ARTÍCULOS

FALANGIST WOMEN IN FRANCOIST UNIVERSITY
THE SECCIÓN FEMENINA OF THE SINDICATO ESPAÑOL UNIVERSITARIO (1939-1965)

Mujeres falangistas en la universidad franquista.
La Sección Femenina del Sindicato Español Universitario (1939-1965)

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Resumen: Este artículo aborda la historia de la rama femenina del Sindicato Español Universitario (SEU) durante el franquismo. Dirigido por una élite de mujeres falangistas de la Sección Femenina de FET-JONS, aunque dependiente también del SEU masculino, la actividad de este grupo de fa-langistas-seuistas ha sido escasamente investigado hasta el momento. Sin embargo, la Sección Femenina del Sindicato Español Universitario (SF-SEU) fue un espacio de poder sensible tanto a la convulsa vida de la universidad franquista, como a la evolución de la cultura política falangista y, por supuesto, a las transformaciones de la Sección Femenina. Por ello, su estudio resulta esencial para clarificar algunas cuestiones relativas a la identidad de género y de clase promovida por la organización de Pilar Primo de Rivera.

Keywords: Franquismo, Falangismo, Sección Femenina, Sindicato Español Universitario, Historia de la Universidad.

Abstract: This paper analyses the Women's Section of the Sindicato Español Universitario (Spanish University Union SEU) during Franco's regime. Led by an elitist group of falangist women from the Sección Femenina (Women's Section) of the FET-JONS, and under the male SEU as well, the activity of this group of SEU falangist women has been barely studied until now. However, the Sección Femenina of the Sindicato Español Universitario (SF-SEU) was a space of power,
sensitive both to the agitated life of Franco’s universities, to the development of a political falangist culture and, also, to the transformations of the Sección Femenina. Thus, it must be analysed in order to shed light on issues regarding gender and class identity promoted by Pilar Primo de Rivera’s organisation.

**Keywords:** Francoism, Falangism, Sección Femenina, Sindicato Español Universitario, History of University.

**INTRODUCTION**

There are few realities that offer as many clues to decipher the power dynamics that were working during Franco's regime as universities do. This is due to the paradoxical advantage offered by the fact that universities were a battleground for opposing forces, that is, the different sensitivities protected by the regime that aimed to monopolise higher education, but they were also a heterogeneous student movement that represented the forces opposing the regime. Changing dynamics in the university world made it impossible to homogenise universities because, under the university's official nature, there was a world of rivalry and negotiation that is proof of the achievements and failures of the regime's politics. Those characteristics have caught the attention of historiography since the 1980s, leading to a considerable amount of research devoted to Franco's universities - or under Francoism - looking into different aspects such as the social and political-institutional history, generational dynamics or intellectual history and scientific wisdom held at universities, just to mention some of the many aspects studied.¹ Although not frequently, those studies occasionally included another line of work of great importance and tradition in historiography on dictatorship: the history of women and/or gender. In any case, the latter is a minority concern amongst historians devoted to the binomial women-university, as they have preferred to focus on the last years of the 19th century or the first third of 20th century - era of the pioneers - as well as to the decades after democratic transition, the era of the *conquest for equality*.²

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² Helena Saavedra Mitjans, «Universidad y patrones de género en el primer franquismo. Continuidades y rupturas en la enseñanza universitaria: alumnas, doctoras y profesoras», *Dictatorships & Democracies. Journal of History and Culture*, 6 (2018): 51-87. Exceptions to that trend were the analyses by Helena
This paper focuses on the little-studied convergence between the history of university and the history of women, during Franco's regime. More specifically, it focuses on the female branch of the official students union, the Sección Femenina of the Sindicato Español Universitario. The actions carried out by this group of women were a blind spot in contemporary historiography. The pioneering studies on the Sección Femenina carried out from the beginning of 1980s till present have only partially considered the sphere of power of the female organisation, whilst research on the SEU gave an accessory role to the union's female branch. A potential reason for this could be the dual-dependency of SEU’s female members (under the SF and the SEU), that relegated them to no man's land, historiographically-speaking, hidden between very prolific lines of study that basically considered that this line of work was someone else’s job. Moreover, the limbo of the SF-SEU’s documents, as sources have been reduced, fragmented and distributed amongst larger document repositories, made the task even more difficult. Another potential reason for the lack of attention could reside on the impact this university branch of the SF had amongst students. I am not anticipating any conclusions if I state a well-known fact about the SF: it had very limited influence amongst female university students, who were mostly indifferent to what the women's union could offer. From this point of view, being concerned about the history of an organisation created to instruct women that hardly managed to do that may seem a childish task. But that argument is far too simple. First, it does not answer the question of why that failure took place, and then there is a second question that must be asked, how did the actions of the women's union impact the organisation that the SF was part of.


3 A state of affairs on the Sección Femenina can be found in Begoña Barrera, «La Sección Femenina en perspectiva. Historias y otros relatos sobre las mujeres de Falange», en Historia Contemporánea 62 (2020): 265-295. The initial work on the SEU by Miguel Ángel Ruiz Carnicer, El Sindicato Español Universitario (SEU), 1939-1945. La socialización política de la juventud universitaria en el franquismo. (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno de España Editores, 1996). The section devoted to the women's SEU «Un caso especial: la Sección Femenina del SEU» (476-496), is still a referent as will be demonstrated in this paper, although the adjective "special (especial)" shows the need to focus specifically in this unique case.
It is this question, and not the former, that guides this paper, that aims to shed light on the Female Section (SF) of the SEU, as a space that is sensitive to changes that took place in the university world and mainly in the SEU, as well as in female falangism. It is based on the broad consensus in recent historiography about the ability to act (agency) of the women that contributed to the creation of right-wing political cultures and regimes. Despite the misogynist and masculinising culture they shared, women who were more akin to those principles and that reached positions of responsibility in the fascist or fascist-like dictatorships, such as Franco's regime, had room for power and were able to renegotiate with their colleagues and even with their superiors an increase in their space of authority, demonstrating that the story of female submissiveness to male authority had more cracks and exceptions than expected, even amongst the champions of that discourse. At the same time, this paper uses the gender approach, key to study any type of female falangism, as well as class perspective, also crucial to delve into and understand a francoist elite, such as that of the SF’s hierarchy.

This analysis is based on a mixed group of sources that include documents coming from archives such as General de la Administración (General Administration Archive, AGA), and that of the Real Academia de Historia (Royal Academy of History, RAH), newspaper and propaganda materials, as well as the memories and autobiographies of people involved in those events.

FROM THEIR ROOTS TO THE SEARCH FOR THEIR OWN SPACE

In December 1939, right after the Civil War, Francisco Franco transformed the Women's Section (SF) of the FET-JONS into the organisation in charge of the instruction and education of Spanish women on the Falange's principles approved by the new dictatorship. The power and authority enjoyed by the SF since then would have been unthinkable for the group of women who, just a few years back, had shown their

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4 The notion of agency has been present in specialised literature on women and fascism since the first studies published in the 1980s. The discussion on its suitability, given the broadest controversy on gender studies, can be read about in the work of authors such as Victoria de Grazia, How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), Claudia Koonz, Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), and Julie V. Gottlieb, Feminine Fascism. Women in Britain's Fascist Movement 1923-1945. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000).
The desire to collaborate with the first fascist-like parties that sprouted in Spain during the Second Republic. Both the leaders of the Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (Councils of the Nationalist Syndicalist Offensive - JONS), and the Spanish Falange (unified in February 1934 as the FE-JONS) had to face the dilemma of whether to accept or not those women in movements that were explicitly defined as for men\textsuperscript{5}. The first refusals by those leaders arose the shrewdness of those young women, who then decided to join the Sindicato Español Universitario (SEU) of the Falange, created at the same time as the party, in November 1933, with the purpose of controlling university and counteracting the republican Federación Universitaria Escolar (FUE) and turning it into the grassroots for young falangists. Years later, the Falange would explore in its propaganda the story of JONS' member Justina Rodriguez de Viguri who, in order not to raise suspicions, changed to a more masculine name and registered at the SEU as Justino. After that pioneer, other women wishing to be involved in Falangism joined the SEU, such as Mercedes Formica, law student who said she had been "moved" by the charisma of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, or even Pilar Primo de Rivera, who joined four other women and asked Jose Antonio to be members of the Falange and were directed to the SEU - although they were not university students - so that they could register as unionised students\textsuperscript{6}.

The result of that process was the convergence under the umbrella of the SEU of all women who were at the avant-garde of women's falangism. Throughout 1934, they achieved certain autonomy and predominance, creating a Women's Section of the SEU, many times coined as the women's Section of the Falange given that, just like it happened with the male members, in those initial years the party and union were difficult to separate from each other. The collaboration of those falangist women, supporting the party in terms of propaganda, scope and helping people imprisoned turned this female group into a key element of the violence and proselytism used by the FE JONS in the last few years of the Republic. With the onset of the Civil War, the SF started cooperating and helping the rebels’ rear-guard together with other women from the parties that participated in the uprising. During the following three years of war, and

\textsuperscript{5} Mary Vicent, «La reafirmación de la masculinidad en la cruzada franquista», Cuadernos de historia contemporánea, 28 (2006): 135-151.

\textsuperscript{6} María Teresa Gallego Méndez, Mujer, Falange y Franquismo. (Madrid: Taurus, 1983), 19-20.
partly thanks to the symbolic weight that Pilar had for being the sister of the "absent" Primo de Rivera\(^7\), the SF managed to prevail as the most important women's organisation of the new single party Falange Española Tradicionalista of the Juntas Ofensivas Nacionalsindicalista (FET-JONS). The years 1937-1939 were vital for the SF, as the identity of Falangist or national syndicalist women was created then and gave shape to the internal structure of the organisation, chaired by an elite of "Officers" who orbited around their National Delegate, Pilar Primo de Rivera\(^8\). The power gained by the Falangist women within the new state peaked in December 1939, when the National Delegation of the SF was officially appointed as being in charge of all Spanish women. At the same time as the rise of the SF, and by virtue of the same consolidation process of the regime's institutional machinery, the SEU of the FET-JONS (the new Francoist SEU) conquered a position of power within the dictatorship as in November 1937 it became the only student organisation allowed.

Despite that division between the SF and the SEU in 1939, an intermediate space arose that involved both Falangist movements: Sección Femenina del Sindicato Español Universitario (SF-SEU)\(^9\). It was called with the same as the small circle of Falangist women in 1934, but Franco's SF-SEU of the FET JONS, was substantially different. Just like the SEU in times of the Republic and the SEU of 1937 were different because the former had been an element of destabilisation of the Republican state and the second had the task of maintaining the Francoist state\(^10\), the SF-SEU of 1934 and the post-war one also served different realities, The first SF-SEU had a semi-informal nature and was improvised, as it was created due to the need to integrate very few women in parties that did not foresee women's participation, the second SF-SEU, Franco's one, was created fully officially, as an official body of the regime, and its purpose would be the female

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\(^7\) Joan María Thomás, *Los fascismos españoles*. (Madrid: Ariel [Edición Epub], 2011), 87.

\(^8\) The construction of that structure during the first few years of the SF can be read about in Sección Femenina de FET y las JONS, *Consejos Nacionales 1937-1942*, 2 Vols. (Madrid: Delegación Nacional de Sección Femenina de FET y las JONS, s/f).

\(^9\) According to the female organisation, it was in 1937, after the approval of the Articles of Association of the SEU, when "it started becoming the women's section of the SEU") But the truth is that until 1939 it did not start organising its structure, and it was only after 1944 that it was recognised as a properly established organisation, Misión y Funciones de la SF del SEU; Reglamento que marca las relaciones de la Sección Femenina con el SEU, RAH, Fondo Asociación Nueva Andadura (en adelante ANA), Carpeta 138.

\(^10\) Miguel Ángel Ruiz Carnicer, *El Sindicato Español Universitario*, op. cit., 100.
education of all university women. Nevertheless, its nature was not unique in the scenario of fascist female organisations. Other countries such as Germany had bodies such as the Working Community of National Socialist University Students (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Nationalsozialistischer Studentinnen, ANSt), founded in 1932 and that brought together all female university students linked to the Union of German Girls (Bund Deutscher Mädel, BDM) since 1939.\(^\text{11}\)

We must bear in mind that, despite the mechanisms and legal tools set in place since the beginning of Franco's dictatorship (such as segregated schools or different curricula depending on gender), in the Spanish post-war years women still took part in university studies, although as a huge minority compared to male students. SEU female members themselves were very aware of what that entailed, given that internal documents circulated between 1939 and 1944 reiterated that there were a total of 8000 female students in universities, in different schools, and growing. The number of female university students accounted for 10% of the total student population.\(^\text{12}\) Thus it is not strange that, once invested with the power to guard over Spanish women, the organisation wanted to extend its authority over the university minority, even if they had to share the power with the SEU.

The SF-SEU operated until the disappearance of the SEU in 1965 as one more Office of the SF, but with the peculiarity of being subject to a dual dependency: "dependent on the National Director of the SEU in everything to do with direction and university mission, and on the National Delegate of the SF in everything to do with female education".\(^\text{13}\) Its internal structure was a simplified version of the organisation of the SEU and the SF, as it had an Officer and a central (national) Deputy and five department directors: Staff, Press and Propaganda, Social Services, Hostels and

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\(^\text{11}\) Haide Manns, Frauen für den Nationalsozialismus. Nationalsozialistische Studentinnen und Akademikerinnen in der Weimarer Republik und im Dritten Reich (Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1997), pp. 151-188. The SF-SEU and the ANSt kept in fact close contact as part of the "visits" between the SF and the Nazi BDM at the beginning of the 1940s, as explained by Toni Morante Ariño, "Mujeres para una "Nueva Europa". Las relaciones y visitas entre la Sección Femenina de Falange y las organizaciones femeninas nazis, 1936-1945". PhD thesis, Universitat de València, 2013, pp. 624-667.

\(^\text{12}\) Quoted in the SEU's SF [internal document, no signatures] and in Misión y Funciones de la SF del SEU, RAH, ANA, Carpeta 138.

\(^\text{13}\) Order from the 23/10/1944, in the Sección Femenina de FET-JONS, Circulares de la Delegada Nacional, Madrid, Afrodisio Aguado, 1948, 71.
Residence halls and Physical Education and Sport. Each structure was replicated in each university district (DU) and was complemented with the District Officers, who appointed School Delegates or Centre Delegates, and Course Delegates, destroying student representativeness, just like in the case of men. To summarise, we can assert that the specificity of its mission forced the SF-SEU to have a double administrative dependency, using an administrative architecture where the names and distribution of services showed the hybrid nature of the SF-SEU.

This limbo was a problem for SEU female members from the onset. On the one hand, they had to follow the mandates of the SF's National Delegate, who had summarised its duties as to "encourage and help, just like women know how to, the SEU's leaders" and also added the recommendation: "do not aim to put yourself at a par with them, equal to equal, because then, far from achieving your goals, they will feel an infinite dislike for you and you will never be able to influence them". In turn, SEU female members showed constantly that, although willing to respect the union's hierarchy, they were not going to give in an ounce of their small area of power to their male colleagues. There are many documented cases of confrontation between the different branches of the Falange's SF and the movement's hierarchy or even the church’s hierarchy. As mentioned in the introduction, in some cases they forced a reconsideration of the idea of falangist women’s submission and to even consider the possibility that they had areas of power negotiation within the regime. Although SEU female members always tried to avoid direct confrontation with their male superiors, they also showed signs of defending their feud. In 1947, Pilar Andón, Officer of the SF-SEU since 1947, addressed her subordinates and said that she was aware of the sense of discomfort and annoyance felt sometimes due to the difficult situation of that double dependency. Although the bulletin asked SEU female members to hide their malaise, the Officer herself stated her discomfort with some of the measures taken by the union,
for instance, she had asked for the conclusions of the organisation regarding the appointment of leaders of the SF-SEU to be debated again as "she did not agree".

The good relationship that existed, according to Pilar Primo de Rivera, between the SF and the SEU was "not only because the Women's Section was born from the SEU, but also because their understanding and actions were always united", but that did not avoid constant disagreements in the union's daily activities. What Pilar Andón stated was not an isolated anecdote or a one-off statement in favour of the role SEU female members played, stating at the time that it was necessary for the "SF to participate as a collaborator in all the SEU’s newspapers" or as she recalled that "the budget to be sent by the SEU's provincial directors should include an item for the SF to carry out its activities and meet the needs of the SF-SEU". This attitude must be put into the context of the favourable ruling the female organisation had received against the Frente de Juventudes (FJ) a few years earlier. Created in 1937, after the merger of all young organisations into one, the FJ controlled not only the SEU, but also people younger than 18. Pilar Primo de Rivera's persistence meant that, from 1945, the control of young women was given to the SF; thus being the single authority on the education of women from childhood to adult life. Contrary to this, the SEU, despite the constant struggle it had for independence form the FJ, did not achieve this until 1956. Thus, although "encouraging and helping " their comrades as Pilar requested was undoubtedly present in the spirit of the female SEU members, so were contesting any interference by male leaders, the plea in favour of their legitimacy as an essential part of the union and even the (very concealed) desire to obtain greater visibility and thus appeal power,

The truth is that, in par with the duty to "encourage and help" SEU members, the National Delegate also acknowledged that the female falangist university students she was leading had a "cultural superiority" over their female comrades. This peculiarity is a prickly business for an organisation that had turned anti-intellectualism into one of the

17 Informe sobre SF-SEU, s/f (¿1948?). RAH, ANA, Carpeta 138.
18 Pilar Primo de Rivera, Recuerdos de una vida (Madrid: Drysa, 1983), 261.
19 Informe sobre SF-SEU, s/f. RAH, ANA, Carpeta 138.
21 Ruiz Carnicer, El Sindicato Español Universitario, op. cit., 275.
pillars on which femininity was based. The SF was not the first or only one to publicly ridicule women who identified themselves with speculative tasks or devoted themselves to learning. The generation that nurtured the initial female falangism had grown up in conservative environments where the 19th century's discourse of intellectual and emotional differences was still in force. Just like during the consolidation of suffragism, the extraordinary ground-breaking experience of intellectual women during the Second Republic was interpreted by those groups as a threat to gender order, and strengthened, rather than depleted, their arguments about how men and women have different minds. After the war, there were few ideas with greater consensus amongst the winners than the urgency to restore gender hierarchy.

The SF took on this task and filled magazines with calls to women's restrain, warning them that excessive intellectual growth could deform their femininity. But the issue always became troublesome when appealing to university female students. Until it was made compulsory to be a member of the SEU union, the SF created the image of SEU female members as exemplary students because of their perfect blend of education and femininity. The article "Diario de una estudiante" (Diary of a student) by Carmen Werner, published in Medina, the SF's weekly magazine, had great repercussion. The author, well-known and former member of the union, presented the SF-SEU as a pool of authentic femininity in a hostile environment and defined it as the "utmost female student's" refuge, "women who study for vocation and need, a perfect synthesis that liberates them from pedantry." With the onset of compulsory unionisation, the SF started softening the distinction between SEU female members and the other students,

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23 There is no prosopography of the first generation of falangist women, although the already quoted autobiography of Pilar Primo de Rivera or the biographies of other leaders such as Maria de la Mora are proof of the social origin of that generation. Please refer to Inmaculada de la Fuente, La roja y la falangista. Dos hermanas en la España del 36. (Barcelona: Planeta, 2006). On the criticisms to intellectual women from the 19th century, please refer to Pura Fernández and Marie-Linda Ortega (eds.), La mujer de letras o la letraherida. Discursos y representaciones sobre la mujer escritora en el siglo XIX (Madrid: CSIC, 2008).


26 Carmen Werner, «Diario de una estudiante», Medina. Semanario de la SF, 27 (1942). Please refer to «La alta cima del SEU», Medina, 72 (1942). A discourse that appeared again in SEU's publications in the provinces, as can be seen in articles such as «Nosotras, las estudiantes», Acción (1), 1st half of December 1943.
replacing the old elitist pitch with a fiction of representativeness. In 1945, *Medina* published an article in which José María García Cernuda, former SEU member, argued that higher education for women was fatal for the marriage institution. This opinion was refuted days later by anonymous SEU female members, such as "Universitaria" who started her response with a clear "I do not agree, comrade Cernuda, with the conclusions you presented", and tried to pacify his concern for the marital life of female university students asserting that "this does not tend to happen with Spanish students". After several comments along those lines, García Cernuda closed the controversy confessing his admiration for the knowledge his female comrades had on university women and acknowledging their authority on the topic, although he went on to mention a text by Father Llanos that spoke about the dangers of intellectual equality between "female and male graduates". If we go beyond the shabby arguments by García Cernuda, the dispute was powerful because it showed how strongly anonymous female SEU members defended themselves, making quasi-impossible theoretical balances and using nationalist ideas to champion female students (protecting their new feud), without discrediting the sacrosanct union and gender hierarchy.

The idea of intellectual women was so broad that SEU female members had to make constant efforts to define its meaning so that, without being the it all for female student's identity, intellectuality could be considered legitimate amongst female students. Manipulated historic female role models were key for the dialectical weaponry of the SF since 1938, and so it was not strange that SEU female members also resorted to them when they needed intellectual referents to justify their activities. At the beginning of the 1940s, publishing house Haz published a brief leaflet entitled *Breve Historia de la Sección Femenina del Sindicato Español Universitario (1932-1939)* (*Brief history of the Sección Femenina of the Sindicato Español Universitario*). Its goal

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29 José María Gª Cernuda, «SEU femenino: Primera respuesta», *Medina*, 206 (1945). The following issue considered the matter closed with a "final note": "After the article of our comrade, published in the previous issue, we consider the matter closed,...understand the advantages of men "having the last word". *Medina*, 207 (1945).
was to “publicise for those who didn't know the courage and faith of female students that attended with enthusiasm and discipline the first heroic gatherings to help their comrades in the war." Despite that, the anonymous author had to conclude a long first section as a "historic preamble" to explain that the "female students of the Falange found a historic precedent in all those women who, during our national life, felt the urge and were interested in the cultural problems of their time". The leaflet included examples such as "our Queen Isabella I, reading texts of History, Grammar, Latin and Poetry", and also Beatriz Galindo, Teresa of Ávila, Juana Inés de la Cruz and Mary of Jesus of Ágreda. Cultivated and learned, those "sublime figures" were part of a list of intellectual women who had put their knowledge at the service of God and their Homeland, the author stated. After that, it is easy to trace the trail towards a contemporary equivalent of those obligations: SEU female members, and therefore all female university students over which the SF-SEU had influence, "will like to offer men, as support and company, the knowledge that, without pedantry, they now search for at university".

Nevertheless, in 1947 some disagreeing ideas came up. Those were years when SEU female members had a bit of airtime in radio station Radio SEU, with broadcasts on Friday evenings. One of the sections of the program was devoted to provide information about "women who write" (that was the title) with interviews hosted by Manuel Zuasti, SEU member and Radio SEU collaborator. Those interviews were then published in Ventanal, the SF’s magazine. Writers such as Rosa María Cajal and Blanca Espinar, whose texts appeared in other publications such as Destino o Arriba, or Carmen Martín de la Escalera, who frequently wrote for the magazine Revista de Estudios Políticos and had already published a first story on Morocco, appeared on the pages of Ventanal giving testimony of unconventional intellectual vocations in the SF's magazines during those years. Their desire to talk extensively about those works led frequently to a subtle verbal struggle with the interviewer, who dragged them to an area of triviality they seemed to try to get away from. “- I have written eight novels. One of them will be published soon. - Are you happy with it? - If I wasn't I wouldn't have taken


32 «Muchachas en la universidad», Medina, 64 (1942).
it to a publisher. [...] – What's your dream as a woman? - To write. Right now, to write extensively. - And afterwards?" That question was left unanswered and Zuasti did not know what to do except to say "Rosa Cajal is not answering. There is a sparkle of mystery in her eyes..."33. The interviewer seemed to be more committed when faced with a less-known author, María Antonia Morales, whose literary taste did not meet the expectations. "–Which authors do you admire the most currently? - Foreign contemporary writers. - What about Spanish authors? - Out of the blue...Valera, I like Pereda's Sotileza; Ricardo de León… […] –What about contemporary Spaniards? - I rather not give my opinion34. He asked María Dolores Pérez-Camero directly "-What do you think about the women who write now? - I will give my opinion only about Carmen Laforet: I think she is a genius or that she perfectly masters the novel technique"35. Those were not disruptive confessions, but the dullness and vulgarity of women's magazines gave an alternative look to those testimonies that surely did not go unnoticed by the SF. At the onset of the 1947/48 academic year, "Women who write" disappeared form Ventanal, with no other changes to the SF-SEU apart from a change of Officer, chaired from then on by Pilar Anadón.36

The oasis that radio station and written section represented has been interpreted in many ways, from an attempt by the SF to make of the female writing phenomenon their own, to an exceptional adventure that encouraged potential message recipients to start their literary careers37. As for its interpretation within the female SEU, we must remember that this initiative took place after the arrival of María de Mora to Ventanal's management, bringing in new desires to falangist publications. Old member of the Falange, De la Mora was, together with Mercedes Formica, one of the falangists closer to the Falange's intellectuals, and hosted the most positions in the SF's propaganda departments, from where she started a journalistic career after leaving the

33 Zuasti, «Radio SEU y Ventanal presentan a Rosa María Cajal», Ventanal, 4 (1946).
34 Zuasti, «Radio SEU y Ventanal presentan a María Antonia Morales», Ventanal, 5 (1946).
35 Zuasti, «Radio SEU y Ventanal presentan a María Dolores Pérez Camero», Ventanal, 7 (1946).
36 Expediente Pilar Anadón, AGA (09) 017.014-51/20341.
organisation. This section's appearance in an issue of the *Ventanal* she was the publisher of makes total sense, in agreement with the general ambience of the union in 1947, when a new generation, more dynamic but also more pensive, wanted to start shaking off the rigidity and mediocrity of their predecessors.

The arrival of Mercedes Formica to Medina's direction, another leading magazine of the organisation, has been mentioned frequently as a sign of an alternative sensitivity (minority, weak and practically negligible in the first decades) within the SF. Formica narrated the story saying that, under her direction, Medina had included plastic and literary collaborators, sometimes from "areas opposite to the Falange", However, after several disappointments and conflicts with internal censorship she decided to leave. "Disappointed, I resigned". It is worth remembering that Formica had been a former SEU member, who joined the union as a university student but also as a committed falangist. Her story is frequently considered, correctly, as that of a one-off situation within an organisation that was not up to her critical and intellectual status.

Nevertheless, it would be necessary to study this to see if Formica was part of a slightly broader phenomenon that had to do with this crossroad: the SF-SEU. Keeping a university space within an organisation that promoted family and domestic life confronted the SF to an aporia that they tried to conceal, but which escaped every time SEU female members took a step aside from the submission and anti-intellectualism premises. Or maybe the SF-SEU became a shortcut to inject a bit of originality into the overpowering simplicity of propaganda. The swiftness with which those experiences were cut back (as during Formica's direction or with the Radio SEU program) or even tamed (as with the references to disagreements between men and women leaders in the SF’s internal documents) makes us believe that the surveillance was proportional to the disengagement, and even objection, the organisation expected to find at universities.

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38 Inmaculada de la Fuente, *La roja y la falangista*, op. cit.
GENERATIONAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL DISCOURSE

It is well known that the 1950s was a turning point for Francoism, years of change in which the generation that lived the war started to give way to young people who, although brought up to constantly remember the conflict and to praise the symbols, were not content with institutional mediocrity or with the apoliticism that the dictatorship had led to by inertia. Universities became, inevitably, an arena for physical and symbolic fight between the different sensitivities. As part of those, the SF-SEU operated as a membrane that absorbed the tensions coming from all players: the desires of the SF to gain the trust of women at university, the idealistic and revolutionary spirit bubbling within the SEU, the lack of engagement with the official jargon and behaviour that soon turned into rejection among most students. That is why the 15 years until the dissolution of the union in 1965 can only be explained by the responses SEU female members gave to the challenges universities presented. There were three areas where the SF-SEU worked on to amend their wrong-doings from the past: restructuring the discredited University Social Service, transforming SEU female members into leaders of the SF and taking on the social commitments typical of Falangism from 1950.

It is well known that the women's Social Service (SS) was exclusively used as an instrument of indoctrination, key for the SF since it was officially created in December 1939. Its compliance by generations of women during Franco's regime gave it a key role in female stereotypes during the dictatorship and it became a crucial element for women's memories during the dictatorship. In 1944 it was set forth that any woman who wished to enrol at university had to present the enrolment receipt or demonstrate that they were registered in the University District (DU) in order to participate in the Servicio Social Universitario (University Social Service, SSU), a version of the normal SS, theoretically adapted to the needs of female university students and controlled by the SF-SEU. The SSU in the 1940s required the "complier" to devote six hours a week during three academic years to topics such as Religion, National syndicalism, childcare.

42 An overview of all the aspects of that decade can be found in Abdón Mateos (ed.), La España de los cincuenta. (Madrid, Eneida, 2008). A text more focused on social and cultural aspects can be seen in Miguel Ángel Ruiz Carmicer, Jordi Gracia García, La España de Franco (1939-1975). Cultura y vida cotidiana. (Madrid: Síntesis, 2001).
and domestic sciences, as well as to work (provide "service") in the SF's cultural and caretaking tasks.\textsuperscript{43}

During the academic year 1949/50 and given the SSU's lack of popularity, its structure was simplified and divided into three types of consecutive activities: a "Winter course" during which compliers had to do one hour a week during the first academic year, followed by a one-month stay in a School-Hostel during the summer of that first year and the "provision of services" for the next two consecutive summers.\textsuperscript{44} A report that came out after the changes were implemented acknowledged that the Winter Course no longer had a pedagogical purpose, it was just "the means to make sure that during the first academic year, the DU's Officer had the new girls who joined the university in her hands." The attendance to the School-Hostel in the summer was, according to female SEU members, the activity compliers accepted the most, especially after the SSU's changes in 49/50. The only problem they appeared to notice was the high price of the stay at the SF's hostel, reason why female students preferred to do the more affordable normal SS. To avoid this, the organisation demanded that female students were not allowed to choose, so that the SSU would be the only path for them. Decisions such as this showed that the SF-SEU was not willing to renounce to the elitist profile of their university project, which not only demanded a strict commitment with the principles of the organisation, but also the economic means to pay for the compulsory training.

Finally, the service provision stage depended on the report the hostel's supervisor gave and on the desires of the applicant. It included the possibility of exempting the complier from that last stage if they had done assistant work as a teacher or leader in some of the SF's institutions.\textsuperscript{45} All in all, the SSU was gradually transformed into a sweetened version of the normal SS, increasingly designed as a control tool and a mean to gain future falangist members from a small number of female students rather than as an indoctrination tool for the masses.

\textsuperscript{43} Pilar Primo de Rivera, Circular 228 a las Delegadas Provinciales de Sección Femenina, Regidoras Provinciales del Servicio Social y Regidoras de los Distritos Universitarios, 14/11/1944, in Sección Femenina de FET-JONS, \textit{Circulares de la Delegada Nacional}, 51-55.

\textsuperscript{44} Sección Femenina de FET-JONS, \textit{Historia y Misión}. (Madrid: Delegación Nacional de Sección Femenina, 1951), 176-179.

\textsuperscript{45} SSU, s/f [1952], RAH, ANA, Carpeta 138.
The capture of future leaders who would nurture the numbers of the organisation was, in fact, the leitmotiv of the SF-SEU since its creation after the war, and even more so in the 1950s. With the inauguration in 1942 of the School of Senior Leaders José Antonio del Castillo de Mota del Cuervo in Valladolid (normally referred to as "Castillo de la Mota" or "La Mota"), SF's flagship whilst it existed, special courses were given to leaders of the DU and other "selected union comrades"46. With time, the expectation to channel the best SEU female members towards the elite of the women's organisation in order to hold leading positions would lead to the creation of courses for graduates in La Mota, held from 1946 with the purpose of "discovering values and training them for leading positions, as teachers or heads of study, and so on"47. But this system did not give the expected results, so at the beginning of the following decade the capture of female students to be part of the SF was one of the main reasons for concern for the women's organisation.

In 1950, the SF observed that there were many female students who despite everything (despite the compulsory unionisation, despite the SSU's reforms) did not find it attractive". This feeling of failure was not isolated. Surviving the 1950s was a real challenge for the falangist organisation, as it could perceive the lack of engagement amongst Spanish women, due to the unfruitful attempts by the SF to renew its image, which was still very attached to the post-war period. Thus, the falangists tried several attempts to change, such as modernising their image in order to attract "female consumers" and those who admired foreign fashion, as well as the search for a new profile for its leaders48. The activities of the SF-SEU focused on the latter, as SEU female members had not managed to "attract" a large number of female students, it seemed more appropriate to focus their efforts to make sure those who did participate in the union during their studies stayed in the SF after finishing. "We must sacrifice

46 María Nieves González Echevarría, «Curso de Mandos Femeninos del SEU en el Castillo de la Mota», *Juventud*, 16 (1942): 5.
47 Syra Manteola, Oficio Circular 6/5/1946 y Oficio Circular de 30 de agosto de 1947, AGA (03) 051043 Grupo 4 nº 8 Caja 2(bis).
quantity for efficacy,” announced the SF-SEU’s officer. Until 1954 women recently graduated were part of the Graduates Section of the SEU. From that year on, with the creation of the Education Office, the SF obtained full control of the SF-SEU graduates and reduced its dependency from male bureaucracy. The goal was, in the words of Pilar Primo de Rivera, to "keep female students who showed human, intellectual and professional qualities and a desire to give during their relationship with the SEU linked to the organisation". Thus, in exchange for "the payment of a quota and collaborating within their power in cultural and professional activities of the SF" new members controlled by the Education Office would enjoy perks such as "professional assistance, grants to travel abroad and professional paid work", and above all, would be proposed by their superiors to participate in Graduate Courses. Once again, the number of women enrolled must have been small, because in that same year, 1954, the SF-SEU’s officer opened up the possibility of "bringing in" to those courses “graduates who were not members of the SF but who wanted to participate in the Graduates Section", that is, those who had not been part of the SF-SEU but who wished now to join the organisation via the graduates’ special channel.

This urge to have members carry out their professional activities within the organisation can be explained by the generational renewal the SF would experience throughout that decade. In the 1950s, the young women who had built the organisation started being replaced by a new generation and the National Delegate wanted to make the most of that change and include female university students in the SF. The midst of that decade saw a turning point in the history of the organisation after the massive arrival of new falangist women to teaching positions and to the service’s hierarchy, the Offices. One example of that was Consuelo Valcárcel Burgos, SEU member that reached the organisation's elite in 1956 as director of the department of vocational training of the SF-SEU. Valcárcel was seen as belonging to a generation separated from the founders' generation not only by the war, but also by her university education. This rose suspicions amongst older delegates, who accused the newcomers of having reached

those positions because of their university education or their social status. Valcárcel herself recalled how her critical attitude earned her some confrontation with more veteran falangists in the organisation52.

The truth is that SEU female members in the fifties experienced the most agitated years of Spanish universities. Just like the SF, the SEU was immersed in a process of generational change that gave way to a youth desperate to ignite the gloomy life the union had had until then. Female SEU members focused their desires on turning the union into a useful tool for students, making it appealing to intellectual curious people and offering a way to repoliticise the young people who should become the leaders of the future. Those were years of different types of cultural initiatives, of openness and even liberation of the discourse in many of their publications, which included an understanding and integrating spirit from its leaders. Those were also years of efforts by the SEU to gain popularity, presenting itself as the champion of students' rights, and finally, those were years of workers' initiatives, with an obviously populist nature, that aimed to reconquer the social concerns of the initial falangism. However, the so-called "February's events" of 1956, and the movement of opposing students showed the serious constraints of this revival project and even the general rejections of university students to a union they believed was merely the public face of Franco's regime53. The SEU operated as a living dead until its disappearance in 1965, unable to make up for lost ground and increasingly less ideological. But those agitated times in the SEU cannot be simply perceived as the diary of a predictable failure, the SEU was also a refuge from the cultural prosaic scenario for many future intellectuals54 and it was also the epicentre of other changes that were experienced in the union's environment, particularly in its women's section, the SF.SEU.

The SF had considered since its creation several action lines that combined social commitment and indoctrination. Undoubtedly, the Social Service had been the epicentre of those, but there were also others, such as the Sisterhood of the City and Countryside and its army of Sanitary-Rural Communicators, created during the war and

53 Miguel Ángel Ruiz Carnicer, El Sindicato Español Universitario, op. cit., 245-304.
54 Jordi Gracia, Estado y cultura: El despertar de una conciencia crítica bajo el franquismo, 1940-1962. (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2006).
similar to the *Massaie Rurale*\(^{55}\). However, it was in the 1950s when the idea of making university students the direct collaborators of that initiative would start to gain momentum. In 1950, the SF-SEU already included amongst its "educational activities" for female students a "Ministry of the Suburbs" that it seems was never actually carried out, at least with that name, a copy of the Ministry of the Suburbs that Acción Católica de la Mujer founded in 1943\(^{56}\). It was not until 1954 when, at the same time as the creation of the Education Office, the first of those projects was created: the "Producers' residences". Its goal was for female students to devote their summer holidays to "knowing the different social groups and their dedication, helping and improving, to some extent, the lives of those who did not get from society the same means they have". The project was publicised as a source of mutual enrichment for university students and "producers", the term used in official jargon to refer to workers. Thus, this "coexistence" would have two declared purposes: "helping the full and comprehensive training of female students and giving producers the possibility to improve morally and socially thanks to the contact like [sic] more mature and able characters." Thus, access to those producers' residences was only allowed to those who had a "profound moral and political education", "authentic moral curiosity" "social refinement, without a tendency to fall into vulgarity, rudeness or bad taste" and portrayed "simplicity, without falling into pedantry"\(^{57}\).

This initiative by the SF-SEU encompassed several elements that were present in the students' ambience and in 1950s' falangism. Female SEU members were aware that the lack of enthusiasm they perceived amongst female students was set in a context of growing social awareness. In 1952, only two years before those Producers' Residences were set up, the SEU had started trying to channel that concern via the Servicio Universitario del Trabajo (University Labour Service - SUT), that offered students the opportunity to participate during the summer in labour camps that put them in contact with the reality of the labour world. The SUT was the best reflection of the attempts by some falangist sectors, and the SEU in particular, to bring back its original workers'


\(^{57}\) Pilar de Balle, Circular 206 de 6/4/1945, RAH, ANA, Carpeta 138.
discourse, the one that rejected the class struggle and idealised the image of workers as recipients of dedication and sacrifice. Less than two years later, the SF-SEU considered the SUT was a proven success and copied that project with its own premises, and since the SUT in 1954 had not organised its female camps, they still had their fragile monopoly intact. The female Producers' Residences project was proof of the difficult balance the SF-SEU had to strike to adapt the falangist premises to the current times and to develop its indoctrinating purpose. Its discourse showed a social responsibility, of course, but tainted with a deep mystification of producers and an elitist spirit in the condescending and redemption tone with which they imagined the actions by female students in the factories, warning them that this experience should, under no circumstances, deviate the behavioural patterns prescribed by gender identity.

At the beginning of 1956, the Producers' Residences had been quite successful and thus it made sense to extend it to the SF-SUT. In December 1955, the national Delegate informed falangists that the 18th Council of the SF that would take place in January 1956 had to be based on a reflection regarding a few key issues, amongst them, reinforcing the organisation's social policy, closeness with the new generations and reviewing the use of Falange’s symbols - greeting and uniform-. Before the Council took place, and given the path the SF would follow after that and that would highly affect their university branch, the Department of Labour of the SF-SEU was created. The goal of this new body, which from then on would be the "link" between the Women's SEU and the SF, was not the "creation of new activities, but to include in the SEU's plan tasks that the SF had been doing via those Departments that had previous experience" that is, the Cátedras Ambulantes and "social activities related to the Offices of Publication, Education and Twinning [between cities and the countryside]". In fact, they even considered the creation of Cátedras Ambulantes in the SF-SEU.

In the bulletin announcing the birth of the Department of Labour, Pilar Balle made a detailed explanation of the ideas behind its creation, establishing an alignment


with the purposes that the National Delegate stated in December: "there is an increasing need to promote the SEU's social activities" stated the Officer, so that the SF-SEU becomes a tool that is able to give female students the "possibility to be useful as a group" and to acquire "personal, non-theoretical, knowledge about the reality of life in Spain", as well as to learn "about the organisation and the possibilities of the Women's Section, thus fostering the attraction of the Falange". It was significant that Balle stressed that this area of the SF-SEU was more urgent than ever, "everyday, there are more groups (especially those coming from secular religious sections) that organise social activities with female students, making them unavailable for the SEU, the University's only official body". Women's catholic associations had always been a key rival for those falangist women, whose vision of femininity and support services overlapped in many areas with organisations such as Acción Católica. This had given way to situations of double affiliation amongst more junior members in the provinces, something that SEU female members wanted to avoid at universities, now that the feminine ideal of those catholic circles was being redefined towards more progressive positions and was gaining supporters.

A few days after the inauguration of the Department of Labour, female falangists hosted their 18th National Council, with the desire to ratify their decision to face the SEU's failure, to review the use of words typical from the falangist ritual and to infuse new generations with the real spirit of the Falange's social doctrine. The "February events" took place soon after the National Council, as if confirming their fears. In following academic years, a new union openness took place, enabling the democratic

60 Pilar Balle, Bulletin 210 that sets the rules for the Department of Labour of the SF-SEU, 18/1/1956, RAH, ANA, Carpeta 138.

61 With regard to double affiliation to the SF and AC, please refer to Inmaculada Blasco Herranz, "Sección Femenina" and "Acción Católica": la movilización de las mujeres durante el franquismo», Gerónimo de Uztaz, 21 (2005): 55-66. For Almería, Sofía Rodríguez López, El patio de la cárcel, op. cit., 251. The creation of the university association Amistad in 1956 in order to unite female catholic students was the best example of that influence in the university environment, Teresa Rodriguez de Lecea, «Mujer y pensamiento religioso en el franquismo», Ayer, 17 (1995): 173-200. María Salas, who was the first vice-president, described it as an area "of convergence of the three existing groups: Graduated Women of the A.C., University Virgin Mary congregations and a group of female university students belonging to or aligned with the Teresian institution", María Salas, De la promoción de la mujer a la teología feminista (Santander: Sal Terrae, 1993), 78. The way Catholicism opened up to a new egalitarian gender model can be found in Mónica Moreno Seco, «Ideal femenino y protagonismo de las mujeres en las culturas políticas del franquismo», Arenal, 15:2 (2008): 269-293.

election of course delegates and centre delegates. But, above all, subsequent years were marked by the de-falangisation of the SEU, the breakup with codes prescribed by the old falangist guard that had never been well accepted amongst citizens and that made no sense to maintain. Pilar Primo de Rivera addressed back then the SEU female members to make it clear to them that "to be or not to be is not down to one more or one less greeting, to one more or one less uniform, but to one more or one less membership". Thus, recalling the National Council of 1956, she asserted that "though it is true that symbols represent a value in themselves, abusing them may just become a routine or, in some cases, an obstacle for the inclusion of young people who were not educated as we were on the struggle, but that nevertheless must give continuity to our ideas." Therefore, somewhere in between backing-down and ratification, the National Delegate summed up the conclusion that the SF-SEU had to draw from a whole decade. The future was envisaged as difficult, but still able to be embraced by young people if the emphasis was placed on the original Falange's principles, still able to seduce female students in the eyes of Pilar Primo de Rivera: "it is not about victory, it is about convincing, that is, it is only a matter of sensitivity, of being able to capture, reading José Antonio, the depth, beauty and authenticity of its doctrine." That is why she urged for an understanding between the "Sección Femenina and the SEU, that like each other so much [and] must continue to understand each other to obtain a specific goal".

But the SEU's disappearance in April 1965 hindered that horizon. The strength of the students' movement had voided any possibility of democratic reform of the union, as the source of disagreements and opposition was its official body nature. The SEU was replaced by a new structure made up of Professional Students' Associations, representative and territorial, and one SEU Commission, that would act as "liaison" between those Associations and the Movement's National Delegation. The SF-SEU disappeared, but the female organisation was not willing to stop in its attempt to be present at universities, so in the Autumn of 1965 it set up the Office of Students and Graduates, the epilogue of the SF's history at universities. This new body started operations in 1965-66 as the successor of the SF-SEU, to give continuity to the work of the latter on the University Social Service and other training courses and institutions.

64 Miguel Ángel Ruiz Carnicer, El Sindicato Español Universitario, op. cit., 381-383.
(Hostels, Residences, and so on). Its Officer was also the director of the Women's Service of the Commission for the SEU, enabling the understanding between both bodies without that entailing the extension of the dual dependency from the past: the Office of Students and Graduates was now the sole property of the SF65.

Despite the celerity with which the organisation recovered from the events, the disappearance of the body the SF was so closely linked to led to great commotion amongst the female falangist hierarchy. In the 23rd National council of the SF, hosted in January 1966, the Officer of Students and Graduates presented a detailed report that aimed to diagnose the SEU's failures (men and women's) and to be a roadmap for the future66. The National Councils were always spaces for discussion where, according to the falangists" testimonies, all leaders expressed their opinion freely and openly, without censoring self-critical tones67. But the report on the SF at universities was exceptionally devastating. It spared no criticisms towards the union, accusing it of "not having known how to channel the students' opinions about a policy that had been wrongly defined and of lack of attraction" and of acting with representative openness "in the aftermath of events". That led to the failure of its proposals, even those that had managed to "anticipate the students' proposals, ahead of the political groups". The collapse of the SEU was also greatly due to the "teaching sector" and the "academic authority", but also, and this was especially significant because they had accused them of this in the past, to "a series of religious-like groups, especially the JEC, that tendentiously presented quotes of the encyclicals to objectively judge specific and detailed policies". This accusation was not minor; it showed the opinion of female falangists about militant catholic sectors that acted at universities, especially the JEC (Students' Catholic Youth), the university branch of Acción Católica68. Increasingly politicised since the beginning of the 1960s, its confrontation with the SEU and its message in favour of the democratisation of education had given greater popularity to the JEC, to the detriment of

67 Inbal Ofer, Señoritas in Blue, op. cit., 52.
the official union and its women's branch, who had witnessed, powerless, how those new groups gained a greater number of young students.

"Our lack of university minorities" could only be filled, according to the new Officer, changing the SF's strategy and focusing on "guiding, helping, influencing, instructing and promoting female graduates and working professional women. Looking for permanent contact with that group of the population that is starting a war and that is becoming important in Spain". Since the approval in 1961 of the Law on Political, Professional and Working Rights of Women, personally promoted by Pilar Primo de Rivera, the SF exhibited itself before the public opinion as the champion of women's labour rights - although this was contradictory with the position they had always kept regarding female remunerated work. Since then, the SF found it easy to claim the defence of women's labour rights at a time when the positive consequences of the stabilisation plan were still not clearly visible and when women still found many obstacles to get the jobs they could legally apply to. The creation of the Office for Students and Graduates was the most ambitious step taken by the organisation in that sense, and somehow, what better showed the intentions that were sometimes only used for propagandistic reasons. The rhetoric used was, finally, an example of the revival of the first national syndicalist discourse that had taken place for a decade in many sectors of the Falange and that found its perfect stage at universities. The final goal of the Office for Students and Graduates was to help female students join the labour market "waking them up from the gentrification that the profession may bury them in, promoting opinion movements within the Spanish society about hot and important

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70 There are at least two interpretations of this: one claiming that the falangist organisation was involved in those legal issues because it wanted to contribute to the emancipation of Spanish women, and another asserting that the SF started to promote those legal changes after being aware that it was being left behind when compared to the international context. An example of the former can be found in Victoria L. Enders, «Problematic Portraits: the Ambiguous Historical Role of the Sección Femenina of the Falange», Victoria L. Enders and Pamela B. Radcliff, Constructing Spanish Womanhood. Female identity in Modern Spain. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999); Inbal Ofer, Señoritas in Blue, op. cit., 79-103. The latter can be found in Aurora Morcillo, The True Catholic Womanhood, op. cit.; Rosario Ruiz Franco, ¿Eternas menores?, op. cit.
topics, [promoting] the actions by falangist minorities in the professional and political order"71.

CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between the SF and the universities was shadowed by a historiography that has focused the discussion on a single direction, wondering what was the footprint the women's organisation had amongst the female students it was meant to instruct. Although that issue is not minor, this paper aimed to question this chapter of history changing the subject-object relationship, focusing on the impact that the university had on the SF, in other words, the effect the constant contact of a group of falangists had in the university world and how it affected female falangism. Seen from this perspective, what previously seemed void of interest for historiography, now seems a space where new interpretations to key problems for the study of the SF could arise, such as those regarding the gender model and the issue of class for the female organisation.

These pages have shown the ability female falangism had to keep its own space within higher education, using it according to its needs. Its first proselytising objectives, just as ambitious as the whole falangist project, were soon thwarted by the poor welcome SEU female members had at universities. This did not stop SEU female members from keeping their space of power within the institution. Contrary to this, they reformulated their priorities and set the key goal (not the single goal) for the female SEU to appeal and educate female students that could become fresh blood to nurture the women's organisation. The fact that universities became the cradle of the SF's future elite seems paradoxical, given that the identity promoted by the SF-SEU encompassed some of the aspects that went against the model of femininity that the falangist organisation promoted.

The staunch defence of their limited space of power against their male counterparts and that blurred the image of submission to male command, or the plea in favour of an intellectualism that, although did not erode the feminise essence, was, deep

down, a somewhat deviation of the devotion to domestic life and that led to some testimonies that disagreed with the official discourse (as those on Radio SEU), turned the SEU female members into peculiar falangists within the organisation. But, the paradox that the SF looked for a source of revival in the SEU, as all paradoxes, is a contradiction only in appearance, For the female falangists, this way of acting was not inconsistent because female students were better educated and, for the SF, its target was still a "minority not prone to discouragement", the task of an avant-garde that, during its own Kampfzeit, had given rise to the SF and that now had to survive including those who were more able.

As well as that desire to include new blood, the SF-SEU is also an excellent study subject to explore the relationship that the female organisation had with other blue powers of the dictatorship. The hybrid nature of the SF-SEU puts its protagonists in a crossroad, especially sensitive to the transformations that took place in the SF and in the SEU. Its sensitivity to the evolution of the latter was also seen in the 1950s, when reviewing the initial falangist discourse meant that both the men's and women's group turned to more social and militant positions. Nevertheless, the female SEU never made a head-on criticism of the dictatorship, it never suggested a discourse in disagreement with the official one, all its projects were conceived within the regime, as a strategy to consolidate the power of the female falangists’ elite by tuning in to what they believed were the demands of the youth they aimed to attract.

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