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# THE SOUND PORTRAIT OF A DICTATOR

## A study of Franco's image in Radio Nacional de España (1937-1961)

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*This article explores the process carried out by Spain's state radio station -Radio Nacional de España- to devise the figure of Francisco Franco, first as a war hero, supreme chief of the rebel side of Spanish Civil War and, after the conflict ended, as a statesman and rebuilder of the Spanish nation, in his roles as head of state and Caudillo de España (leader of Spain). Through the examination of materials from newspapers, magazines, sound archives, censored scripts and administrative documentation, this research focuses on the capacity of state radio to adapt its discourse to convey the figure of a "charismatic" ruler that satisfies the needs of the Francoist regime to survive and legitimize itself. The article shows how state radio constructs a discourse around Franco arranged to the different speeds of the national and international political context that shook Spain, Europe and the occidental world from 1937 to 1961.*

**Keywords** Franco regime, Spanish Broadcasting History, Spain, Radio, Spanish radio, Spanish Civil War.

## Introduction

In the 1930s radio was in its golden age, at the height of its greatest popularity and expansion, and authoritarian states were well aware of this. Joseph Goebbels thought of radio as ‘an authoritarian medium in essence’ for its power to reach the entire population<sup>1</sup>, and political leaders across Europe sought to adapt to this new context to build their public image, a process that was adapted to the circumstances of each country, especially in dictatorships.

This construction of a ‘personality cult’ in Europe’s authoritarian regimes of the 1930s has been studied in numerous works, especially Adolf Hitler, which has been investigated from historical, psychological and sociological perspectives. Also, the mass media played a crucial role in this construction, although not all of the media have received the same attention<sup>2</sup>. Despite the wealth of research on dictatorships and media such as the press or the cinema, less attention has been given to radio, largely due to the methodological difficulties involved in its study<sup>3</sup>.

Spain was not exempt from this phenomenon, but the creation of the ‘myth of the Caudillo’ had its own distinctive characteristics, derived of the impoverished state of 1930’s Spain and the length of Francoism, which extended until 1975. This research addresses the radio’s role in the process of building and mythicizing the figure of Francisco Franco during the Spanish Civil War and the first twenty years of the Franco regime. This period is key to understanding the making of a political figure characterized by a capacity to adapt to the turning tides of the national and international situation<sup>4</sup>.

Radio in the Spanish Civil War had a singular importance, as it was the only media able to have national-spread coverage. The other main media before the war, newspapers, was fragmented, both in the adscription to a side and in the number of publications (more than 450). In the last year of the war, a severe paper shortage, further hindered their distribution. Moreover, newspapers -or prints- were taken and operated by disparate factions, both in republican and nationalist sides. Therefore, radio became a way for Franco to go beyond the faction disputes and have a single voice advocating for his leadership<sup>5</sup>. At this moment, Francoist broadcasting had two main objectives. The first, the creation of Radio Nacional de España (RNE) in January 1937, marked the culmination of the regime's radio project for its propaganda machine. Its objective was to combat – on a single radio front - the spread of the ideologically heterogeneous voices of the Republic on the airwaves<sup>6</sup>. The second purpose was to use radio to exalt Franco since his appointment as head of state and generalissimo of the Nationalist forces during the Spanish conflict on 30 September 1936. Consequently, mass media intensified his presence to

extremes and his figure elevated around an elaborate *caudillista* mythology and a charismatic leadership<sup>7</sup>.

The mythicized image of Franco's figure evolved along with the regime. A large body of research has chronicled this construction<sup>8</sup> and its projection in the mass media<sup>9</sup>. The contemporary research summarizes different efforts to combine charisma and political legitimacy to offer the doctrinal substrate to Francoism as an ideology and Franco as a leader, also the projection of these efforts through media depiction in the press, cinematographic newsreel or television. In any case, these approaches highlight an analysis about the cult of Franco's personality as a mythical leader of Spain as one of the central elements of the regime's propaganda apparatus and its socio-political foundation<sup>10</sup>. This elaboration builds up a war hero after the end of the Spanish Civil War and a modern government since the 1950s to the end of the regime<sup>11</sup>. However, no published study has addressed this construction through one of the most persuasive media of the time: radio<sup>12</sup>, despite the profusion of broadcasts to and from Spain by both sides of the Second World War<sup>13</sup>. This investigation analyzes the attempt of the dictatorship to build an image of leadership for Franco according to the circumstances of each decade: from the war hero to the statesman.

### **The 'written waves': research on radio history.**

The optimal method for this research would require the analysis of the radio programmes aired during this period. However, this is a complex task, given the almost total absence of extant sources, in other words, the messages themselves. Magnetophon recorders did not reach Spain until the mid-fifties and recordings were often re-used or discarded after use<sup>14</sup>. However, Radio Nacional de España hold some sound archive fragments from the period under study, which serve as a non-exhaustive reference.

Therefore, the source material used was, paradoxically, the printed word. Firstly, newspapers (*ABC*, the most widely distributed daily of the time) and the prominent radio magazines of the era: *Radio Nacional* (1939-1945), *Sintonía* (1947-1951) and *Ondas* (1952-1961). However, the documentation only gives an account of what the regime wanted to say. Other sources were analyzed to overcome this limitation, including circulars, correspondence and radio scripts endorsed by the official censor. These documents are deposited in the General Archive of the Administration in Alcalá de Henares (Madrid, Spain) and contain significant aspects of this research, albeit 'officially sanctioned by the regime', regarding the intentions of the state radio officials. Finally, we follow NO-DO<sup>15</sup> footage to compare Franco's presentation in other of the main media of this period.

## **Building a myth through radio broadcasts: the Spanish Civil War**

The advantages of radio over other media at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War were evident to the rebellious faction, the Nationalists. Their concept of radio would serve totalitarian ends: ‘under no circumstances will a Power like ours, born of war and legitimized by victory, abandon Radio, since it would be akin to precisely abandoning the basis of the cultural and political education of the Spanish people’<sup>16</sup>. In any event, faith in the medium served as the driving force behind the first broadcasts of RNE in January 1937. The good results, despite the material shortcomings, led to making the effort of launching a more established, unified broadcaster<sup>16</sup>. Initially it was the 'official voice' of the rebel camp; once the war was over, the station became a cornerstone of official propaganda to consolidate the legitimacy of the 'New State'<sup>17</sup> through the figure of Franco, leader of the regime and victorious general.

In the first months after the uprising, widely known as the *Alzamiento*, Nationalist propaganda highlighted the military exploits of the insurgent generals. From 1 October 1936, with Franco proclaimed head of the Spanish government and state, attention was turned to the figure of the new Caudillo. The key points of the propaganda of this period covered Franco's meteoric military career and his appointment as generalissimo of the armies. More specifically, radio propaganda began the construction of Franco's figure based on his status as a soldier and his role as army general. As the conflict unfolded, the successive Nationalist victories portrayed an image of a brilliant strategist or a triumphant general, as illustrated in a message broadcast by Radio Castilla de Burgos on 22 November 1936, signaling the ‘capture of the Spanish capital’:

The Head of State, His Excelentísimo Señor General Franco, has indicated that the imminent capture of El Escorial and its monastery of San Lorenzo, the principal historical and religious center of Spain, would be the same as the conquest of the capital. As far as Madrid is concerned, General Franco does not consider it just to take the city by armed force and avoid unnecessary blood spilling.

As for Franco himself, however, the general's voice was not without its shortcomings, which were difficult to conceal. The radio propaganda officials had to contend with the fact that Franco spoke with ‘soft, high-pitched reedy voice, which, besides sounding rather unmasculine and preadolescent, would frequently break into a rather ridiculous squeak’<sup>18</sup>. The fragments of extant sound archives highlight some of these oratorical defects. He comes across as an orator with limited speaking skills and little ability to improvise; indeed, his radio addresses reveal he is ‘reading’ and expose his pronunciation errors. Therefore, gifted speakers sought to elevate Franco and extol his virtues in his radio broadcasts. Examples to follow included the Spanish

Legion commander, Millán Astray's 'firebrand' style; General Queipo de Llano's 'alcoholic gruffness'; or Fernández de Córdoba – the Nationalist radio's official announcer's 'severe' delivery style.

Franco's radio debut, one day after the taking of Badajoz, serves as an example. Here one detects some radio-speaking guidance in his addresses, a style he maintained throughout the three-year conflict. Millán Astray would introduce Franco with slogans such as 'Franco in battle', 'Franco will win the war and the peace', or 'Franco, the driver of Spain'<sup>19</sup>. Millán Astray's would often perform the role of Franco's regular 'opening act'. The 'choruses' and cheers of appreciation also served to project the general's voice to the foreground<sup>20</sup>. In any case, the general's sporadic and rare proclamations during the Spanish Civil War were managed by Millán Astray and the journalists Víctor Ruiz Albéniz, Luís Bolín or José María Pemán<sup>21</sup>. However, attempts to obfuscate the contrast between Franco's oratorical skills and those of other figures of the regime was only a part of this process of Franco's subterfuge.

Another tactic adopted by the Nationalist propaganda officials was to keep General Franco's potential rivals in the background. Relevant figures of the rebellion that could upstage the rising Caudillo included Queipo de Llano (very popular general from the South of Spain), José Antonio Primo de Rivera and Millán Astray (founder of the Legión and former mentor of Franco, he was a symbol as severely mutilated war-hero). Another tactic to rest attention away from the figure of Franco was done by directing fierce and derisive attacks on Republican leaders, such as Juan Negrín (Prime Minister of the Republic from 1937 until the end of the war, he was the main advocate of seeking the support of the communists and USSR to resist until the apparently imminent beginning of World War Two), Miguel Azaña (President of the Republic during the whole war), Vicente Rojo (chief of the General Staff of republican forces, he was one of the most prestigious militaries in the war, and even Franco made a flattering portrait in his later film *Raza*), La Pasionaria (communist politician that symbolized the will to resist), among others<sup>22</sup>.

Nationalist propaganda took pains to ignore the 'absence' of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, who had been incarcerated since 14 March 1936 in an Alicante prison, where he would be shot on 20 November 1936. José Antonio, or 'El Ausente' (the Absent One), as he would be known after his death, was the leader of Falange, a fascist party which had been marginal during the Second Republic, but whose importance was snowballing since the beginning of the war, both due to the influx of new members (as a way to 'show compromise' with the rebels and to acquire privileges) and because it was the seed of the single-party that would support Franco's regimen, FET (Falange Española Tradicionalista). Therefore, Primo de Rivera symbolized the original,

'authentic', Falange, while Franco was seen as the pretender who tried to use the party for his ends. The founder's doctrinal discourses were temporarily silenced after his death, as was the news of his execution, which led to tension in the Nationalist camp<sup>23</sup>. Radio Nacional did not announce Primo de Rivera's death (on 20 November 1936) until 'the communiqué' of 16 October 1938. This was intended to avoid the distraction of attention that was supposed to be directed at Franco. This process also included the temporary silencing of the doctrinal speeches of the founder of Falange. This situation - the silencing of the death of the founder of Falange caused some tensions within the National Party. For example, in the weeks before the Falange unification decree, some 'squadrons' occupied the Radio Castilla station in Burgos on 3 February 1937. Then they read José Antonio's speech delivered at the Europa cinema on 2 February 1936, whose dissemination had been prohibited by Franco's Propaganda Services<sup>24</sup>. José Antonio Primo de Rivera was not the only figure within the national camp to be eclipsed by General Franco on the radio. Since the beginning of the conflict, General Queipo de Llano had contributed to the popularity of the national side's cause and, specifically, to its initial success in Seville. First was his radiophonic talks on the initial days of the Spanish Civil War. He was much more 'charismatic' than Franco, with more remarkable ability and fluency in speech, and with a 'sparkling' style that became enormously popular. Queipo's improvised vehemence was the main stumbling block faced by those responsible for propaganda in Seville, fearful that the general would deviate from the guidelines issued by the state or Falange 'press and propaganda' services. Since 1 February 1938, Queipo de Llano stopped broadcasting his famous talks to avoid overshadowing the myth around Franco as a victorious leader<sup>25</sup>. On that date, also, the National Radio station from the Palacio de Anaya in Salamanca was transferred to Burgos, the seat of the new Government appointed by Franco. A significant movement. State radio accompanies the National Government (and therefore, Franco) wherever it might be.

The aggrandizement of the figure Franco also required Radio Nacional to spread the message to the broadest and most receptive audience possible. One of the best opportunities to achieve this was by addressing the potentially most receptive audience: children. To this end, in 1938, Fernández de Córdoba, recounting Franco's life on the children's radio program 'Ondas Animadas', tapped into the national sentiment:

Generalissimo Franco. He was born at El Ferrol and that's why it's now called Ferrol del Caudillo. Franco always galloped ahead of his brave legionaries on his white, graceful horse. The enemy were petrified upon seeing the approaching child-like captain, his

sword drawn, followed by his legionaries shouting at the top of their lungs: 'Viva España!' And they cried the same when they won as when they died.

At the age of 20, Franco was a captain.

He's the Caudillo who led us to victory. As he is very brave and very good, he loves Spanish children very much. When you wake up or go to bed, don't forget to pray every day, 'My God, I love Spain very much. I dearly love Generalissimo Franco'<sup>26</sup>.

Nationalist radio output also increased indirect presence of the figure of the Caudillo. The main objective of this was to have listeners associate Radio Nacional with "the voice of Spain, identified with the Caudillo and his government". However, the radio programming's objectives went one step further. Millán Astray conferred on Franco the material authorship of all the war dispatches aired by Radio Nacional<sup>27</sup>. The regime's different official biographers have always defended this authorship, which more recent studies have categorically refuted. This 'caudillization' of the war dispatch had already been supported by the very announcer of the dispatches, Fernández de Córdoba, who described them as 'The Diary of the Generalissimo'<sup>28</sup>.

In short, the war saw the first attempts at *caudillaje* around the figure of Franco. An undertaking that involved the setting up of an incipient propaganda apparatus in which radio broadcasting, under the flagship of the recently launched RNE, would be pivotal in disseminating the voice and slogans of the figure profiled as Spain's future leader.

### **The forties: the victorious Caudillo**

The first years of the dictatorship developed two main processes concerning broadcasting: on the one hand, the effort of the dictatorship to control information, and on the other, in direct relation to the above, by the construction of a nationwide broadcasting apparatus with its corresponding administrative system. In this context, the radio's role in building the figure of Francisco Franco as Caudillo was a continuation of the station's work during the Civil War. Franco was the victorious general and it was on this merit that the legitimacy of the 'New State' would be founded. The historical interpretation of the regime's theorists pointed to this reality: the conflict had been inevitable and necessary. The winning side had saved Spain, restoring the country order and stability just in time to prevent it from sliding into anarchy and falling into the clutches of communism.

All of the regime's media and channels of communication contributed to the mythification of Franco's figure. The slogans and the censorship show that this construction resulted from a meticulous design<sup>29</sup>, intensified even more than it was during the Civil War. Radio broadcasting

was able to 'camouflage' the leader's idiosyncrasies better than the NO-DO could. Both media had to forge an image from the mediocre material available, although it was a greater challenge for cinema to transform raw footage than for radio. Radio editing, speaker participation before and after Franco's addresses or the hubbub of the crowd itself sufficed to offset the Caudillo's limited oratorical skills. No one dared to point out, either in public or in private, the generalissimo's possible flaws in matters of oratory. The only reference found in the official press regarding the Caudillo's speech-making abilities is therefore quite enlightening:

His speech at the closing ceremony of the III Trade Union Council is a model of oratory.

The oratory of the Generalissimo! Unequivocal, austere, firm, including warm accents of emotion that drive one to act [...] Serenely, with simple solemnity. Without flattery or dialectical skills, conducive to applause<sup>30</sup>.

This reference, interpreted less fervently, portrays Franco as a reader of speeches written with little interest in improvisation, whose statements adhered to the brevity that had characterized him during the Spanish Civil War and maintained throughout the 1940s. Despite the purported modesty of these speeches, Radio Nacional meticulously chronicled the Caudillo's tours around Spain and the proclamations delivered on them. The habitual absence of Franco's voice on the airwaves was made up for by the announcers themselves, who elevated his figure through accounts, reports, indirect references or summaries of the Caudillo's speeches. In this context, a feature of continuity in this process concerning the Civil War was the overt emphasis of Franco's military status during the 1940s. He was most frequently referred to by his rank: 'Generalissimo of the Spanish Army' or 'Caudillo of all Spaniards'. When taking part in ceremonies involving the Falange, he was the 'National Leader of the Movement'.

The aggrandizement of Franco the soldier was particularly evident at one of the regime's major annual celebrations, the marking of the 18 July 'Alzamiento Nacional', which for political propaganda purposes, the mass media would seize upon to lionize the figure of the Caudillo. One particular event commemorated the role of Franco and the 'African' army in the 'uprising to save the homeland'. On this type of occasion, the radio would habitually broadcast slogans such as 'among all the dates that the National Syndicalist State commemorates, July the 18th is the one that makes us most feel the strong emotion of being Spanish, perhaps because civil wars sharpen the national sentiment that is ultimately the love of the Patria'<sup>31</sup>.

These conventions give an idea of the two realities that were sought to be brought together at these commemorations. One was general and dominated all celebrations: the exaltation of and allegiance to the figure of the Caudillo. The other was to acknowledge the Falange, as a protagonist and articulator, which was present in all areas of Spanish society.

The values associated with the Caudillo were interpreted, in a large part, in accordance the slogans that emanated from the official propaganda apparatus, which provided a list of aspects that could - and should - be addressed when referring to the head of state over the radio. The thematic lines were:

1. The Caudillo Statesman and Politician
2. Reminder of what we owe to the Caudillo
3. The Caudillo, the chief architect of Victory
4. The Caudillo and Spain's international problems
5. The Caudillo and the Falange
6. The Military Leader
7. The Leader, Africa and the Legion
8. The Caudillo and the Sea
9. The Caudillo and national reconstruction
10. The popularity of the Caudillo
11. The Caudillo in the Spanish trade union organization
12. The Caudillo and the Spanish Youth
13. The Caudillo and the Spanish post-war period<sup>32</sup>

Of these thirteen points, at least four (1, 4, 9 and 13) refer to Franco as a statesman. Five of them (2, 3, 6, 7 and 8) present him as a soldier; the remaining four (5, 10, 11 and 12) could be included in a broad section that indistinctly expresses forms of political and popular support.

The other aspect that characterized Franco's portrayal during the 1940s was the exaltation of a charismatic leader venerated and loved by his people. Not surprisingly, the exaltation of the mass's forms part of the dictatorial roots of the Franco regime. The NO-DO archives contain a significant number of populist events featuring Franco with the people. However, these manifestations of support for Franco and the dictatorship were much more difficult to transmit by radio:

Last Monday the 26th [January 1942] at one o'clock in the afternoon, Radio Nacional de España broadcasted to Spain the brilliant events that took place in the capital of Catalonia to mark the third anniversary of its liberation. The jubilation of the crowd boomed constantly through our microphones. To the victorious march pass of the Army and the Falange. These commemorations were presided over by the head of the Spanish state, who was constantly cheered [...] Then, amid an outpouring of enthusiasm from the crowd, the Caudillo delivered the following speech...<sup>33</sup>.

This display of popular support could be acknowledged as a sign of unconditional loyalty to the figure of Franco, both for the masses attending the event and for their devotion. The first sentence of the leader's address, imbued with a hint of paternal condescension, did not dispel the enthusiasm and spontaneity of the crowd: 'Dear people of Barcelona, if you could remain

silent for a few moments, I might be able to say a few words'. The very act of reading, four years later, the communiqué announcing the liberation of Barcelona, was an assertion of who had led the victory, and it was particularly directed at the critics (inside and outside) of the regime.

### **The fifties: head of state**

However, the aggrandizement of both the army and Franco's role in the Spanish Civil War evolved into a more useful way to cover a regime that, having consolidated its position, sought to cement its legitimacy less on the increasingly distant civil war and more on its peacetime achievements. Reference to Franco's status pivoted from 'Caudillo' and 'Generalissimo' to 'His Excellence Head of State'. The move away from references to Franco's military status in favor of his status as head of state and architect of the country's regeneration likely responded to the regime's needs to recover Spain's place on the international stage, following the isolation to which the country was subjected. In the political narrative, references to the exercise of the powers of head of state and head of government were more frequent at receptions of ambassadors and diplomats, in swearings-in of new ministers, whose councils he presided over, and in the presidency of the inaugural sessions of the Cortes.

This was evident in the late forties' radio broadcasts, which gave ample coverage to visits by foreign state dignitaries as a visible demonstration of Franco's support abroad, at least, as the state propaganda understood it. Radio Nacional de España contributed to the elaboration of the speeches at all such events. The government was mindful of the gravity of Spain's diplomatic deadlock after the Second World War and of the message it needed to send to the Spanish people. Thus, the visits of the First Lady of Argentina, Evita Perón (1947) and King Abdullah I of Jordan (1949) were covered as state occasions.

After World War Two, Spain was ostracized by the international community, which was represented in 1946, when other countries removed their ambassadors and Spain was expelled of the UN. However, in the 50's began the gradual return of Spain to the international system, mainly sponsored by the United States, in the wake of their anti-communist alliances during the Cold War, with the return to the UN in 1955, and, most of all, the Pact of Madrid (1953), by which the United States could use Spanish military bases in exchange for economic benefits. The most prominent symbol of the ending of Spain's period of international isolation was when the President of the United States, Dwight Eisenhower, landed at the U.S. airbase at Torrejón de Ardoz on 21 December 1959 – the first official visit to Spain by an American president.

The visit offered an excellent opportunity to highlight the regime's stability thanks to the support of the West's foremost power. That the United States could now be considered allies

sent a clear message to the Spanish population in general, and the internal and external opposition in particular. More important, it was a superb opportunity to present Franco as a leader of international relevance, almost in equal footing with the US President. After Franco greeted Eisenhower at the foot of the plane, Radio Nacional's announcer, Matías Prats, broadcast, 'Spain, Mr. President, opens its doors to you'<sup>34</sup>. The live connection was then returned to RNE's central studios in Madrid, where two announcers began a detailed running commentary – based on a previously written script – of the route the presidential motorcade transferring both Eisenhower and Franco to Madrid was supposedly taking. Thus, to the sound of recorded military band music, the announcers, sitting in the studios of RNE, filled the gap between the first broadcast from Torrejón de Ardoz airbase to the center of Madrid, when they announced: 'We are now linking up with our teams in Plaza de España. We're live'. And two new announcers took up the commentary, reeling off new patriotic metaphors. Doubtless, it was a momentous occasion for this series of 'great visits' between Spain's isolation and its return to the international fold, and a reinforcement for the image of Franco as leader of international relevance. It was, in any case, a coup for the regime's propaganda machinery and its foreign office, and, as the presenters of the time said, 'the radio was there'.

The second demonstration of the change in Franco's elevation from soldier to politician is shown in the coverage given to the dictator in the high days of the regime. Furthermore, the July 18th commemoration continued to evolve, as the radio coverage did.

The more blatant totalitarian aspects, such as references to the uprising, were gradually phased out. The celebration became a somewhat more intimate affair, with Franco holding an official reception for his government, those in the senior echelons of the state and the diplomatic corps. As has already been pointed out, the closest the commemoration came to "a palatial feast, with all the pomp of a royal court, took place in the afternoon in the Gardens of the Palace of La Granja". This superficial facelift from the late forties onwards, saw explicit references to the *Alzamiento* disappear from the state radio broadcasts. The holiday would now be considered as 'the day of unity'. In practice, greater emphasis was given to the festive aspects of the event than to the uprising or the eminent military and political Nationalist figures of the early years of the Civil War. The broadcast underscored the first decade of peace, having kept Spain out of the Second World War as well as a raft measures of heaven-sent inspiration undertaken by 'Spain's rector in these difficult times'<sup>35</sup> In short, RNE reflected the regime's search for the legitimacy that led to a new reading of its origins.

Besides, other commemorative dates highlighting the figure of Franco as a statesman were gradually incorporated, such as October 1st, the anniversary of Franco's official appointment

as head of state in 1936. Radio Nacional de España received precise instructions on the aggrandizement of the figure of the Caudillo. Hence, in order to ‘ensure that this would not be reduced to a mere literary expression, it is necessary to present to the audience the political stature of the Generalissimo, expounding, albeit briefly, some of the things that, in the different aspects of national life, we Spaniards owe to him’<sup>36</sup>.

Despite these initial proposals of the Vice-Secretariat of Popular Education, from outset there was no intention other than the exaltation of Franco himself. Spain’s situation in the early 1940s was not conducive to triumphalism either. The country was in ruins and hungry; little else could be offered than words and music. It is enough to read a subsequent rule (issued by this same body) to grasp the scant originality between the regime’s different festivities. The propaganda guidelines in 1942 dictated:

1.- In the morning broadcast, a brief reference shall be made to the meaning of the day of the Caudillo and National Head of the Movement. Subsequent broadcasts, that is to say, lunchtime, afternoon and evening broadcasts, shall exalt the figure of our Caudillo and Head of State, who made Spain find itself and led it to the victory [...]<sup>37</sup>.

The radiophonic coverage of the October 1<sup>st</sup> celebrations is directly linked to the evolution of this date. The saint's-day dimension that the event acquired and its relocation to the Pardo placed this anniversary in the Caudillo's innermost sanctum. The NO-DO newsreel covered it quite faithfully<sup>38</sup> and Radio Nacional also did a series of reports on it, one of which, held at the Spanish National Radio Archive, remains intact. First broadcast on 1 October 1958, under the title ‘Un día del Caudillo’ [A day in the life of the Caudillo], it sought to substantiate the ‘twenty-one years since the glorious date on which Francisco Franco was proclaimed Caudillo of all Spaniards; twenty-one years in which our people have understood many things well, not only that they owe peace and the restoration of things to Franco [...] Never in the history of Spain has there been a person with such a total commitment and devotion to his people’<sup>39</sup>.

While the tone of exaltation is not new, the 10-minute treatment of the Caudillo mentions his (excellent) state of health, his work as governor, his humanistic pursuits (a love of painting, reading and cinema), his Catholic identity, his hobbies (hunting and fishing) and his sacrifice for the good of Spain. The piece concludes with ‘the assessment of a typical day in life of the Caudillo of all Spaniards: 14 hours of work and 6 hours of sleep. Franco does not favor the siesta. He is a good workhorse that, while denying him the pleasures of street life, a stroll in public, the personal acquisition of a book, a tie, fishing tackle, is immersed in the inaccessible satisfaction of governing the country as God commands’<sup>40</sup>.

## Conclusions

Radio – especially the state broadcaster – was instrumental in the propagandistic orchestration of Franco's radio figure as leader of the insurgent faction and, later, as a political figure. In this context, RNE's first broadcasts of Franco-related commemorations cast the dictator as the soldier who became the guarantor of the regime and its most traditional values. In this sense, everything seems to indicate that Radio Nacional de España built a radio image of Franco and his government that responded more to the aspirations of the state than to daily reality. This process was developed on two fronts: in daily radio broadcasts and in a selection of events with a strong symbolic charge that defined the archetypes and served to show the resolve in defining the regime's domestic and international course of action, as also happened in other dictatorships, such in Portugal<sup>41</sup>. Future research could explore the radiophonic connections between Franco in Spain and Salazar in Portugal and their radio use as a propaganda tool to highlight parallels between the two Iberian cases.

In this light, it is worth noting the chronological variable and the state radio's periplex around the construction of both the figure of Franco and the regime itself. Radio Nacional de España adapted to the different speeds of domestic and foreign policy throughout the duration of the regime by collaboration in transforming the figure on which Spain's legitimacy was based.

The role of RNE was likely perceived as indispensable, given the medium's wide social penetration, despite its limited geographical reach<sup>42</sup> which advanced at different speeds due to the lack of radio infrastructure and the slow advance of the country's electrification, which during those years was limited to the most built-up areas. However, the radio's capacity to bring the figure of the Caudillo into the Spanish population's most 'intimate' milieu - the family - was, in this sense, its greatest triumph, if only because of the scarce impact of the other media in the first decades of the Franco regime. Despite this, it is not easy to gauge the degree of acceptance that Franco's figure managed to achieve among the Spanish audience or the general population. On the one hand, in the initial years of the Spanish post-war period, its aura of success among its supporters, who were not a small minority, should not be underestimated. One way to explain it reasonably would be precisely to admit certain greatness or superiority to the enemy. Nor should we forget the potential boomerang effect of radio propaganda. Dissent, especially that related to daily problems, was carried out in the private sphere, such as the popular catchphrase "less Franco and more white bread", which became a usual, ironic -if discreet- response in front of the music and the greeting of the 'part' of Radio Nacional<sup>43</sup>. Without data, and we do not have enough, it is impossible to establish a balance. There is no doubt that archetypes'

construction gains strength as their audiences give them credibility, but that does not depend so much on official bodies but on the predisposition of the recipients to assimilate the messages broadcast. Therefore, it can be affirmed that the experience was perceived as sufficient as soon as the construction of a specific image of Franco was achieved and transmitted. Another thing is the collective mentalities of the citizens who lived and listened to these historical moments.

## Notes

1. Reuth, "Goebbels. Una biografía", 317-318.
2. Sparks, *Communism, Capitalism and the Mass Media*.
3. Gómez García & Martín Quevedo, "Crusade over the airwaves".
4. Preston, *Franco*, 95 and Moradiellos, *Franco. Anatomía de un dictador*, 82-88.
5. Núñez, *La prensa de guerra en la zona republicana durante la Guerra Civil española*.
6. Davies, *The first radio war*, 473-478.
7. Box, *Construcción simbólica del franquismo*, 322-324.
8. Preston, *Franco*, 100-105 and Box, *Construcción simbólica del franquismo*, 322-325.
9. Sevillano, *Propaganda y m.d.c. en el franquismo*, 62.; Ellwood, "Image of Franco regime", 227; Palacio, "Early Spanish Television", 602-605 and Thomas, *La Falange de Franco*.
10. Moradiellos, *Franco. Anatomía de un dictador*, 208-228.
11. Rodríguez, *Un franquismo de cine*, 36-101.
12. Goody, "Radio Voices and Propaganda", 196.
13. García, "Pawns in Chess Game", 413-415.
14. Balsebre, *Historia de la radio en España. Vol. I*, 9-11.
15. NO-DO was the official newsreel whose exhibition was mandatory in every cinema until 1981. It became one of the main propaganda vehicles of Francoism and served to shape the collective mind of the Spaniards, especially about Franco and the State. Francoism used NO-DO to present the official stance about national and international issues, but also to create an image of a unified, prosper and peaceful Spain, in which traditions and Catholicism were the main cultural roots (Tranche, Sánchez-Biosca, & Otero, *NO-DO: el tiempo y la memoria*). RTVE, Spain's public broadcaster, and Filmoteca Española provide free online access to the entire NO-DO catalogue. It can be found in <https://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/>
16. Tovar, 1939, "La radio como instrumento de propaganda", *Radio Nacional*, July 16.
17. Gómez-García & Martín-Quevedo, "Radio Nacional de España en el laberinto franquista"

18. Ramírez, *Franco, historia de mesianismo*, 40.
19. De Silva, *General Millán Astray*, 236-237.
20. Franco's speech during Spanish Civil War (18/4/1937).  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PVksDRtbPc>
21. Blanco, *Incompetencia militar de Franco*, 248-249.
22. Balsebre, *Historia de la radio en España. Vol. I*, 395-401.
23. Rodríguez, *Historia de la Falange*, 273.
24. Ridruejo, *Casi unas memorias*, 87
25. Quevedo y Queipo de Llano, *Queipo de Llano. Gloria e infortunio de un general*, 237.
26. RNE Archive. Catalog reference P-CT-0033576.
27. Fernández de Córdoba, 1939, "Radio Nacional por dentro", *Radio Nacional*, February 26, pp.6-7.
28. Fernández de Córdoba, F. *Memorias de un soldado locutor*, 5.
29. Peñalba-Sotorrío, "Nazi Propaganda Aims", 906-908; Sevillano, *Propaganda y m.d.c. en el franquismo* and Box, *Construcción simbólica del franquismo*.
30. No signature. 1945. *Radio Nacional*, February 4, p. 1.
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38. Rodríguez, *Un franquismo de cine*, 91-96.
39. Report about a day in the life of the Caudillo, Francisco Franco. In RNE Archive, reference FR176<2>A0003046.
40. *Ibidem*.
41. Ribeiro, "Portuguese press during World War", 363-367.
42. Gómez & Cabeza, "Audiencias radiofónicas del franquismo", 120-124.
43. Díaz, "El hambre y la gastronomía", 12.

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