



# The Social Assistance of Falange and the identity construction of the new childhood in the Franco dictatorship

Patricia Delgado-Granados<sup>1</sup> and Bárbara de-las-Heras-Monastero<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla, España. <sup>2</sup>Facultad de Educación, Psicología y Ciencias del Deporte, Universidad de Huelva, Av. de las Fuerzas Armadas, s/n, 21007, Huelva, España. \*Author for correspondence. E-mail: barbara.delasheras@dedu.uhu.es

**ABSTRACT.** The issue of childhood in dictatorships is still the subject of marginal and insufficient attention by historians of education. In the case of Spain, the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975) silenced the memory of those defeated in the Civil War, with children being the main victims. Our study takes as its starting point the Falangist institution Social Assistance, erected as the most emblematic welfare agency of the Franco regime, whose main function was to discipline the child's soul and resocialize the school population from the territories of the vanquished -the Republicans-. The analysis of the research evidences the mechanisms of control and punitivism used by Social Assistance for the identity construction of the 'New Child'. In this work of coercive reorganization of childhood, Newsreels and Documentaries (hereinafter, NO-DO) became during the dictatorship the best propaganda tool to tell audiovisually the role of Social Assistance in the dissemination of national-syndicalist and national-Catholic values. The methodology applied has been the historical-educational research through the bibliographic review, the use of primary sources and the analysis of audiovisual archives. The results show the importance of NO-DO to disseminate an image of childhood, which contrasts with the identity developed by the children who passed through the Social Assistance institutions, as well as to elaborate a propaganda story that promoted the social acceptance of the Franco regime both nationally and internationally.

**Keywords:** the Franco's regime; childhood; education; Social Assistance; NO-DO newsreels.

## A Assistência Social da Falange e a construção identitária da nova infância na ditadura franquista

**RESUMO.** O tema da infância nas ditaduras ainda é objeto de atenção marginal e insuficiente por parte dos historiadores da educação. No caso da Espanha, a ditadura de Franco (1939-1975) silenciou a memória dos derrotados na Guerra Civil, sendo a infância a principal vítima. Nosso estudo toma como ponto de partida a instituição falangista Auxílio Social, consagrada como a mais emblemática organização assistencial do regime franquista, cuja principal função era disciplinar a alma da criança e ressocializar a população escolar dos territórios dos derrotados -os republicanos-. A análise da pesquisa mostra os mecanismos de controle e punitivismo utilizados pelo Auxílio Social para a construção identitária da 'Criança Nova'. Neste trabalho de reordenamento coercitivo da infância, as Notícias e Documentários (doravante NO-DO) tornaram-se durante a ditadura a melhor ferramenta de propaganda para relacionar audiovisualmente o papel do Auxílio Social na difusão dos valores nacional-sindicalistas e nacional-católicos. A metodologia aplicada foi a pesquisa histórico-educativa por meio de revisão bibliográfica, utilização de fontes primárias e análise de arquivos audiovisuais. Os resultados mostram a importância que o NO-DO teve na divulgação de uma imagem de infância, que contrasta com a identidade desenvolvida pelos meninos e meninas que passaram pelas instituições de Assistência Social, bem como no desenvolvimento de uma história de propaganda que promoveu a aceitação social do regime de Franco, tanto a nível nacional como internacional.

**Palavras chave:** ditadura de Franco; infância; educação; Assistência Social; Notícias NO-DO.

## El Auxilio Social de Falange y la construcción identitaria de la nueva infancia en la dictadura franquista

**RESUMEN.** El tema de la infancia en las dictaduras aún sigue siendo objeto de una atención marginal e insuficiente por parte de los historiadores de la educación. En el caso de España, la dictadura franquista (1939-1975) silenció la memoria de los vencidos en la Guerra Civil, siendo la infancia la principal perjudicada. Nuestro estudio toma como punto de partida la institución falangista Auxilio Social, erigida

como el organismo asistencial más emblemático del régimen de Franco, cuya principal función consistió en disciplinar el alma infantil y resocializar la población escolar procedente de los territorios de los vencidos - los republicanos-. El análisis de la investigación evidencia los mecanismos de control y punitivismo empleados por Auxilio Social para la construcción identitaria del 'Niño Nuevo'. En esta labor de reordenación coactiva de la infancia, Noticiarios y Documentales (en adelante, NO-DO) se convirtieron durante la dictadura en la mejor herramienta propagandística para relatar audiovisualmente el papel de Auxilio Social en la difusión de los valores nacionalsindicalistas y nacionalcatólicos. A nivel metodológico es una investigación histórico-educativa, empleándose la revisión bibliográfica, la utilización de fuentes primarias y el análisis de los archivos audiovisuales. Los resultados muestran la importancia que tuvo el NO-DO para difundir una imagen de la infancia, que contrasta con la identidad que desarrollaron los niños y niñas que pasaron por las instituciones de Auxilio Social, así como para elaborar un relato propagandístico que promoviera la aceptación social del régimen franquista tanto a nivel nacional como internacional.

**Palabras-clave:** dictadura franquista; infancia; educación; Auxilio Social; Noticiarios NO-DO.

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## Introduction

As stated by Tiana (2007, p. 203), the main characteristic of the past, given its nature, is its transience; in other words, "[...] that which no longer exists, that passed by and has now disappeared. All that is left of it are traces, marks, mere remnants, generally disorganised and partial". The task of the historian consists of reconstructing and recreating those footprints from the past, on forgotten and silenced occasions over a long period of time, with the aim of thoroughly recomposing that part of history that builds our own identity and forms part of our memory. In this regard, Miralles and Gómez (2017, p. 11) assert that:

[...] In both historical research and the teaching of history, memory should be *deconstructed* to then be turned into history. This process, which combines memory, history and identity, has been used habitually by the power [...] to convey its message and turn it into socially accepted truth.

From this perspective, one of the themes that continues to receive marginal and insufficient attention from education historians is that of childhood in dictatorships. In the case of Spain, there are very few references that focus on childhood education in the context of the civil war and the immediate Franco regime (Valiente, 2010; Cenarro, 2013). Some of the most recognisable reasons for this are due to its voluntary nature, which meant that the State intervention was almost nil, leaving it "[...] practically in the hands of private initiative which covered, only in part, the demand generated by this field" (Monés, 1991, p. 155). This has meant that there are very few specific studies on childhood during the Franco regime, and that it has been relegated to the background in scholarship that focuses on the history of education. In turn, few studies have analysed the social politics during this period<sup>1</sup>.

This article is framed within this field of research, taking as its object of analysis the Social Assistance<sup>2</sup> and the set of welfare initiatives promoted by the Franco dictatorship<sup>3</sup> in order to analyse the construction of the identity of the new childhood. In this sense, as highlighted by Cenarro (2013), the name 'children of the Social Assistance' was a category constructed during the Spanish post-war period that encompassed, both generally and non-specifically, all those who had spent all or part of their lives in one of the children's homes that formed part of the Falangist welfare network. Under these premises, childhood was not perceived so much as an aim, but as an instrument with specific political and geostrategic objectives by way of which the regime aspired to consolidate and instil [...] the breath of the National Revolution" (Orden de 28 de mayo de 1938, p. 7568).

The analysis of Social Assistance in Spanish childhood has enabled the revelation of how its influence came to extend across Spain, becoming, over the years, the most emblematic charitable-social institution of the Franco regime, aimed at modelling the 'New Child'. Thus, this article aims to cover an historiographic-educational gap, such as the study of childhood during dictatorships, based on the analysis of the Social

<sup>1</sup> In Spain, research on the history of childhood education has been seldom addressed. We can highlight the following scholarship, among others: Fernández y Mayordomo (1984); VVAA (1987); Sarasúa (2002); Fernández (2010); Sanchidrián y Ruiz (2010); Ortega (2011); Payá (2006); Payá y Chamorro (2018).

<sup>2</sup> Cerdeira (1987) highlights two key stages in the Francoist Social Action model. The first stage, known as 'State Welfare' (1939-1958), began during the Civil War and ended with the Stabilisation Plan; and the second stage, 'Social Assistance' (1959-1978), runs from the Stabilisation Plan to the Constitution (1959-1978).

<sup>3</sup> From a political perspective, the lengthy duration of the dictatorship (1939-1975) makes it necessary to periodise it. Among other reasons, because, as time progressed, the ideological essence of the regime became increasingly complex, coexisting with the fascist and post-fascist social democratic eras on an international scale (Payne, 1987; Moradiellos, 2017). There is general acceptance among historians that Francoism should be periodised in a tripartite way. As stated by Preston (2015), this article distinguishes three phases: the Blue Period, between 1946 and 1945, of a marked imperialist and fascist nature; the Period of National Catholic Corporatism, between 1945 and 1959; and the Developmentalism or Technocracy, between 1959 and 1975.

Assistance institution in terms of the construction of children's identity during the Franco regime. In order to do so, the propagandistic image of childhood transmitted by newsreels is analysed. A historic-educational methodology is employed, based on the NO-DO story as the main source for information collection. In line with Collelledemont, Padrós-Tuneu and Grosvenor (2022, p. 93), the aim is to contrast Franco's newsreels on childhood education "[...] not as mirrors of reality, but as constructors of the spaces of the final memory", taking into consideration that the totalitarianism and populism power practices are undertaken by way of two mechanisms: employment of the propagandistic image as a device and education as a response (Grosvenor, 2021). In this way, attention has been focused on those argumentative, visual and musical techniques employed by the political propaganda of the regime, coated with complements, such as strident music, the majesty of the voices, patriarchal speeches, aesthetics of symbols, spatial reduction of the population, the real and important news mixed with secondary notes, the serious mixed with the laughable, negation of problems and the presence of silences (Muñiz, 1998; Collelledemont et al., 2022). Based on these elements, newsreels constructed an image of childhood that was very much a contrast to the identity developed by the children that passed through the Social Assistance institutions.

## Social politics in the context of the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) implied, as with any time of war, a period of alteration of daily life with the addition of the Republican rear. The misery inflicted by the war affected the population and, in particular, children, the most vulnerable and unprotected group. Shortfalls in terms of healthcare, misery and food shortages, among other evils, led to the continuous wandering of children across the country, the increase of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and deaths caused by starvation. During the post-war period (1939-1952), charity became the means of subsistence for many helpless families; and charitable institutions became the ideal place to indoctrinate minors in the principles of National Catholicism (Fernández, 2010; Altet, 1996; Armengou & Belis, 2016)<sup>4</sup>. In this context, one of the first initiatives was the charitable-paternalistic Social Action of the State, pertaining to the Interior Ministry, and the Work of Social Assistance, the main institution of the dictatorship's charitable action whose main task was to raise strong and healthy children, with an explicit ideological load (Cerdeira, 1987; Sánchez y Hernández, 2009a).

Social protection meant reinforcement and protection of maternity and children's health, in order to show a less reviled image of the regime, internationally, in the aftermath of the war. It is therefore not surprising that in the field of maternal and children's health, the dictatorship developed, based on its pro-natalist policies, different initiatives aimed at ensuring the care and protection of children<sup>5</sup>.

From the 1960s onwards, following the end of international isolation and with the implementation of the Economic Stabilisation Plan (Decreto Ley 10/1959, de 21 de julio) and the Development Plan (Ley 194/1963, de 28 de diciembre), social policy underwent a process of modernisation.

## Social Assistance and the Female Section of the Falange Española de las JONS<sup>6</sup>

The main objective of the social policies undertaken during the Franco dictatorship was to inculcate a specific axiological framework based on the traditional values of society and the Catholic Church. To this end, a series of institutions were created in order to deal with the basic needs generated following the fascist uprising. Among the population of children, the organisation of Social Assistance, launched in Valladolid on 30 October 1936, was the most important, at the initiative of Mercedes Sanz Bachiller, widow of Onésimo Redondo, who was appointed national delegate, and with the collaboration of Javier Martínez de Bedoya, national secretary.

The new welfare institution, initially known as "Winter Relief", like its German counterpart, was established along the lines of the welfare systems of the Hitler *Winterhilfe* and the Mussolini welfare model (Orduña, 1996). From both it adopted logos and symbols that served as propaganda tools during the fratricidal contention. The idea was to create a similar model in terms of the diffusion of propaganda within the Falange,

<sup>4</sup> Once the dictatorship had begun, Franco brought together the four basic pillars upon which to lead the country: the heads of State, of the Party, Government and the Army, characterised by the use of a single-party policy, known as the National Movement, authoritarianism and centralism.

<sup>5</sup> This concern for children was inherited from a new social conception of childhood that was constructed in 18th century Europe, focusing on aspects such as care, education, food and support for abandoned children. However, although in Spain this change in mentality was delayed, arriving in the last decades of the 19th century, concern for children was becoming greater, given the high infant and child mortality figures in the first decades of the 20th century (Salazar et al., 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (hereinafter, FET y de las JONS) was originally called Falange Española and was a political party of fascist ideology. It was founded in 1933 by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of the Spanish dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera, who reigned in 1923-1939, and by Rafael Sánchez. A year later, in 1934, the Juntas Ofensivas Nacional Sindicalistas (JONS), joined, a right-wing Spanish group supported by the Catholic Church and the military. From 1937 onwards, it took on its full name, becoming the sole party of the Franco regime, which lasted until 1977 (Thomas, 2017).

that is “[...] that which corresponds to the German experience of Winter Relief [...]” for the underprivileged (Martínez, 1996, p. 156). Its functions were focused on covering the needs predominantly related to Children’s Canteens, Mother’s Houses, School Houses, Nurseries and Brotherhood Kitchens for orphaned, destitute and helpless children. From this moment on, it extended across Spain and became the first public assistance organisation of the regime. By October 1939, 2.847 canteens and 1.561 Brotherhood Kitchens, attended daily by 496.637 children and 548.331 adults, respectively (Sánchez, 2008).

The extended idea, especially following World War I, was to build a ‘New State’ with a healthy and strong race, which meant increasing the care given to children and instructing future mothers. For the commander and psychiatrist Vallejo Nágera (1937), one of the pioneers in psychiatrising the Republican dissidence, it was a matter of promoting the emerging idea of ‘purity’ of the Spanish people. From this approach, race did not refer to a biological human group, but to a social group - the aristocracy - and to form government based on military discipline and the patriotic principles destroyed by the working classes and Marxism (González de Tena, 2009). This extremely classist and exclusionary vision is particularly evident following the end of the Civil War when the institution becomes widely valued on a global scale, and conceived as a mixture of an orphanage, barracks and convent with fascist roots, dedicated to saving children in danger “[...] due to their parents’ moral conditions” (Auxilio Social, 1937, p. 7). Thus, its main task, once “Spain had been returned to the industrious calm of peace” (Decreto de la Jefatura del Estado de 17 de mayo de 1940, Preamble, second article), consisted of:

The foundation of establishments where subsistence and educational training of poor orphans, of both sexes, and under the age of eighteen, would be looked after, with preference given to those orphaned as a result of the Revolution and the War (second article).

The regime constructed an old and new image of childhood. The old image, Republican childhood, was the victim of neglect and abandonment by parents who had rebelled against Spain and ultimately neglected their families (Cenarro, 2013). For Vallejo Nágera (1939) the adversaries - the reds - were nothing more than individuals with innate and degenerative psychological characteristics that led to their mental inferiority. Their moral depravity had led to their ideological deterioration, resulting in a degenerative society. It was therefore necessary to create a solid comprehensive re-education plan that began with the separation of the child from their environment, predominantly by way of the disarticulation of their private space, par excellence, the family (Cenarro, 2006). And, instead, to inculcate a series of principles, values, action guidelines and behaviours aimed towards achieving the acculturation of children by removing any reference to their past. In contrast, the new childhood created by way of Social Assistance was based on the recruitment of the masses, typical of fascism, managing to build a social consensus around the dictatorship as, in many cases, the passage through Social Assistance enabled them to pursue higher education and thus reach a social status unthinkable for a ‘son of a red’ (Cenarro, 2012). Over the years, the institution became a permanent organisation and a space of Falangist power, representing one of the main national-unionist hallmarks of the dictatorship. It was understood that:

Social policy should be understood in a national and totalitarian manner, the charitable function cannot be allowed to be undertaken in a way that is disperse, all individual efforts must be united under the management of Social Assistance (Auxilio Social, 1938, p. 35).

Special attention was therefore given to the symbolism of the institution itself, as it represented the ideals of the Movement, and those who received support had to learn the principles of national syndicalism (Sánchez, 2008). For FET y de las JONS, in its eleventh point, it was about providing a permanent resolution to the ‘social issue’ by way of the extirpation of the class struggle, highlighting that: “[...] our regime will make class struggle radically impossible, inasmuch as all those who cooperate in production constitute in it an organic totality” (Falange Española Tradicionalista [FET] y de las JONS, 1939, p. 4). Social Assistance was presented as:

[...] a powerful body which carries its will for justice to the heart of the people. It is not content with temporarily remedying the hunger and painful problems experienced by Spain, rescued piece by piece from Marxism, but, in an honest struggle, seeks total solutions to them (FET y de las JONS, 1940, p. 27).

According to Carasa (1997, p. 109), Social Assistance constituted one of the great transformations of the national revolution system, bringing with it “[...] the death of the individual as assistant and [...] as assisted”. This affective invisibility of childhood in the Social Assistance centres is analysed in few studies of historical

memory, even though it is not always possible to find a clear and accurate definition of childhood in these centres (González de Tena, 2006; Cenarro, 2012, 2013). They make it clear that the child population gradually built a collective identity from a common experience in which the most traumatic experience was the entry into the homes due to the separation from their families - mothers or siblings- (Cenarro, 2013). The uprooting of families exacerbated feelings of loneliness, suffering and vulnerability, and it is precisely the experiences of isolation and the shortcomings derived from these emotional absences, frequency or non-existence of visits that "[...] in the memory of the former residents acquire a status of emptiness that is impossible to recover" (González de Tena, 2006, p. 181). Likewise, the stories reveal the deprivation of basic resources such as food - malnutrition - and water - dehydration-. In these almost survival conditions, they had to assume the guidelines in these centres - a very strict and punitive disciplinary system - and the power relations between the children and those in charge - directors, teachers, carers, cooks, the Falange instructor and the priest (Cenarro, 2013)-.

Within this political framework, the Women's Section of FET y de las JONS became one of the most important tools of ideological control seen in Francoism. Since its creation in 1934 until its extinction in 1977, the Women's Section (hereinafter SF) was led by Pilar Primo de Rivera, sister of the founder of the Falange Española, José Antonio Primo de Rivera. Nationally, it was structured hierarchically through national and provincial controls, and, within these, in Departments that acted in a uniform manner following the directives of the National Delegation. In this context, the SF entrusted Social Assistance with the task of socialisation and indoctrination of the child population in the fields of education and social assistance. In May 1937, Social Assistance had already become a National Delegation of FET de las JONS (Auxilio Social, 1938). Ley del 19 de marzo de 1938 guaranteed its full funding by way of the Social Welfare Protection Fund, and the Decree of 28 May of the same year made possible the creation of the Higher Charity Council and the creation of the Auxiliary Service for Liberated Populations (Decreto del 28 de mayo, 1938).

Social Assistance was comprised of female collaborators, most of whom were members of the Falange SF. It was therefore necessary to recruit the female population, thus ensuring that the social policy of the regime was put into practice. By way of Decreto de 28 de diciembre de 1939, the regime officially instituted the women's Social Service, within the framework of Social Assistance. Compulsory for women between 17 and 35 years of age, single and for a period of six months, the SF Social Service aimed to contribute to:

[...] the formation of the National Syndicalist Homeland with the boost of its moral support, comprised of faith, brotherhood and discipline - and its material efficiency. And that, in turn, they will receive from Spain, by way of Social Assistance, a profound teaching of human knowledge, a broad vision of both the needs and desires of its people and a maternal and homely knowledge that will make of them the women and mothers that the New Spain needs (Decreto de 28 de diciembre, 1939, p. 7348).

The reasons for which women joined these centres were predominantly linked to work, illness or the abandonment of family responsibility by her husband. Generally, this decision was not made alone, but was conditioned "[...] by the advice or pressure of the parish priests in rural areas, or other family members, connected to the upper echelons of local politics or the Women's Section" (Cenarro, 2013, p. 158). For Pilar Primo de Rivera, , in line with the guidelines of Social Assistance and the SF, "[...] the only mission of women in the tasks of the homeland is the home [...] it is the best contribution to the service of the homeland, for the creation of a Christian, cheerful, clean and welcoming home" (Palacio, 2006, p. 79). The home thus acquired essential value as a mechanism of ideological control by way of the transmission of Falangist values and the elimination of any individualistic and destructive practice related to liberalism and Marxism.

In this context, Social Assistance was not just a maternal-childhood support programme, but it had a clear influence on social thought as regards the role that women and children should play in the New State. To this end, a pro-natalist discourse was employed, based on the idea that the strength of the nation depended on a healthy and abundant population. Therefore, for example, protective measures included increasing the birth rate, caring for future mothers and instructing them on the upbringing of their children, or the improvement of quality of life for working women (Cenarro, 2013). Over the years, Social Assistance became a party organisation and a means of socialising the ideological programme of the FET de las JONS. In the words of Antonio María de Oriol Urquijo, National Delegate of Social Assistance, the new institutions represented:

An instrument of direct action of public assistance which aims to make that spirit of Christian solidarity a reality which will make it impossible to offer everyone a spiritual and human formation that will make them useful members of society (La semilla..., 1965, minutos 00:57-01:12).

## Social Assistance centres

The Imperial Spain that the regime intended to build required, on the one hand, solving the issue of children's health and, on the other, achieving strong mothers through its three sections. The first section, "Protection of the child with family", was composed of: Child Feeding Centres, Nurseries, Kindergartens and Colonies. The second section, 'Protection of the orphan child', included: Creche Homes, Children's Homes, School Houses, Learning Homes and Professional Homes. And the third section, "Protection of the mother", included: Pregnancy homes, Mothers' homes, Polyclinics and Maternity clinics, recovery camps and rest camps for working mothers. The aim was to put "[...] into practice the demographic policy of the National Syndicalist State, raising the level of health and culture for mothers, forging a strong and happy childhood" (FET and de las JONS, 1940, p. 9). And, above all, eliminate the family and individualistic values attributed to the Second Republic (Sánchez, 2008).

In order to achieve these objectives, Social Assistance focused the majority of its economic, institutional and organisational efforts on creating a network of homes for orphaned and abandoned children, or those without resources, with the aim of offering them the necessary support services, according to their abnormal circumstances. They were classified based on the age of the children and were the flagship institution of the Falange organisation for the re-education and regeneration of the assisted child population (Cenarro, 2012).

The Obra-Nacional-Sindicalista de Protección a la Madre y al Niño<sup>7</sup> was responsible for founding the *Creche Homes*, aimed at children aged between 0 and 3 years old, together with their mothers. These centres provided care services (doctors, nurses, etc.), in addition to a variety of programmes on maternal, political and religious education (Cenarro, 2012). After the age of three, children were transferred to the *Children's Homes* until the age of seven in boarding schools<sup>8</sup>, where they were segregated by sex (Sánchez y Hernández, 2009b). They were also schooled, either in nearby schools or National Primary Schools in order to "[...] attend to the education of boys and girls admitted to the Children's homes [...]" who cannot be admitted to the existing National Schools" (Orden de 23 de mayo de 1946, p. 5042). When there were "[...] a large number of pupils in these homes [...]" permanent places were created for national teachers and they were provided with a "[...] residential home" (Orden de 29 de septiembre de 1948, p. 5120).

From the age of seven, they were transferred to the *School Houses* divided into two grades: first and second. In the first grade, those who were considered the most brilliant - gifted - were admitted and could proceed to the Intermediate or Higher Education Homes, which were "[...] institutions where pupils undertook their studies in any order, outside of the Home, either in official or private centres, following the curriculum in order to achieve skills certificates or prepare to start them" (Sánchez y Hernández, 2009b, p. 434). They had to pass a test of both their intellectual and religious ability with the intention of forming an elite group, which essentially constituted a privileged group as regards the group of boarders (González de Tena, 2006). In the case of the second grade, they remained until the age of fourteen, after which they could attend the *Learning Houses* where they specialised in either technical or industrial trade. Among the most sought-after courses was Agricultural Training, generally reserved "[...] for children who did not stand out for their intelligence [...]" and "[...] , where they learned to work the fields and the garden [...]" ; and Industrial Learning where they were taught carpentry, lock smithery, ironwork, electronics, among others (Sánchez y Hernández, 2009b, p. 434).

The disciplinary regime was similar in both degrees: morning prayer, personal hygiene, classes, gym and sports. Girls studied singing and dancing, while boys played music with drums and trumpets (Sánchez y Hernández, 2009b). Similarly, by way of Orden de 7 de diciembre de 1951, the *School Houses* and *Canteens* were created, in all Intermediate and Professional Education Centres in order to facilitate assistance for boarders and "[...] promote the spirit of coexistence and political and social education among them" (Orden de 7 de diciembre de 1951, p. 5913).

As regards methodology, the falangist Antonio Juan Onieva, Pedagogical Advisor to Social Assistance, was responsible for the establishment of different working methodologies in School Homes based on age. From the ages of seven to twelve he proposed a 'methodised teaching' by way of the division of content into subjects, although he did not support this method, as he believed that although pupils were disciplined, it gave a biased vision of the world. And, from the age of twelve to fourteen, he incorporated a global learning system in which the content was based on a specific reality of which multiple aspects were studied. The latter approach is, according to Sánchez y Hernández (2009b), advanced for a time in which the memorising method

<sup>7</sup> In 1939, there was a nursery, a home and a children's canteen in almost all provincial capitals.

<sup>8</sup> These institutions had a double function. During the winter they were Homes and in summer they became Colonies (Sánchez, 2008).

predominated, as it favoured their understanding of the facts. This is explained by the fact that during the first stage of the dictatorship, elements of the most traditional teaching coexisted with the most traditional pedagogy because:

[...] the teaching model was subject to discussion, a debate that revolved around the proposals of Catholic teaching, which incorporated elements of modernity, and the pedagogical renovation that the tradition of the Free Teaching Institution presented as an alternative (Cenarro, 2013).

Thus, the educational programmed proposed by Onieva was based on a national Catholic education model, whose pillars of action were discipline and Catholic morality<sup>9</sup>. A traditional model that was rarely combined with some projects influenced by the most modern and progressive pedagogical currents of the time - Montessori, Decroly o Fröbel- (Sánchez, 2008). We find innovative experiences, such as in the camps<sup>10</sup> and kindergartens, where special attention was given to the integral education of children, specifically to physical and psychological health, or to issues such as “[...] the location of the building, the healthiness of the facilities and aesthetics” (Cenarro, 2012, p. 55). The use of play, contact with nature, personal hygiene and attention to the environmental beauty of the facilities were recommended for their importance in the children’s development. However, generally speaking, an educational model based on strict discipline prevailed as the most effective method for children to willingly abide by the rules established by the hierarchical household power structure, thus contributing to the service of the national community<sup>11</sup>. Onieva, as reflected in his numerous conferences, defended this disciplinary system shaped, on the one hand, based on the principles of National Catholicism and integrated into daily routine by way of prayer and attending mass or catechises. And, on the other hand, by way of the normalisation of the political principles of Falangism by way of rituals such as paramilitary instruction, parades and the singing of *Cara al sol* (Cenarro, 2012, p. 57). In short, it was a question of educating from a very early age in submission and obedience, so that they would be the transmitters of those guidelines.

## The construction of the ‘New Child’ of the Social Assistance by way of the NO-DO Newsreel

Following the end of the Civil War, Social Assistance became the main support organism for children, in addition to the tool *par excellence* for the construction of the ‘New Child’. In this coercive reordering of childhood, the media paid special attention to Social Assistance, in addition to numerous publications by the National Delegation by way of bulletins, circulars and leaflets (González Maza, 2010). The regime’s efforts in humanitarian and regeneration work were thus demonstrated, with the official entity NO-DO<sup>12</sup> as its main propagandistic reporter, responsible for projective a codified and sugar-coated reality for the public.

[...] in the most pleasant and effective way possible, educate and instruct our people, convince those who are still potentially mistaken of their error and show foreigners the wonders of Spain, the progress undergone by our industry, our natural wealth, the discoveries made by our science and, in short, the resurgence of our country in all its aspects driven by the new State (Archivo General de la Administración [AGA], 1942, Preamble, paragraph 1).

The NO-DO cameras were responsible for giving the news of the beneficiaries of the Social Assistance. The Decreto de 17 de mayo de 1940, in paragraphs c) and e), referred to children. Specifically, news regarding foundations and inaugurations of establishments and the regime’s own welfare working with children:

c) The foundation of establishments where the subsistence and educational training of poor orphans, of both sexes, under the age of eighteen years old, is taken care of, with preference being given to those who are orphaned as a result of the Revolution and the War. [...]

e) To provide children with care of a non-strictly sanitary nature, which tends to facilitate their full physical and moral development (Decreto de 17 de mayo, 1940, p. 3623).

<sup>9</sup> It should be highlighted that at the beginning it supported the pedagogical approaches of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (hereinafter, ILE) led by Giner de los Ríos. The following are among the most important works: Onieva (1939, 1940, 1943), among others.

<sup>10</sup> The mission of the Camps was to host children between 6 and 12 years old for a period of one month in order to improve their physical and spiritual condition.

<sup>11</sup> See Archivo General de la Administración [AGA] -Cultura- (s.f.) Conferencias sobre pedagogía. Revisión del concepto de disciplina.

<sup>12</sup> From 1942, NO-DO (Newsreels and Documentaries) had the exclusive right to publish newsreels and reports that were filmed in Spain or abroad, making them compulsory in the country’s cinemas. Therefore, the main body of the collection is comprised of the News programmes produced between 1943 and 1981, numbering 4.016 (Filmoteca Española, 2023). In this study we have employed the use of NO-DO reports belonging to the Newsreels, Documentaries in Black and White and Colour, and Image Magazine section - as the main means of knowing the mechanisms employed by the regime to transmit its principles on childhood by way of the Social Assistance. For this purpose we have resorted to this audiovisual medium because of the essential role played by this institution in the constitution of children’s identity.

It therefore comes as no surprise that the images issued by NO-DO regarding Social Assistance had a double propagandistic purpose<sup>13</sup>. On the one hand, to show the welfare and humanitarian task to large groups, and on the other hand, to project an image of children victimised by 'Marxist barbarism' and submerged in poverty and defeat (Vinyes, Armengou, & Belis, 2002). The idea of social justice as regards the regime towards underprivileged children was thus employed as a propaganda tool. It was necessary to reproduce, for teaching purposes, short audiovisual archives that would show the viewer images of a new political, social and cultural scenario (Rodríguez, 2022). During the early post-war years, the messages from NO-DO centred predominantly on providing food-related and religious activities in the Social Assistance installations. The cameras therefore captured supposedly neutral messages, in which those people filmed barely spoke, and in which the image was the most important aspect.

The NO-DO cameras took great care with the image they wished to transmit to the audience, representing the New Protective State on the basis of two elements: modernity and hygiene. With this aim, the Social Assistance premises used to stand out for their majestic buildings and facilities (NO-DO, nº 200A, 1946). Likewise, it was common to see reports of children being looked after by carers - auxiliary and religious - who taught them the basics of hygiene (brushing their teeth, taking care when getting dressed, etc.), in addition to the importance of hygiene in the centres: "[...] is rigorously practised and presides over the life of the children. The spectacle of the shower room is comforting for its cleanliness" (Una obra ejemplar, 1956, minutes 01:31-01:40). Similarly, well-equipped facilities were often highlighted, such as the Hogar Cuna Hermanos Almeida in Salamanca whose "[...] building is equipped with that which is the most state-of-the-art" (NO-DO, nº 87B, 1944, minutos 01:35-01:38).

The pieces broadcast by NO-DO demonstrated the dictatorship's interest in consolidating the appearance of a strong state devoted to the national cause. This can be seen, for example, in number 45B (NO-DO, nº 45B, 1943). The announcer emphasises that "Social Assistance [...] has managed to reduce to less than half the number of people assisted in its peremptory institutions [...] thus giving vigorous impetus to the protective and educational organisations for thousands of orphaned children and victims of both the revolution and the war" minutes 00:35-00:54). In order to do so, the Creche Houses, as transmitted in newsreel 87B (NO-DO, nº 87B, 1944), once the children exceeded the raising age, "[...] are handed over to their parents or, those who do not have parents, are adopted by other families with the due guarantees" (minutes 01:48-01:53).

On the other hand, NO-DO devoted significant space to issues related to emblematic events that took place in the Social Assistance centres, such as: launches, anniversaries, visits from celebrities or gift giving. The meetings were led by the Chieftain, his wife Carmen Polo, or a relevant individual, always surrounded by an entourage of officials - ministers, mayors, party secretaries - as a representation of power. There was therefore constant interest in showing launches (NO-DO, nº 39A, 1943; NO-DO, nº 87B, 1944). The anniversaries of the work undertaken by Social Assistance took on special relevance, as can be seen in issue 46A (NO-DO, nº 46A, 1943) the launch of two Homes in Madrid by General Franco together with other authorities. It is worth mentioning the visits made by personalities with clear diplomatic interest, such as the princess Sofía de Grecia (NO-DO nº 887A, 1960). Similarly, attention was paid to the welfare side of the regime, as in the delivery of toys at Christmas by Carmen Polo accompanied by her granddaughters (NO-DO nº 887A, 1960).

The aim was to re-educate. For this purpose, an educational model was implemented based on severe discipline aimed at compliance new generations by way of political propaganda on the Movement, Falange and Franco in order to, in the words of Falangist Onieva, "[...] change their way of thinking and being [...], as for more than two years, only hate was sown in those little souls" (Onieva, 1943, p. 10). with the rules in accordance with the national-syndicalist and national-Catholic education. Segregation by sex was manifested in the NO-DO documentaries that reflected, in the case of boys, a military disciplinary system that was identified with male virile strength, highlighting the success of the educational work undertaken by Social Assistance: "The preparation received during those early years has been effective. The boy accepts the discipline of the mind that will help him to dominate the body" (La semilla..., 1965, minutes 04:28-04:39). Meanwhile, in the case of girls, a domestic education, typical of traditional women was encouraged, with dolls being highlighted as "[...] an excellent procedure for discovering the sensitivity of the pupils" (La semilla..., 1965, minutes 05:40-05:43).

Physical education was a symbol of the new, healthy and strong Spanish homeland projected by undertaking gymnastic exercises in large groups organised in symmetrical rows. An example of this is

<sup>13</sup> The political propaganda of the NO-DO was controlled by the Interior Ministry from 1938 and received special attention. It is sufficient to recall that the National Department of Cinematography, created in April 1938, depended on its General Propaganda Management (Gubern, 1993).



newsreel number 1140B (1964), where the celebration of the gymnastic Festival of boys and girls in Social Assistance on the occasion of its XXVIII Anniversary appears. The Christian education of boys and girls was also mandatory, and an image of an outdoor parade of children receiving communion at the Joaquín García Morato (*Gracia y destreza de la infancia*, 1948) home is particularly striking. Similarly, political training constituted a fundamental element in order to interiorise the Falangist principles, as can be observed in the fascist greetings aimed at Franco by children of all ages (NO-DO, nº 46A, 1943). The vision of childhood offered by the NO-DO therefore obeys effective strategies from a communicative perspective, where orderly environments are shown with children actively learning in a climate of strict discipline, as opposed to the supposed disorder and anarchism of the republicans. In this sense, in all the centres, the uniform worn stands out, in light colours for the youngest children and darker colours for the older ones, as is the case in number 45B (NO-DO, nº 45B, 1943) where some children are shown in uniform with a dark shirt with the Falangist symbol embroidered on it and studying at their desks in complete silence.

On the other hand, at the most basic educational levels, up to the age of around seven, teaching methodologies that were in vogue at the time were implemented as a result of their innovative nature, as can be observed in the documentary *La semilla: una obra de Auxilio Social*: “[...] in the nurseries and kindergartens where boys and girls are cared for according to the most advanced pedagogical standards” (*La semilla...*, 1965, minutes 03:12-03:18). Although no special mention is made of any pedagogical reference - method, authorship-. However, didactic resources such as play, contact with nature or walking are all present in Franco’s filmography, as can be observed in another documentary, *Una obra ejemplar* (1956), which states: “They enjoy ample space for leisure and recreation. Play is the children’s greatest illusion. Flowers and water, two beautiful elements of distraction” (minutes 01:47-02:01). The aim was to offer the audience the image of a happy and protected childhood, as is made explicit in the documentary itself: “The happy children show a good appetite” (*Una obra ejemplar*, 1956, minutes 03:04-03:08).

The female public was also an essential object of the regime’s political propaganda in order to promote its demographic policy. In the case of women who formed part of Social Assistance, their assistance and charitable work “for the needy and the protection of underprivileged children” was highlighted, (minutes 10:49-10:52), as indicated in newsreel number 46A (NO-DO, nº 46A, 1943). To this end, in the documentary *La semilla: una obra de Auxilio Social* (1965), by way of a pro-natalist discourse, it showed the maternal and infant care programme undertaken by Social Assistance, which promoted the care of pregnant women - Maternity Centres, Mothers’ Homes - and for newborns. Along the same lines, there is a perceived interest in making visible the family reconciliation measured offered by Social Assistance to working women. It was therefore understood that: “[...] women, enlisted in work, would be unable to fulfil their role perfectly if they were concerned about their children” (*La semilla...*, 1965, minutes 03:00-03:12). Therefore, from the 1960s onwards, NO-DO gave priority to newsreels and documentaries about children, increasing the presence of working women and their educational dimension (Molina-Poveda, 2020; Molina-Poveda y Sanchidrián Blanco, 2020).

However, for this political campaign to be successful, the regime made use of a series of visual, sound and argumentative techniques which, as in the rest of European totalitarianisms of the period - German and Italian - were coated with a series of complements with the intention that the message transmitted would penetrate the population (Muñiz, 1998; Colleldemont et al., 2022). It was necessary to educate people about the successes achieved and, to this end, visual propaganda was of particular importance, as it generated a visual experience by way of the set of symbols that formed the idea of the nation and the people identified with it. Therefore, a variety of shots were employed in the cinematographic scenes in order to help convey the intentionality of the propaganda message. The *overall* shot was the most common and it had an instructive function in order to show what it was like and what was done inside the facilities; the *panoramic* shot, less frequently used, showed the beautiful views that generally surrounded the imposing Social Assistance buildings with the intention of compensating for the serious circumstances from which those receiving assistance came; and finally, the *close-up* served to extol feelings of patriotism, belonging, pride and joy.

The musical dimension<sup>14</sup> also played a very relevant role in propaganda strategies due to its capacity to transmit ideas and feelings in a subliminal way (Rodríguez, 2022). In order to do so, the music had to strictly comply with national Catholic and Falangist slogans - , casticist nationalism’- (Muñiz, 1998). In general, music was a mere form of accompaniment, due to the fact that the real sound belonging to the scenes was

<sup>14</sup>Music enhances emotions in any persuasive message due to its abstract and irrational nature, which are later translated into behaviours. This is explained by the fact that feelings are abstract and irrational, and the process of encoding a message is faster by way of music, given that it has the same abstract and irrational composition, than through image, which requires specifics to reach that exact emotive irrationality (Muñiz, 1998).

omitted, so the music and voiceover reinforced the idyllic image of the work undertaken by the Social Assistance. To this end, the soundtrack consisted of orchestral compositions based on military marches and popular songs - patriotic and nationalist pride - sacred music for religious scenes or classical pieces for scenes with children. As regards argumentative techniques, a patriarchal discourse was used, interpreted by both men and women, the latter seeking the complicity of the female audience in order to instil a female identity based on a traditional, Catholic, family-loving role. As highlighted by Cirici (1977), the aim of the dictatorship itself was not to show reality and report truthfully on the welfare actions of the regime. Its intention was to create an emotive mythology of childhood based on order, hierarchy and unity.

## Final considerations

The topic of childhood education during dictatorships continues to be a pending subject as regards historic-educational research. In the case of Spain, Francoism silenced the memory of those fallen in the Civil War, with children being the main victims. On the one hand, the post-war period broke any perspective of modernisation in childhood education undertaken in earlier decades; and, on the other, childhood education was relegated to the private-family sphere.

This study reveals that throughout the Francoist period, children were a favourable group for inculcating the educational and propagandistic aims of the regime, projecting an image of identity in accordance with Falangist principles. In this context, the Social Assistance of the Falange was an ideal space for the exploration of all of these axiological dimensions, as an instrument of charity and social assistance for orphaned children. The new institution was responsible for disciplining children and re-socialising the school population, acting as a corrector for any deviance of the vanquished. When it was founded it emerged as a charitable and humanitarian association of a public nature in the uprising zone. The Catholic Church participated at a later date. Over the years it became the most important welfare organisation of the Franco regime, acting as a propaganda vehicle for children within the realms of social, political and domestic education designed to improve the country's maternal and children's health education.

Under a pro-natalist discourse, derived from the demographic policy of the 'New State', the network of Social Assistance centres promoted the re-catholisation and re-education of childhood by way of Catholic doctrine. In the case of the children of the fallen, the aim was to eliminate all traces of republicanism, considering that they had inherited their parents' ideas and should therefore be separated from their family environment. The new national identity was sustained under a dualistic conceptual framework: the victors and the vanquished, where the 'sons of the reds' had their personalities crushed during their stay. The new regime made invisible their suffering and loneliness they endured, eliminating their individuality towards a common identity model according to Falangist ideology. In this way, NO-DO constructed an image of the new childhood based on three principles: "healthy, strong and happy". For this purpose, a wide-ranging propaganda campaign was undertaken with the intention of showing the successes achieved by Social Assistance, taking into consideration both visual, musical and argumentative aspects. The aim was to use simple messages to educate the public regarding the welfare and educational work for underprivileged children, which was employed as a key propaganda tool. In this way, news programmes and documentaries took great care with cinematographic scenes, making the image of the New State clear at all times: protective, beneficent, powerful and modern.

In general, common aesthetic elements were employed, such as the magnificence of the buildings painted white as a symbol of peace, large groups of babies or children surrounded at all times by the attention of professionals, the modernity of the facilities, the Falangist and Catholic symbolism, the uniform as official attire or the exhibition of the visits from celebrities to the Social Assistance centres. As regards welfare, the children were presented as receiving the necessary attention, such as scrupulous hygiene and adequate food, thus contributing to a healthy quality of life by way of play and contact with the outdoors. In relation to education, the pedagogical approach varied greatly depending on age. Thus, while the centres that took in children up to the age of seven emphasised didactic resources such as play, contact with nature or walks, more in line with the innovative teaching methodologies of the time.

The School Houses presented an educational model based on severe discipline, in accordance with the national-asidicalist and national Catholic training promoted by Social Assistance's pedagogical advisor, Antonio Juan Onieva. Education was segregated by sex, so the cameras showed, in the case of boys, a military disciplinary system that was identified with virile strength, and, in the case of girls, domestic education,

typical of traditional women. Physical education was a symbol of the new, healthy and strong Spanish homeland, as was Christian and political education, which served to re-educate new generations based on political propaganda by the Movement and the Falange. All in all, the musical and argumentative techniques contributed to the promotion of feelings of belonging, pride and joy, as the ultimate aim was to represent both a disciplined and happy childhood. The commentators praised the conditions and functionality of the spaces at all times, ensuring the success of the Social Work of the Franco dictatorship.

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Patricia Delgado Granados:** Graduate in Education and Doctor of Education, Universidad de Sevilla. She is currently a Professor at the Universidad de Sevilla. She is part of the History, Memory and Heritage of Education research group (HIMEPE), HUM206, in the Education and Social Pedagogy Theory and History Department at the Universidad de Sevilla. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4717-3406>  
E-mail: [patdelgado@us.es](mailto:patdelgado@us.es)

**Bárbara de las Heras Monastero:** Graduate in Education and Doctor of Education, Universidad de Sevilla. She is currently a PhD Teaching Assistant at the Universidad de Huelva. She is part of the History, Memory and Heritage of Education research group (HIMEPE), HUM206, in the Education and Social Pedagogy Theory and History Department at the Universidad de Sevilla. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3062-6779>  
E-mail: [barbara.delasheras@dedu.uhu.es](mailto:barbara.delasheras@dedu.uhu.es)

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