

## *Federico Moreno Torroba's Relations with the Franco Regime*

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A few years ago, I mentioned to a fellow musicologist, an eminent and learned Hispanist, that Bill Krause and I were writing a book about Federico Moreno Torroba.<sup>1</sup> Much to my surprise, his immediate and almost breathless reaction was, “*Torroba?* Wasn’t he that . . . ?” I knew the words he intended but hesitated to say: “fascist composer?” In that moment it dawned on me that Torroba was and continues to be viewed by some—imprecisely but persistently—as having been a fellow traveler with Franco. I knew then that this was an issue we would have to confront fearlessly, and without any preconceptions or attempts to massage our data to suit a preconceived outcome. This paper is an initial summary of our findings and presents our answer to a simple question: what was the nature of Torroba’s relationship with Franco and Francoism?

Let’s make one thing perfectly clear: we reject out of hand the argument from guilt by association. Many eminent composers and artists made their peace with the Franco regime and flourished in Spain during the dictatorship, including not only Joaquín Rodrigo and Joaquín Turina but also such stalwarts of the artistic avant-garde as Salvador Dalí and Joan Miró. Yet, they are not thought of as fascists. So, why tar and feather Torroba? Perhaps it is because he was Catholic and a monarchist. But millions of his fellow Spaniards were the same, and that did not automatically make them suspect. Like many of them, Torroba was religiously and politically moderate and simply made the best he could of a potentially dangerous situation. Perhaps it is because he moved with such ease in official circles, occupying prominent cultural posts, such as the President of the Sociedad General de Autores de España and Director of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, posts he could not have held without the regime’s approval. But this aspect of his career can just as easily be explained by his innate capacity for administration and his affable temperament, which allowed him to get along well with colleagues of widely varying dispositions. Perhaps it is because of the conservative character of his nationalist esthetic, which was anchored in nineteenth-century Romanticism. However, his musical style remained basically unchanged throughout several different regimes over the decades. It was in no way *intended by him* as a response to or affirmation of Francoism, though it may inadvertently have served that function at times.

Guitarist Pepe Romero, a close personal friend of the composer for many years, unequivocally dismisses the notion of Torroba’s allegiance with Franco: “He was the

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<sup>1</sup> *Federico Moreno Torroba: A Musical Life in Three Acts* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). The book contains a wealth of documentary evidence for the conclusions we reach here, though we expect that the biography will be only the beginning of serious investigation into Torroba’s life and times, not “la palabra última.”

furthest thing from a fascist that you can imagine.”<sup>2</sup> And yet, we will now see that Torroba’s relationship with the regime was ambiguous, and though I am certain he was not a fascist, I can see how such a legend might have started. I can also see why and how it must be laid to rest. What will take its place, however, is not another clearly delineated political affiliation, such as socialist, but rather ideological shades of grey, shades that ironically made Torroba’s survival and success possible during trying and dangerous times.

Torroba always maintained that he was apolitical. On several occasions in the 1970s he asserted in press interviews that he had never gotten mixed up in politics.

I have never meddled in politics. I don’t know, but I believe I could be as much of a communist as anyone, if they let me organize it in my own way.<sup>3</sup>

This recalls Granados’s declaration that art and politics have nothing to do with one another.<sup>4</sup> That, of course, is patently untrue and a bit of dissembling that is too self-serving for us to accept at face value. George Orwell more astutely observed that posing as apolitical in the name of art is simply another kind of political posture.<sup>5</sup> I have no doubt that Torroba really believed what he was saying, but I also think that he cut himself too much slack. It might prove useful before going any further to offer a brief overview of Torroba’s life and times to understand this point.

Torroba was born during a relative lull in the upheavals that beset Spain during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. All in all, 1891 was not bad a year to be born in Madrid. But this year was simply the eye of the storm. There soon followed the war with the United States in 1898 that ended Spain’s pretensions to being a great power, and there were bombings and assassinations by anarchists. In fact, Torroba witnessed the attempted assassination by anarchist Mateu Morral of King Alfonso XIII in Madrid in 1906, and he later stated that “I was really frightened. That day I understood a few things for the first time.”<sup>6</sup> One can only speculate what his cryptic reference to understanding “a few things” meant. The horrors of political violence? The amorality and treachery of the anarchists in particular? The fundamental instability of Spanish society? We do not know, but the horrors continued. There was an unpopular war in Morocco, which helped spawn labor riots in Barcelona during the so-called Tragic Week of 1909, and the incompetent leadership of the king, which resulted in military debacles in Morocco and the ascent to absolute power of a military dictator, Miguel Primo de Rivera, in 1923. Rivera’s regime collapsed in 1930,

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Walter Clark, January 6, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Manuel Vicent, “El pentagrama de Federico Moreno Torroba,” *El País*, November 14, 1981, 14.

<sup>4</sup> See Walter Aaron Clark, *Enrique Granados: Poet of the Piano* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), a;sdfka;skldf.

<sup>5</sup> In his 1946 essay *Why I Write*.

<sup>6</sup> Hebrero San Martín, “Federico Moreno Torroba, 90 años de vida y de música,” clipping from unknown periodical, between March 3 and September 12, 1982 [located in Torroba family archive, Navarra].

Alfonso XIII soon abdicated, and a Second Republic was declared the following year. Its life was eventful but brief, and the ensuing civil war ended Spain's democratic experiment. Nearly forty years of military dictatorship was the result.

One has to ask how it would be possible to run such a gauntlet of catastrophes and remain apolitical. Torroba claimed that, at his father's urging, he joined the army with the intention of becoming an officer, in order to avoid the penury of being a composer. But he said his military career lasted only a year before he flunked out because of difficulties with trigonometry. Recent examination of the actual records of his military service compel a revision of this history.

He was apparently drafted into the army in 1912, in accordance with legislation passed that year. He served three years on active duty, stationed in Madrid, and then another fifteen in the reserves. He was honorably discharged in 1930. He never heard or fired a shot in anger, and the service did not impede his musical career. However, he acquired a respect and affinity for military officers and later eulogized the generals with whom he socialized at various Madrid cafes. His favorite general by far was the aforementioned Primo de Rivera, whom he admired for his accessibility and patronage of the theater. In fact, he and fellowship *zarzuelista* Pablo Luna met with Primo in 1925 and received from the dictator control of the Teatro de la Zarzuela, on the condition that they end performances by midnight. Torroba was forever grateful to him for this assistance.

Along with this monopoly came an obligation to their benefactor: the Teatro de la Zarzuela not only produced zarzuelas but propaganda spectacles as well, such as the "Homenaje a Primo de Rivera" and "Unión Patriótica," which convened on September 15-16, 1928. Does this constitute meddling in politics, or just an exercise in self-protection? Is it possible to separate the two completely? In any case, Torroba was not ideologically opposed or averse to the nationalistic ideology of a military dictatorship, or the self-serving propaganda of a *caudillo*. But there is no evidence he was an active supporter of the regime either. In fact, on one occasion he joined a protest against the heavy-handed treatment ;afklsdjf;akljs;dfkla

With the collapse of the *dictadura*, Torroba and Luna lost control of the Teatro de la Zarzuela, but a member of the minor nobility, the Duque del Infantado, supplied them with control of a new venue, the Calderón, which Torroba used as a platform for launching some of his greatest hits, including *Luisa Fernanda* in 1932 and *La Chulapona* the following year, both during the Second Republic.



Torroba himself was lukewarm towards the Republic; in fact, if one reads between the lines of his assessment below, one detects a certain hostility toward, or least dubiousness about, the entire democratic enterprise:

The proclamation of the Republic left me feeling neither hot nor cold. With the advent of a libertine atmosphere there were very picturesque scenes, with the women dedicating themselves to their tasks on the street.<sup>7</sup>

This is an allusion on his part to a supposed increase in prostitution and loose morals that attended Republican reforms. As Antony Beevor observes in his landmark study of the Civil War, Primo's son, José Antonio, founder of the Spanish fascist party, or Falange, delivered a diatribe from prison against the Popular Front. He claimed that it was directed by Moscow, fomented prostitution, and undermined the family. 'Have you not heard the cry of Spanish girls today: "Children, yes! Husbands, no!"'<sup>8</sup> Torroba's offhand remark about women on the streets illustrates the concerns he shared with the José Antonio concerning declining moral standards.

Yet, Torroba flourished during the Second Republic, which afforded him many professional opportunities. Such was his professional stature that he was honored with La Orden de la República in 1935. In addition to his mounting successes as a zarzuela composer and impresario, sometime after the election of a conservative government in 1933, he was appointed to the Junta Nacional de la Musica y de Teatros Líricos. In 1935 he was made a member of the prestigious Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando. His acceptance speech was a paean in praise of Spain's traditional folklore as the legitimate basis for composition and the zarzuela's preeminence as the only truly authentic form of Spanish musical theater. His rhetoric revealed a solidly nationalistic stance rooted in the writings of philosopher Miguel de Unamuno.

<sup>7</sup> Vicent, "El pentagrama," 14.

<sup>8</sup> Antony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 46.

His philosophical ruminations before a receptive audience at the Academia constituted the distant rumblings of a tremendous storm that was soon to break over Spain, a cataclysm of violence that Torroba and his fellow *madrileños* could hardly have anticipated. In fact, Torroba apparently experienced the commencement of hostilities as a sudden and unexpected event:

[One day,] I went to the Escorial in order to deliver something to [the playwright Carlos] Arniches, and we waited there till the next day. On that very next day the Civil War broke out. I remained in Madrid for fourteen months, naturally very frightened.<sup>9</sup>

Torroba apparently thought it safest to remain in Madrid. He was understandably concerned not only for his own safety but for that of his wife and two young children. But he proved to be no safer there than he would have been in most other places. According to various sources, after fourteen months, the Republicans came to suspect that he had composed the Falangist hymn *Cara al sol*, “Face to the sun.”

A journalist friend of his finally convinced the jailers that Torroba was not the hymn’s composer, and he was released. The actual composer of the hymn was Juan Tellería. Torroba described this harrowing experience many years later, claiming not to have known or been told the reason for his detention:

I was put in jail for fifteen days, at the Dirección General de Seguridad, but no one did anything to me there. There were no declarations or accusations, or anything. I spent two weeks on a miserable wooden bed, listening at night to the jailers shouting the name of this or that person. Of course, that poor person was not going to respond. No one said to me so much as “to hell with you.” Then Gisbert arrived . . . who at that time was a journalist with *El Heraldo*. He had connections and was able to get me out. I fled immediately for San Sebastián disguised as a Cuban, wearing a casual shirt and a red scarf around my neck. I put those clothes on and left running.<sup>10</sup>

Fearing now for his life, Torroba immediately left Madrid and settled in Santesteban, in the northern province of Navarra, where his wife’s family had a home. Navarra, a historic bastion of Carlism and resolutely conservative, had fallen into Franco’s grip at the outset of the war and remained a safe haven for Torroba and his family.

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<sup>9</sup> Vicent, “El pentagrama,” 14.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



We should note here that this incident was not the first time that Torroba had been accused of writing music for the fascists. When *Luisa Fernanda* premiered in Barcelona in 1934, a rumor was circulating that Torroba had composed a hymn for the Juventudes de Acción Popular, the youth wing of CEDA (Confederacion Española de la Derecha Autónoma), the conservative Catholic party headed by José María Gil-Robles. The performance was interrupted by shouts of “¡Viva el fascismo!” answered by “¡Viva la República!” Security forces had to intervene to restore order. It was a huge scandal, and Torroba complained to local authorities, insisting that he had written no such hymn, a fact corroborated by local journalists soon thereafter.<sup>11</sup> Such experiences clearly inspired some bitterness in Torroba, but the irony in all this is that though he composed no such hymns during the Republic, he would turn his hand in that direction before long.

During the war years he continued to compose and perform, as circumstances permitted. Four zarzuelas were produced during this time in rebel territory, including *Sor Navarra* in 1938, not long after his hasty departure from Madrid. This was followed in quick succession by *Pepinillo y Garbancito en la isla misteriosa* (1938), *Tú eres ella* (1938), and *El maleficio* (1939). *Pepinillo* was premiered in Zaragoza, and the other three works in San Sebastián.

With the Republic’s demise, he and his countrymen were forced to adapt—not to an entirely new ideology, but to the consolidation of conservative forces that had been present in Spanish society for decades. Generalísimo Francisco Franco interpreted his success as “a victory over liberals and internationalists.”<sup>12</sup> In his view, the Civil War was to rid Spain of Freemasons, Jews, regionalists, anti-clerics, and communists, as well as to “liquidate the

<sup>11</sup> Víctor Sánchez Sánchez, “Moreno Torroba y la nostalgia de un Madrid idealizado,” *La Chulapona*, program notes for the production at the Teatro de la Zarzuela, Madrid, February 6 to March 7, 2004 (Madrid: Teatro de la Zarzuela, 2003), 22.

<sup>12</sup> Javier Jiménez Campo, “Rasgos básicos de la ideología entre 1939-45,” *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, n15 (1980): 85

nineteenth century, which should never have existed.”<sup>13</sup> The essence of Spain’s culture, he argued, was in Castile, the birthplace of the empire. The Spaniard’s character was formed before the Enlightenment, and owed nothing to Europe. Thus, Franco’s brand of nationalism stressed restoration and retrogression. Spain’s glorious past would somehow be the model for its tenuous future.



With the end of the Civil War in March of 1939, Torroba made plans to re-enter Madrid’s musical life. Unfortunately, his first production in post-war Madrid was a fiasco. Perhaps modeled after Juan Valera’s novel *Pepita Jiménez*, the zarzuela *Monte Carmelo* (1939) told the story of a woman and a priest falling in love with one another. The libretto was by the redoubtable duo of Federico Romero and Guillermo Fernández-Shaw. It premiered very successfully on October 17 and had a long run, playing in Barcelona the following year. But subsequent productions were blocked by Franco’s censors, who declared the work’s libretto sacrilegious and banned it for a number of years. This was a situation made all the more disappointing to our composer because he considered this to be his finest work. The tangled performance history of this zarzuela and the repeated jousting with censors that the authors had to undertake give us insight not only into Torroba’s understandable frustrations with the situation now prevailing in a new cultural climate, dominated first and foremost by the concerns of the Catholic church.

There is a file in the government archives in Alcalá de Henares containing correspondence between the authors and censors regarding *Monte Carmelo*, and it sheds a great deal of light on the whole affair.<sup>14</sup> It was apparently submitted on September 11, 1939, and approved September 27, 1939, on condition of certain excisions in Act II. These pertained to the nature of the love interest, just the sort of thing the censors, all

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>14</sup> Archivo de la Administración, 73/08155 97/39.

Jesuit priests, would not endorse. Were those changes made? Romero's later assertions to the contrary (see below), apparently they were not, or this work would not have experienced repeated difficulties in getting permission from the censors. They again made application on September 11, 1940, to the Ministerio de la Gobernación Subsecretaria de Prensa y Propaganda, but the result was the same.

Upon yet another application, in late 1944, censor P. Constancio de Aldeaseca laid bare his objections in a response of January 3, 1945. These included "certain sentences uttered by Sr. Arzobispo de Granada [that] reduce his figure to a level of vulgarity, indecorous with his station and dignity," as well as the love of Esperanza and Juan María for one another, which would be "scandalous." Even if that were changed, he was convinced that this was still a work suitable only for adults, not children.

Federico Romero wrote to the censor on October 29, 1947, stating that the original production at the Calderón had been cleared in advance with the censors; however, with the reorganization of the government department of Cinematography and Theater (Cinematografía y Teatro), they would have to renew permission. Romero's petition did not have the desired effect, and permission was denied, yet again, because of the impermissible love interest. The censor on this occasion was Padre Mauricio de Begoña. His report of November 13, 1947, states that "the theme of Esperanza's love for the priest Juan María should be excised. This character should be a student or seminarian."

Since the authors deemed this premise vital to the entire work, they decided to withdraw it, though not without protest. Romero refers to a movie he has recently seen, *La Fe*, which he deems far worse in regard to priestly *amor* and yet which won the Primer Premio Nacional and critical praise. He believes that it is time to reassess *Monte Carmelo*. However, the official response was what one sees above, that the priest should be some other type of character.

Torroba's musical style did not change at all as a result of Franco's ascendancy and the right-wing ideology now gripping the country. After all, a *pasodoble* under the Republic was the same as one under Franco. The popular, bourgeois character of his music dovetailed perfectly with the anti-intellectualism of the regime. But librettos were another matter and were closely scrutinized for anti-regime or anti-clerical sentiments. In fact, *Monte Carmelo* was not the only zarzuela by Torroba that ran afoul of the censors. For instance, when his 1933 zarzuela *Azabache*, set in Andalucía, was revived during the Franco era, the censors insisted that certain changes had to be made. The file on this work indicates submission of a new version of the book, by Antonio Quintero and Pascual Guillén, on May 21, 1949. The text came through largely unscathed, though on page 40, the censor did not approve of the expression "as there is a God" ("como hay Dió"). Apparently the suggestion that there might not be a God was too much. Perhaps such an offhand reference to the Supreme Being gave offense, though it is very common to invoke the deity in Spanish. The censor's summary of the work is interesting:

A light work with an insubstantial argument, characterized by a certain atmosphere of disrespect for religion typical of the period during which it was written [i.e., the Republic in the 1930s]. There are several “filler” scenes introduced with no other objective than to provoke hilarity [with] irreverent situations. This irreverence, which at times borders on ridicule and contempt, is the dominant note of the work.

After suggesting a few changes here and there, he granted permission, despite his obvious disregard for the quality of the work as a whole. *Azabache* was revived again in 1952, this time under a new title, *Boda gitana* (Gypsy wedding), though with the original libretto by Pascual Guillén. It is interesting to see what the censors redlined in the text. For example, on page 2, Piti asks for one favor: that the Guardia Civil would leave them alone (“Que nos quiten la guardia sivi”). Of course, the Civil Guard was a federal police force that enforced the government’s will. So, that passage had to come out. Another example of disapproval appears on page 6, where Paz says, “But God is present everywhere” (“Pero Dios está en toas partes”), to which Piti responds, “Ay, look, like the radio!” (“Ay, mira, como la radio!”). That had to come out, too. Comparisons of the deity to something as mundane as a radio were insufficiently respectful. Perhaps the whiff of pantheism present in this observation also caused concern.

*La Caramba*, with a text by Luis Ferneandez Ardavín, premiered in 1942 at the Teatro de la Zarzuela. Its file proves that it cleared the censors with very few changes. However, according to Torroba’s son, Federico, Jr., some priests nonetheless considered it immoral. During confession, people in Bilbao and Pamplona were asked if they had seen the zarzuela and told that it was a mortal sin to do so. The main reason for this was that at the end of the drama, La Caramba enters a convent, and the libretto comments, “A nun can never be a woman with a happy life.”

This climate of censorship, repression, and dictatorial control is the necessary context for considering Torroba’s composition of the Falangist *Himno al Trabajo* (Hymn to Work) in 1940, with a text by Falangist Tomás Borrás. It is episodes like this that have contributed to his reputation for being a fascist, though the situation is a good deal more complex than one might at first suspect. Borrás was a journalist, theater critic, and playwright who was married to “La Goya,” the stage name of Aurora Purificación Mañanos Jaufrett, who did one-woman shows inspired by the art of Goya. She was a Mata Hari-type figure who served as a secret messenger to José Antonio Primo de Rivera while he was in prison. It seems likely that, given Borrás’s involvement in the theater—and Torroba’s admiration for José Antonio’s father—he and Torroba had known one another for years. In fact, Borrás had written approvingly of the 1915 production of *El amor brujo* in which Torroba performed. It seems likely that they were by this time old acquaintances.

However, we know next to nothing about their relationship. What we know for certain is that in 1939 or 1940, he approached Torroba to set to music some verses he had written in praise of those elements of Franco’s forces engaged in rebuilding Spain, a sort of Falange of workers. The message seems harmless enough: dedicated workers putting their

trades and skills to use in creating a new nation, etc.—until we get to the bit about “I am imperial Spain.”

This fascist Civilian Conservation Corps is reminiscent of the workers brigades celebrated in Leni Riefenstahl’s classic propaganda documentary *Triumph des Willens*, in which row after row of shovel-wielding workers move with military precision. The innocuous march Torroba composed is catchy but generic and utterly uncharacteristic of him. It sounds very much like the sort of music that populates long stretches of *Triumph des Willens*, rousing and insipid all at once. Yet, as we know, Torroba was not in the habit of composing insipid music; thus, it suggests a level of indifference on his part.

***Himno al trabajo* (1940)**  
**Music by Federico Moreno Torroba (1891-1982)**  
**Text by Tomás Borrás (1891-1976)**

<p><i>Con el rumor de la faena,          ritmo febril de mi taller,          formo el latido de la vida          a una nación que vuelve a ser.</i>          ***</p> <p><i>Tiendo la vela de aventura,          que hay otro mundo que encontrar;          siembro la flor junto a la espiga          y se hacen versos en mi hogar.</i>          ***</p> <p><i>Soy nacionalsindicalista,          creo en las leyes del amor.          ¡Basta de obrero envenenado          y de patrón explotador!</i>          ***</p> <p><i>Soy la Falange del trabajo,          para que el bien triunfe del mal;          soy la alegría y la justicia,          y soy la España imperial.</i></p>	<p>With the sound of work,          the feverish rhythm of my workshop,          I create the beat of life          for a nation coming into being.          ***</p> <p>With the sail of adventure,          there is a another world to discover;          I sow the flower along with the seed          and compose verses in my home.          ***</p> <p>I am a member of the National Syndicate,          I believe in the laws of love.          Enough of the exploited worker          and the exploiting capitalist!          ***</p> <p>I am the Falange of work,          so that good will triumph over evil;          I am joy and justice,          and I am imperial Spain.</p>
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In any case, one piece out of a total oeuvre of over 300 works would not a fascist Torroba make. But how about two? As it turns out, the *Himno al Trabajo* was not his only musical tribute to the right-wing forces, or his first. The modern Spanish Air Force (Ejército del Aire) was formally established shortly after the war, on October 7, 1939. Our composer obligingly composed a hymn for it as well, *Sobre campos y trincheras* (Over fields and trenches), with a text by Agustín de Foxá, author of the lyrics for the Falangist hymn *Cara al sol*. This hymn quickly became popular not only with the Ejército del Aire but also with the Escuadrilla Azul (volunteer pilots, equivalent of the Blue Division) fighting in Russia. It was eventually replaced by a new hymn in 1967, and is now known as the “old” Air Force Hymn, *Himno antiguo del Ejército del Aire*.

***Sobre campos y trincheras (1939-40)***  
**Music by Federico Moreno Torroba (1891-1982)**  
**Text by Augustin de Foxá (1906-59)**

<p><i>Sobre campos y trincheras como estrellas matinales / cruzan alas nacionales del Imperio mensajeras. / al reflejo del radiante sol / brilla el cielo español / con luces de victoria / mientras triunfa en su esmaltado añil / la audacia juvenil / forjando nueva historia / una, grande libre e inmortal / surges vieja Patria del dolor / prodigio redentor del mundo occidental.</i>  ***</p> <p><i>Arma imperial del cielo / tu alucinante vuelo / sobre los campos que acompaña / con decisión sabe atacar hasta vencer. Honor a los ungidos / por clara fe ascendidos / al duro azul que nada empaña / su inspiración pudo volar y renacer.</i>  ***</p> <p><i>En vuelo aviadores / ya rugen los motores / con eco recio / ¡Arriba España! / Claro clarín / limpio vibrar / amanecer.</i></p>	<p>Over fields and trenches like morning stars / national wings cross like messengers of the empire. Reflecting the radiant sun, the Spanish sky shines with lights of victory, while youthful audacity triumphs in its lacquered indigo, forging a new history, one nation, great, free, and immortal / the old Fatherland arises from pain / prodigious redeemer of the western world.  ***</p> <p>Imperial weapon of the sky / your captivating flight / over the fields that you accompany / you know to attack with resolve until victory. Honor to the anointed ones / ascended in pure faith / to the clear blue which nothing can stain / their inspiration was able to fly and be reborn.  ***</p> <p>In flight, aviators, already the engines roar / with a strong echo / Live, Spain! / clear trumpet / clearly sounds / sunshine.</p>
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One could certainly be excused for assuming at this juncture that Torroba’s musical collaborations were not merely a form of capitulation to realities he could not alter but that they also represented his personal convictions. There is nothing criminal in any of this, but it tends to put the lie to his repeated assertions that he “never got mixed up in politics.” Writing hymns for the Falangists and Franco’s air force was an undeniably political act, even if there was an element of coercion involved.

Indeed, these songs must not be overlooked. They clearly suggest a certain sympathy with the rightists, even the Falange, which was the most extreme element of the right. It should not surprise us if Torroba preferred a Franco victory to one by the “communists.” He had flourished under the Second Republic and had never openly expressed any antagonism towards it, yet his treatment at the hands of that government once the war started, his arrest and detention on suspicion of having composed just this sort of hymn, certainly persuaded him that his existence would be precarious if the left triumphed. As the old saying goes, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. The Falange was the enemy of his enemy, and Franco’s forces had saved him and his family. Writing these songs was the least he could offer as repayment. And, in fact, he could afford to do no less.



Recall that the year before, the production of his beloved *Monte Carmelo* had been terminated by Franco's censors; others of his works were criticized. Torroba's professional survival depended on his cooperation with the regime, and turning down these assignments (if that's what they were) would have jeopardized that survival. It is obvious that Torroba put very little of himself in these marches; he clearly tossed them off in order to fulfill an obligation.

This, at least, is the opinion of Pepe and Celín Romero, who knew Torroba intimately. Members of the Romero family had fought on the side of the Republicans, and, in a mirror image of Torroba's ordeal, Celedonio (the *pater familias*), had been imprisoned by Franco's forces after the fall of Málaga in 1937. Because he had given some concerts for the international Red Cross, he was suspected of being in league with the Republicans. It was only after some friends persuaded the authorities that he was just a harmless, apolitical guitarist that he was spared. Yet, Celedonio would later give benefit concerts for the same official labor unions, or *sindicatos*, that this hymn extols.<sup>15</sup>

It is nearly impossible for us now to understand the chaotic and dangerous circumstances that Spaniards like Torroba and Celedonio Romero endured during and just after the war. We must not rush to judgment, as only those who have lived in a police state can really understand what it is like. Both men did what they thought was necessary to stay alive and remain professionally active. In any case, rather than clarifying Torroba's political allegiances, this song actually adds to the ambiguity of his stance. Federico, Jr., tells us—and the Romeros confirm it—that during the Civil War, Torroba taught his children to sing both the Republican and Francoist hymns, so that they would be well prepared should they find themselves trapped in one area or the other. This suggests a high degree of political ambivalence, of using music as a shield against reprisals rather than as a declaration of personal affiliation. Faced with a Franco triumph, Torroba apparently did what he had instructed his children to do: make the winner's music. Everyone knows that he who pays

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<sup>15</sup> This information comes from an interview I conducted with Celín and Pepe Romero, September 5, 2010.

the piper calls the tune. All we can for certain now is that, if it contributed to his survival, these ditties were a small price for to pay for the beautiful music he would produce as a result—even if they also reflected his political convictions at the time.

What were Torroba's feelings about Franco himself? Torroba stated his opinion that Franco was "*un cero a la izquierda*" ("a zero to the left," i.e., an ignoramus) when it came to music, and the allegation was not unfounded. "They say that he liked *Marina* [by Arrieta], but that is not certain. He didn't have an ear for music. Maybe he liked military marches, but not much else."<sup>16</sup> Yet, there is no doubting that Torroba prospered during the Franco years, enjoying a successful career as a composer, impresario, and conductor. No restrictions were placed on his extensive travels overseas to conduct zarzuelas in the Americas. And he eventually came to occupy prominent cultural positions. His collaboration, such as it was, usually paid off. However, after an unsuccessful tour of Mexico in 1947, during which his zarzuela company lost a lot of money, Franco refused to help him recoup his losses. Apparently Franco heard that Indalecio Prieto (1882-1963), the socialist leader in exile, had publicly embraced Torroba. Franco's reluctance to bail out Torroba may well have been payback for this display of *fraternidad* with a "communist." We may never know for sure, but Torroba's feelings about Franco would remain ambivalent, at best.<sup>17</sup>

In conclusion, Torroba *was* a conservative traditionalist, and some of his musical activities in the years immediately after the Civil War merit close scrutiny. But he was not a fascist composer, much less Franco's *Kapellmeister*. His relations with the regime were ambiguous, and he suffered at the hands of Franco's censors as much or more than any other *zarzuelista*. In the end, he felt that Franco's regime was no more helpful to musical theater than the socialists had been. But there is no denying that as a Catholic, monarchist, and army officer, he preferred a victory of the right over the left, and that he was not willing to put his head on the chopping block by refusing to cooperate with Franco. It is also important to remember that Torroba functioned under a number of regimes, including a monarchy, Republic, military dictatorship, and democracy. He never openly opposed or supported any of them. Our conclusion is simple: Torroba was neither a fascist nor a Francoist, but neither was he entirely apolitical. He was above all else a survivor, one who, unlike hundreds of thousands of Spaniards, survived some of the worst horrors of the twentieth century and lived to tell about them.

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<sup>16</sup> "Para esto de la música Franco era un cero a la izquierda. Dicen que le gustaba *Marina* [zarzuela by Arrieta]. No es cierto. No tenía oído. Tal vez le gustaran las marchas militares, pero ni eso." Quoted in Vicent, "El pentagrama," 14.

<sup>17</sup> This episode cannot be documented but is part of the family's oral history. We thank Federico, Jr., and his sons Tristan and Jacobo for sharing it and many other valuable insights with us.