora no parece quedar ante el falangista sincero el margen de esperanza que hace meses parecía
Years later after his rift Franco’s regime, Ridruejo was a well-known poet, and became involved with a group of University of Madrid students interested in politics and poetry. He wrote in his memoir: “Starting in 1954 I was in contact with groups of university students…I helped one of these groups to work within the University to organize and promote a type of association of a political and intellectual nature.” This group of students was Encuentros, which began in 1953. Initially, Ridruejo’s involvement with these students was his participation in the Encuentros meetings. He was both well connected in the poetry world and a friend of the student leaders of the Encuentros, and thus acted as a liaison between the professional poets and the students. An intelligence report carried out by Franco’s security forces in 1955 described the activities of the members of Encuentros. The report describes how the group, whose “brain” was Enrique Múgica, “successfully organized the ‘Encuentros entre la Poesía y la Universidad,’ during which the best Spanish poets came to the classrooms [of the University].” The poets who recited their works included Ridruejo and members of the “social poetry” movement like José Hierro, Gabriel Celaya, Vicente Aleixandre, and Blas de Otero. Students also recited the works of dead or exiled Spanish communist poets, Miguel Hernández and Rafael Alberti, and the Chilean communist poet, Pablo Neruda. Poets

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64 Ridruejo, Casi unas memorias, 335. Original quote: “Desde el mismo año 1954 venía teniendo contactos con grupos de jóvenes, universitarios en su mayoría…Ayudé a uno de estos grupos a trabajar en la Universidad organizando actos intencionados y tratando de promover alguna asociación de doble filo, intelectual y político.”
65 “Nota informativa sobre grupos activos de comunistas y institucionalistas...” in Jaraneros y alboratadores, ed. Roberto Mesa, 31. Original quote: “organizó con positivo éxito los ‘Encuentros entre la Poesía y la Universidad,’ en el curso de los cuales pasaron por las aulas los mejores poetas españoles.”
66 Lizcano, La generación del 56, 41.
were significant intellectuals of their time, and their association with Múgica and his
group worried the security forces. The security department’s report says: “Múgica’s
success [in creating the Encuentros], in the face of SEU’s hierarchy, linked him to very
important people, despite the fact that he was only a fourth-year law student.”67 The poets
who opposed the Franco regime found themselves in the students, who, unlike most
people in Spain at that time, were willing to take risks to express their ideals. They chose
to perform for the writers and poets rather than for engineering or medical students
because the humanists and potential lawyers seem to have had the ability to convert their
anti-Franco sentiments into subversive art or action. As poets, their goal was to confront
the realities of their society, and all of these poets were subversive. In a 1954 article in
the clandestine publication España Popular, the author wrote about political energy of
the Encuentros after the readings ended: “the Congress turned into a pro-liberty
demonstration. Various young men stood up, protesting against the Francoist censorship
that impedes Spain,” which speaks to the oppositional function of the symposium.68 It
seems that Encuentros was not just a forum to discuss poetry as an art form—it was
politically oriented and rebellious.

Encuentros is a major example of what Pedro Laín Entralgo, in his memoir, calls
a poetry congress. Laín cites Dionioso Ridruejo as the inventor of poetry congresses and
emphasizes their importance as liberal and radical organizations. Laín gave students

67 “Nota informativa sobre grupos activos de comunistas y institucionalistas...” in
Mújica ante la jerarquía del SEU a la vez que lo relacionó con personas de mayor
relevancia, a pesar de ser un alumno de 4 curso de Derecho.”
estudiantes transformaron en una manifestación pro libertad. Varios muchachos se
levantaron protestando contra la censura franquista que impide que en España.”
permission to organize their poetry congresses, and because he was a high-ranking member of the SEU’s hierarchy, the organization of such congresses was not illegal. He explains that the ultimate purpose of a poetry congress was “that Spanish poets meet each other and talk freely amongst themselves. Only good… could be derived from free communication between the operators of the most selfless and least professional occupation.” By calling poetry the “least professional” occupation, Lain does not mean that poets lacked seriousness or expertise. He means that poets wrote not for personal aggrandizement, but for the voiceless, whom we might conclude incorporated most of the people of Spain, or the non-intellectual mass. Thus, as champions of the people and critics of the oppressive government, the poets involved in the congresses were inherently political. And because these political poets involved themselves in poetry congresses, the congresses were also inherently political. And Encuentros was a particularly oppositional poetry congress because of the subversive poets who participated in its forums.

The subversive nature of the poetry that the Encuentros students discussed during their meetings was a direct result of the Franco regime’s censorship policy. Censorship acted as the determining authority for what was legal art and what was subversive art. The Franco regime prohibited any work of art or literature that criticized the government and also the works of artists who associated with opposition parties, like the Spanish Communist Party, even if the content of the art was not explicitly subversive. And because SEU was a government organ, censorship existed extensively in the university system. Therefore, it was very difficult for students to find and read banned poetry and

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69 Lain, *Descargo de conciencia*, 431. Original quote: “Sólo bienes—para los poetras mismos, para todo el país—podían derivarse de la librea comunicación entre los operarios del más desinteresado y menos profesional de los oficios.”
literature, and possession of such material was in itself a subversive act. This means that because the Encuentros students read the works of censored poets like Neruda, Alberti, and Hernández, they were engaging in subversive activity.

What seems to be the most important aspect of censored poetry, in terms of its influence on the Congreso de Escritores students, was specifically that the poetry was illegal. Though it may be true that the students were interested in the actual content of the poetry, they were also attracted to the work of certain poets because the government had banned it. After his arrest, Congreso de Escritores co-founder Julián Marcos told Franco’s security forces that the SEU’s strict curriculum, which obviously did not include the works of censored poets, pushed students to seek out this illegal poetry out of curiosity. Marcos says in his interrogation: “there exist complex writings that … are inadequately explained [by professors] or in some cases censored, which causes students study them simply because they are prohibited…” 70 In the interrogation, Marcos said that the regime’s censorship of Pablo Neruda, Rafael Alberti, Antonio Machado, Louis Aragon, and Miguel Hernández actually heightened his interest in those poets, and that this interest undoubtedly influenced his formation into a radical student. Ridruejo echoed this sentiment in a letter he wrote to the FET and the JONS after his arrest in 1956. He writes that the youth had developed the “habit of peering through the keyhole of censorship,” which meant that, to them, “only the forbidden counted, and everything that

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alluded to the tedious official dogma was boring.”

Marcos also explains that censorship forced students to read subversive poetry in private and resulted in a lack of freedom to have logical discussions with professors. Thus, it seems that Marcos and his cohorts organized both the Encuentros and the Congreso de Escritores as a response to this lack of a forum in which they could discuss their ideas about censored poetry. And because the Congreso de Escritores was responsible for the Manifesto that instigated the February 1956 protests, it appears that poetry’s illegal status had a role in the early phases of the student movement.

It is important to note that Franco regime had not banned the works of most of the contemporary poets who recited at the Encuentros, as opposed to poems by the older, more established Communist poets like Neruda, Alberti, etc. But this is not to say that these non-censored poets were not subversive, or that censorship did not affect them. In fact, the poetry movement that they belonged to, the wave of “social poetry,” developed as a way for poets to subtly criticize the regime without using explicitly anti-Franco language, thus avoiding censors. John Butt, in his work on literature in modern Spain, explains how social poets used colloquial language, vague imagery, and general themes that did not overtly critique the government, like love and work. They used no incendiary or overly poetic language and thus did not suffer from censorship. But this stylistic effort came with a cost: because the social poets avoided much of the traditional

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71 Ridruejo, Casi unas memorias, 348. Original quote: “el hábito de mirar por el ojo de la cerradura…resultará que solo lo prohibido es lo que vale, mientras que todo lo aludido por el prolijo dogma oficial no es más que material de hastío.”


lyrical qualities of poetry (verbosity, high diction, detailed metaphor, vivid imagery, etc),
their poetry’s artistic value suffered. Eleanor Wright, in her book about anti-Franco
poetry, goes so far as to deem much of social poetry as “mediocre” in an artistic sense.\textsuperscript{74}
Butt calls the movement more “anti-poetry” than poetry because it did not employ the
normal poetic procedures.\textsuperscript{75}

But the fact that social poetry movement did not produce high-quality art was not
a primary concern of the Encuentros students. The students invited these social poets to
their politically oriented poetry symposiums because, beneath the mediocre artistry, their
poems criticized Franco. The critique of the regime was very implicit and came from,
ironically, an intentional avoidance of political commitment in the language of the
poetry.\textsuperscript{76} Poets like José Hierro and Vicente Aleixandre wrote objectively about the
reality of Francoist Spain—a reality that was undeniably dismal for most Spaniards as a
result of Franco’s rule—without the use of overtly political imagery and language. This
neutral language allowed social poets to not appear propagandistic and biased, which
made their poems about the miserable Spanish standard of life seem more truthful. Thus,
social poetry subtly criticized Franco because it portrayed an “objectively” unfavorable
view of the Spanish situation for which his regime was responsible. It seems that
Franco’s censorship worked against itself by prompting the development of a poetic style
whose subversive nature was difficult to detect.

Wright wrote extensively about poetry as dissidence in the 1950s. She explained
how “social poetry” reflected the anguish and frustration of the intellectuals of the

\textsuperscript{75} Butt, \textit{Writers and Politics in Modern Spain}, 40.
\textsuperscript{76} Wright, \textit{The Poetry of Protest Under Franco}, 169.
decade, and thus was poetry of social protest.\textsuperscript{77} This seems appropriate because the poetry’s purpose was to reveal the ills of Spanish society. But what effect did this form of poetry actually have? Most Spaniards did not read poetry, let alone subversive poetry, and those who did read non-conformist works likely sought out these materials because of their own anti-Franco position. Wright continually labeled this poetry as a form of protest, but it seems unlikely that poems themselves, no matter how oppositional, could actually destabilize a dictatorship. Wright is correct in her assertion that protest poetry was ultimately critical of the government, but she should have also discussed its importance in inspiring physical, public protests like the 1956 University of Madrid demonstrations. In this sense, poetry was effective in more than just criticizing the government—the 1956 student protests prompted Franco to fire important members of his government, and the participation of thousands of students quantified and confirmed society’s discontent with the regime. Butt argues that social poetry fell out of favor because its audience was not large enough to directly affect the political situation.\textsuperscript{78} But the consequences of the 1956 protests refute this position. Even though its audience was small, the poetry of the time was significant not only because it expressed the intellectual opposition to the government, but also because it inspired actual political action with undeniable results.

The crucial intermediary between the Encuentros and the physical protests of 1956 was the Congreso de Escritores, with which Ridruejo was also intimately involved. Ridruejo writes in his memoir: “It was I who suggested to the students [of the Encuentros] the advantage of finding a medium in which university students could

\textsuperscript{77} Wright, \textit{The Poetry of Protest Under Franco}, 145.
\textsuperscript{78} Butt, \textit{Writers and Politics in Modern Spain}, 47.
exchange their ideas with some comfort…and from my reasoning came the birth of the “Congreso de Escritores Jóvenes.” The Congreso de Escritores was more radical of an organization than the Encuentros (even though they had essentially the same members) because the Congreso produced a publication. In the Encuentros symposiums, students listened to and discussed existing anti-Franco poetry, which was a subversive act. But with the Congreso de Escritores’ newsletter, which featured articles about poetry, theater, film, and the general state of Spanish culture, the students were creating new subversive material and distributing it to other students. The same report by the security forces that detailed the activities of Encuentros says that the Congreso de Escritores’ newsletter had a “troublingly accusatory tinge,” which suggests its subversive quality. In Pablo Lizcano’s book about the 1956 protests, he argues that the Congreso de Escritores newsletter was important because it defended freedom of thought and emphasized the necessary political commitment of all literary and artistic endeavors. But the newsletter was also important because it furthered the radical formation of the Congreso de Escritores students.

Ridruejo, a poet and publisher, provided the inspiration for the Congreso de Escritores and its publication. But his most important and direct influence on the 1956 protests came from his role in the writing of the Manifesto. At the end of January 1956, Ridruejo met with various students from the Congreso de Escritores in a café to write

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79 Ridruejo, Casi unas memorias, 353-354. Original quote: “Fui yo que surgirío a estos muchachos…la conveniencia de encontrar un medio para que los jóvenes universitarios intercambiasen sus ideas con alguna comodidad…De estas razones mías nació en realidad el proyecto de un ‘Congreso de Escritores Universitarios.’”


81 Lizcano, La generación del 56, 118.
their petition. According to the 1956 interrogation report of Miguel Sánchez Mazas, all of the students “read, commented on, edited, and substantially transformed [the document]…but the principal authors were Dionisio Ridruejo, Enrique Múgica, Javier Pradera, Ramón Tamames,” and Sánchez Mazas himself. As one of the primary authors of the Manifesto, Ridruejo’s connection to the 1956 protests was crucial because the distribution of the Manifesto on February 1 instigated the protests.

As a result of the protests, the police detained Ridruejo, and he remained in jail for a month and a half. During his time in jail, he wrote a poem called “Romance for the Imprisoned Students” in which he highlighted each of the seven students that went to jail for their coordination of the 1956 protests. The first four lines of the poem illustrate, with clever irony, Ridruejo’s transformation from Francoist to dissident: “Detained in prison / for illegal propaganda / or so says the judge, / a judge from a special Court.” Ridruejo was Franco’s former Minister of Propaganda and he wrote this poem from his prison cell, arrested for his engagement in illegal propaganda. The poem is also ironic because poetry itself seems to have been a major influence on the organization of the protests. Enrique Múgica explains in his police interrogation that he and his fellow radical students “were very friendly with Ridruejo and considered him to be a person of prestige and great moral authority,” which suggests that Ridruejo’s personal interaction with the members of Encuentros and the Congreso de Escritores was a source of

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83 Ridruejo, Casi unas memorias, 356.
84 Note: In Spanish, the title was “Romance a los estudiantes presos.”
85 Dionisio Ridruejo, “Romance a los estudiantes presos,” in Materiales para una biografía, ed. Jordi Gracia (Madrid: Fundación Santander, 2005), 263.
inspiration for those students. While it is not certain, it seems that without his help, these students would not have met so many important subversive poets, nor would they have successfully created the Congreso de Escritores and the Manifesto that directly instigated the protests.

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86 “Acta-declaración de Enrique Múgica Hertzog,” in *Jaraneros y alboratadores*, ed. Roberto Mesa, 204. Original quote: “con quien le une mucha amistad y a quien consideran como persona de mucho prestigio y autoridad moral”
Chapter 4

Semprún and the Young Intellectual: Organization of Dissidence

According to José Álvarez Cobelas, in his work on university opposition to Franco, one of the results of the 1956 University of Madrid protests was that, due to its involvement in the organization of the protests, the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) became the benchmark organization for student opposition until the death of the dictator.\(^87\) There is no question that the PCE’s influence on the 1956 protests was critical. Many of the students who instigated the protests were known or suspected communists, and the PCE provided these students with a model for their organizational tactics.

The most important member of the PCE in the context of the 1956 University of Madrid protests was Jorge Semprún. The grandson of one of King Alfonso XIII’s prime ministers, and the son of a Republican politician, Semprún came from a political family.\(^88\) At the onset of the Civil War, Semprún and his family left Spain to escape the violence, and remained in exile once Franco assumed power. He eventually settled in Paris, where he lived for most of the rest of his life as an exiled opponent of the Franco regime.\(^89\) During World War II, Semprún became involved with the PCE, whose headquarters were in Paris. He joined a communist sect of the French Resistance against the Nazi occupation of France, and in 1943, the Gestapo arrested Semprún and deported him to the

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\(^{87}\) Álvarez Cobelas, *Envenenados de cuerpo y alma*, 89.

\(^{88}\) Note: King Alfonso XIII was the Spanish monarch until 1931, when he fled the country upon the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic. Not until 1975 did a monarch return to the throne. In that year, Franco died and Alfonso’s grandson, Juan Carlos I became king, as dictated by Franco’s law of succession. Shortly after his designation as king, Juan Carlos I initiated Spain’s transition to democracy, much to the surprise of the military and the Falange, who had expected the monarch to perpetuate the authoritarian system.

Buchenwald concentration camp. In 1945, American soldiers liberated the camp, freeing Semprún, who then returned to Paris. During the 1950s, he continued his work with the PCE, whose primary goal was resistance to the Franco regime. Semprún was in charge of the party’s clandestine activity in Madrid, and in 1956, he became a member of the PCE’s executive committee. He wrote and operated under the pseudonym Federico Sánchez to protect his identity, authoring articles in clandestine communist periodicals within Spain like *Cuadernos de Cultura* and *Mundo Obrero*, as well Paris-based publications like *España*. In his writings for these publications, Semprún emphasized the value of students, cultural and artistic activity, and intellectuals in the fight against Franco. Also during the 1950s, Semprún was in contact with a number of the students who organized the 1956 University of Madrid protests, especially Enrique Múgica and Javier Pradera. Both Semprún’s personal interaction with these students and his more general contributions to the PCE’s strategy strongly influenced the organization of the 1956 protests.

In 1955, Semprún wrote an article in *Cuadernos de Cultura* that outlined his vision for the PCE and later defined his interactions with the student organizers of the 1956 University of Madrid protests. The article, entitled “Intellectual Intervention in the Fifth Congress of the Spanish Communist Party,” focused on the PCE’s recently established intent to include intellectuals in their fight against Franco, instead of just mass participation from the working class. According to Semprún, the PCE’s General

90 Rodríguez Marcos, “Muere Jorge Semprún…”
Secretary Dolores Ibárruri was the original advocate for the inclusion of intellectuals in the party’s resistance efforts. But in his *Cuadernos* article, Semprún expanded upon Ibárruri’s philosophy by emphasizing the inclusion of students in the oppositional struggle. Fairly close in age to the older students, Semprún understood the generational gap that existed between students of the day and their parents, who had a much stronger connection to the Civil War and the ensuing National Movement. He recognized the profound discontent that was growing among students, writing that a “heightened sense of political struggle clearly manifests itself in students and the university.” Semprún believed that this heightened sense of struggle meant that students had tremendous potential for political activism. In her analysis of the *Cuadernos* article, Mangini asserts that Semprún was enthusiastic and hopeful that the underground political intentions of students would result in further rebellion. But Semprún’s article included much stronger language than that of hope and enthusiasm. For example, he implored older members of the PCE to reconsider their “lack of confidence and underestimation of the student mass” so that the two groups could collaborate. Collaboration between the students and the PCE required more than just hope—it required an active role by the PCE to attract these students. Semprún also wrote that the young generation, who had already shown signs of agitation and discontent, would “not be able to continue [with their combat] without the

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93 Sánchez [pseud.], “Intervenciones de intelectuales…,” 11. Original quote: “Donde esta agudización de las luchas políticas se manifiesta con mayor nítidez es en el campo universitario y estudiantil.”
95 Sánchez [pseud.], “Intervenciones de intelectuales…,” 8. Original quote: “falta de confianza, de subestimación de la gran masa estudiantil.”
Semprún’s tone is active and deliberate and Mangini’s assessment of Semprún as hopeful makes him seem too passive—to hope that something occurs does not guarantee its occurrence. Semprún’s PCE colleague and filmmaker Ricardo Muñoz Suay says in his memoir that “proselytism amongst young writers became one the primordial tasks of the party,” which further undermines Mangini’s assertion that Semprún merely hoped that young artists would join the fight against Franco. If one of the PCE’s primary goals was to attract young student writers, then Semprún, as the head of clandestine operations in Madrid, was active in the fomentation of student radicalism.

But what kind of student was Semprún looking for? Although student objection to Franco’s regime was increasingly ubiquitous in Spain, not all students were suited to carry out organized rebellion. In his work on student activism in Spain, José Maravall explained that Spanish clandestine organizations in the 1950s recruited their young members based on personal affinities and radical family background. In other words, he argues that organizations like the PCE targeted students who had personal relationships with PCE members and supporters, and also students whose parents or family members had histories of leftist radicalism. But in the context of the 1956 University of Madrid protests, this description of clandestine recruitment is only partially accurate. It is true that the PCE came into contact with the 1956 protest organizers through personal connections. In his autobiography, Semprún described how his friend and social poet

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96 Sánchez [pseud.], “Intervenciones de intelectuales…,” 8. Original quote: “no podrán recorrer consecuentamente sin la ayuda de nuestro Partido.”
97 Ricardo Muñoz Suay, Opération Realismo (Montpellier: Imprévue), 1979, 176.
98 Maravall, Dictatorship and Political Dissent, 146.
Gabriel Celaya introduced him to Enrique Múgica in San Sebastián. Semprún also describes how he met Javier Pradera through his friend and Encuentros member Julio Diamante. Pradera would later direct the PCE’s university activity. It is likely that Dionisio Ridruejo, another personal friend of Semprún’s, introduced the PCE representative to even more students. But Maravall’s second claim—that clandestine organizations recruited students whose families had known liberal political orientations—does not apply as strongly to the students behind the 1956 protests as his first. Javier Pradera’s grandfather was Víctor Pradera, a leading Carlist who supported the Nacionales in the Civil War until anarchist militants killed him and his son (Javier’s father), who was also a Carlist. Ramón Tamames was the son of a prominent Madrid physician, Manuel Tamames, who prospered under the Franco regime. Miguel Sánchez Mazas’ father was Rafael Sánchez Mazas, who was a leading ideologue for Primo de Rivera’s Falange until his death at the hands of the Republican during the Civil War. These founding members of the Congreso de Escritores certainly did not come from liberal families, which means that the PCE targeted them for slightly different reasons than what Maravall suggests.

In their book about the anti-Franco student movement, Hernández et al argue that the PCE’s target was any student who was dissatisfied with the government. But this conclusion, like Maravall’s, also seems only partially accurate. Although it was true that the PCE targeted more than just Marxists, the students that the PCE approached shared a

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100 Semprún, *Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez*, 37.
101 Note: The Carlists were a political organization that sought to replace the ruling Alfonsine line of Spanish monarchs with a different sect of the Bourbon royal family. The organization joined with Primo de Rivera’s Falange during the Civil War, and its members supported Franco’s Nationalist side.
common characteristic other than their dissatisfaction with Franco. That common characteristic was an affinity for the arts, mainly poetry. In his 1955 *Cuadernos* article, Semprún calls poetry “perhaps the most direct and effective form of expression of the deepest aspirations of the intellectuals, which are more or less the aspirations of the people,” and applauds young student poets for their ability to “orient themselves on path of poetry with social content, combative poetry that make accusations against the Franco regime.”\(^{103}\) He also speaks about poetry congresses and their potential for inciting “real acts of social agitation and propaganda.”\(^{104}\) Semprún was not interested in these students just because they disapproved of Franco, as Hernández et al suggest. It seems that Semprún was more interested in students who both disapproved of Franco and involved themselves in either the creation or discussion of poetry. An examination of Semprún’s autobiography further disputes Hernández et al’s position that the PCE’s interaction with students was non-selective. In the beginning of the book, Semprún lists the names of his friends from 1956, who he believed were crucial to the protests of that year. They were Enrique Múgica, Julián Marcos, Jesús López Pacheco, Julio Diamante, Javier Pradera, Ramón Tamames, and Fernando Sánchez Dragó, all members of the Congreso de Escritores.\(^{105}\) These were students who not only disapproved of Franco, but also read the works of communist poets like Neruda, Hernández, Alberti. These were students who hosted contemporary social poets at their poetry symposiums and distributed cultural

\(^{103}\) Sánchez [pseud.], “Intervenciones de intelectuales…,” 8. Original quote: “es quizá la forma de expresión más directa, y la más eficaz de las aspiraciones profundas de la intelectualidad progresiva, que son el reflejo más o menos exacto de las aspiraciones del pueblos,” and “se orienta por el camino de una poesía de contenido social, de una poesía combative de acusación al régimen franquista.”

\(^{104}\) Sánchez [pseud.], “Intervenciones de intelectuales…,” 8. Original quote: “verdaderos actos de agitación y propaganda.”

\(^{105}\) Semprún, *Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez*, 38.
publications. It appears then that Semprún was, in fact, selective in his targeting of university students.

Maravall, in addition to his discussion of family background and personal relationships, wrote about the connection between cultural activities and clandestine recruitment. He argues that underground organizations were attracted to cultural activities and discussions because the students who participated in these discussions were ideologically homogenous. According to Maravall, all of the radical students that he interviewed had read at least some of works of Marx, and most of them had read other seminal works on class struggle and labor. This analysis of student cultural discussion groups effectively designates them as strictly Communist endeavors. But with Encuentros and the Congreso de Escritores, this was not the case. It is true that many of the Encuentros and Congreso de Escritores members had affiliations to the PCE, and it also true that Semprún was a key player in the Congreso de Escritores’ birth. But there were members of the Congreso de Escritores that subscribed to political ideologies other than Communism: José María Ruiz Gallardón was a monarchist, Gabriel Elorriaga was a leftist Falangist, and Fernando Sánchez Dragó did not identify with any political ideology. The Encuentros and Congreso de Escritores students were ideologically homogenous in the sense that they all opposed Franco and that they read and discussed subversive poetry. But in terms of political commitment, the student organizers of the 1956 protests were diverse. This political plurality very well could have been a result of...

107 Hernández et al, *Estudiantes Contra Franco*, 127. Note: These students were part of the Congreso, but their roles in the 1956 protests were less major than the students that I have discussed throughout this paper. Nevertheless, the non-communist students still participated in the writing of the Manifesto and the cultural activities of the Encuentros and the Congreso de Escritores, and therefore should not be ignored.
Semprún’s appeal to all anti-Franco intellectuals. In his *Cuadernos* article, Semprún explained that discontent with Franco existed among intellectuals who were monarchists, traditionalists, former Falangists, Christian democrats, and liberals—not just among Communists.\(^{108}\) What was important was not their specific political commitment, but their status as anti-Franco intellectuals. The political demographics of Encuentros and the Congreso de Escritores echo Semprún’s view.

Another element of Semprún’s influence on the organizers of the 1956 protests was his endorsement of propaganda. In his *Cuadernos* article, Semprún not only pushed the PCE to seek out student supporters, but he also argued that propaganda would aid the party in these efforts. He wrote, “the influence of [the PCE’s] ideas is exercised through the dissemination of our propaganda and our ideological and cultural materials,” but that this dissemination was “limited given the demand [for] and enormous interest” in such materials.\(^{109}\) But even in its limited quantity, the PCE’s propaganda reached the student organizers of the 1956 protests, further contributing to their radicalization. In his 1956 interrogation record, Julián Marcos explained that members of the Congreso de Escritores received, by mail, propagandist material from the France-based PCE. The materials included publications like *Mundo Obrero* and *Cuadernos de Cultura*, essays by progressive intellectuals, and the documents describing the proceedings of the Fifth Congress of the PCE. The students read and subsequently burned the material to destroy

\(^{108}\) Sánchez [pseud.], “Intervenciones de intelectuales…,” 10.  
\(^{109}\) Sánchez [pseud.], “Intervenciones de intelectuales…,” 9. Original quote: “Se ejerce también por medio de la difusión de nuestra propaganda y de nuestros materiales ideológicos y culturales, escasa todavía en relación con las necesidades y con el interés enorme que despiertan.”
Marcos believed that Múgica, who had compiled a contact list of the Congreso de Escritores members, was responsible for sending the students’ addresses to the PCE. Although it is difficult to determine whether Semprún was directly responsible for the transmission of these PCE publications to the members of the Congreso de Escritores, it seems plausible that the students received communist reading material as a result of Semprún’s propaganda policy. Semprún’s influence is also evident, then, in the distribution of the Manifesto. Essentially, the Manifesto that the Congreso de Escritores members distributed at the beginning of February was propaganda. Even though it was technically a petition, the Manifesto was an informative document that the students distributed to gain support for a particular political cause. The fact that the students received Mundo Obrero and Cuadernos de Cultura also meant that they probably read articles by Federico Sánchez, Semprún’s writer alias, who contributed frequently to these publications.

While much of Semprún’s influence on the students of the Congreso came from his propaganda policy and his writings, he also claims to have been directly with the student organizers of the 1956 protests. In his autobiography, he writes that he and “a small group of university student militants and intellectuals finally succeeded in leading relatively substantial activity. The Congreso de Escritores Jóvenes was organized, and the students began to agitate within the very halls of the SEU. At the end of 1955, I returned to Paris to inform the party of the result of our work.” The “work” to which Semprún

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111 Semprún, Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez, 217. Original quote: “Con un grupo muy reducido de militantes universitarios e intelectuales habíamos conseguido, al fin, desembocar en una actividad relativamente amplia. Se prebaraba el Congreso de
refers is undoubtedly his subtle and clandestine interactions with the Encuentros students that fostered and inspired their political activism. Also, in an article that appeared in Mundo Obrero on February 7, 1956, while the protests at the University of Madrid were occurring, Semprúin effectively implicated the PCE as a participant in the organization of the protests. In this article, Semprúin used the protests as an example to show that “it is possible to organize decisive action from a large majority of students, and this action will spread to and reinforce the people’s struggle.” Franco’s press reprinted this article in publications like Arriba and ABC to denounce the PCE for its role. And although it is true that the Franco regime often blamed the communists for dissident activity that they had no part in, Semprúin confirms in his autobiography that the PCE was involved in the 1956 protests. He writes about how his PCE colleague, Simón Sánchez Montero, who another PCE member sent from Paris to Madrid, saw the reprint of Semprúin’s Mundo Obrero article in Arriba, and was “overjoyed by our success, one of our first in Madrid, after all this time.” Semprúin speaks about his success, which means that his intended collaboration with students, which he first stated in his Cuadernos article, had paid off. Semprúin’s influence on the student organizers of the 1956 uprising seems just as important as Laín’s and Ridruejo’s, and the protests helped establish his organization, the PCE, as the most effective oppositional group during Franco’s dictatorship.

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113 Semprúin, Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez, 79. Original quote: “La alegría a Simón por aquel éxito nuestro, uno de los primeros que podíamos apuntarnos en Madrid desde hace tiempo.”
Conclusions

The organizers of the 1956 uprising at the University of Madrid were not ordinary Spanish students. Múgica, Pradera, Marcos, Tamames, and the rest of their group were part of an intellectual minority that was morally concerned with the problems of the Spanish university system. Most students in Spain disliked the SEU for practical reasons—because it made college expensive or because they had difficulty finding jobs after graduation. But the members of the minority disapproved of the SEU because it did not allow them to achieve their full intellectual potentials. In this milieu, the students behind the 1956 protests took control of their own intellectual development. They read poetry that the government had forbidden. They organized student symposiums to discuss the intellectual subjects that their university professors ignored. They appealed directly to the government with a Manifesto, hoping to improve their academic situation. And eventually, they publically protested, which resulted in their arrests and incarcerations.

But this small group of University of Madrid students, even with all of their moral concern and intellectual desires, could not have organized like they did without help from members of the older generation. Pedro Laín Entralgo, Dionisio Ridruejo, and Jorge Semprún simultaneously influenced the protest organizers, aiding them in their evolution from academically underwhelmed students to subversive political activists. The influence that these three older men provided came not only from direct personal interactions with the students, but also from the general philosophies that they promoted. Ridruejo’s commitment to poetry and its discussion inspired the students to create Encuentros, which was their very own poetry congress. The liberalism that Laín instituted at the University of Madrid allowed for the creation of new student organizations like
Encuentros and also the Congreso de Escritores, even the SEU was supposed to be the only legal student organization. And Semprún’s vision for the PCE exposed the students to propagandistic strategies and encouraged their participation in the all-important fight against Franco.

The implications of the 1956 student protests were significant. Franco’s violent repression of the protests resulted in further contempt for his regime from the general public. The uprising informed Franco that discontent for his regime came not only from the working classes, but also from the wealthy students of Spain’s universities and intellectuals from within the regime. It also highlighted the generational gap between older Spaniards, who still identified with Franco’s National Movement, and the youth, who had no connection to the Civil War and feared for their futures. The protests established the PCE as a powerful oppositional force within the university system, and set a precedent for student political activism that continues to exist in Spain today. The story essentially ends in 1965, almost a decade after the first student uprising, when Franco dissolved the SEU, which had steadily lost its influence on students and its support from members of the government since the 1956 University of Madrid protests. But even after Spain had transitioned to democracy, the student organizers of the protests continued their intellectual, political, and artistic pursuits, for which they are well known in Spain today. Miguel Sánchez Mazas and Ramón Tamames became university professors and Javier Pradera turned to journalism; Enrique Múgica became a politician and elected official; Julio Diamante began directing films; and Jesús López Pacheco continued to be a published poet. But what most contemporary Spaniards probably do not know is that these men, over fifty years ago, risked their safety to challenge the dictatorship.
List of Works Cited


