

# CASTILLO-PUCHE AND CENSORSHIP

Douglas Edward LaPrade  
University of Texas-Pan American

## 1. Introduction

During the Franco regime the works of José Luis Castillo-Puche suffered from official censorship in as strong a manner as the books of any other Spanish author. The two novels by Castillo-Puche that invited the severest censorship were Sin camino and Paralelo 40. In these two novels Castillo-Puche dared to broach two of the most delicate subjects from the censors' point of view: religion and foreign affairs. Sin camino is about the religious instruction of seminary students, and Paralelo 40 portrays the American community that settled in Madrid when American military bases were established in Spain.

The documents prepared by the censors during the Franco regime are stored in the Archivo General de la Administración in Alcalá de Henares. The Culture section of this archive contains the documents of the Ministry of Information and Tourism, the ministry charged with censoring books and the press during the Franco regime. In the Archivo General de la Administración there are four files corresponding to Sin camino and two files corresponding to Paralelo 40. In this essay the reports written by the censors about the novels Sin camino and Paralelo 40 will be presented.

## 2. Sin camino

It is not surprising that the censors felt obligated to suppress a novel like Sin camino in a moment in history when the Franco regime was characterized by a close relationship with the Church. During the era when Franco's National Catholicism held its sway, Castillo-Puche wrote this novel that expresses his doubts about the doctrines and practices of the Jesuits and the Opus Dei. The novel's action takes place in the seminary of Comillas in Cantabria where Castillo-Puche himself had studied.

In the year 1950 the censors prepared their first file on Sin camino. This file, which bears the number 4581-50, contains the manuscript of the novel. A prominent feature of this manuscript is the quantity of passages crossed out by the censors. This file does not contain a report written by the censors, but it contains a card dated October 19, 1950, which indicates that Sin camino has been authorized for publication. Nevertheless, the same file contains an official form dated November 21, 1950, according to which the authorization to publish Sin camino has been revoked.

Castillo-Puche attempted to publish Sin camino again in the year 1954. File number 7163-54 includes a new manuscript prepared by Castillo-Puche. Like the previous manuscript, the new one has many passages crossed out by the censors. The file includes two reports written by the censors, one dated November 2, 1954, and the other dated December 12, 1954. At the end of both reports appear the words “can be published.” In spite of this approval by the censor who prepared the two reports, the publication of Sin camino was not authorized in Spain the the year 1954.

Following are the texts of the two censors’ reports in file number 7163-54.

**File 7163-54. Sin camino. First report. November 2, 1954:**

“The warning that the Censor must require does not refer to the basic content of the work Sin camino by Castillo-Puche. The subject of the novel is perfectly admissible because it reflects the crude and gross reality. Who can ignore and call into question the tremendous crises of a man facing the problem of a vocation? There is no fictional theme that can outweigh Life, which offers us identical typical cases even better than that of Castillo-Puche’s protagonist. The censor’s reference that we can consign alludes exclusively to the tone of irony and humor which throb in a series of dialogues between seminary students, which can bother or might bother certain ‘circles’, given our well-known intolerance and ‘Iberian sensibility’. For which reason we think the book’s early pages should bear—for greater security—‘the ecclesiastic licenses’. Should the book not bear them, we think, for the aforementioned reasons, that we should consider the

consequences”.

**File 7163-54. Sin camino. Second report. December 12,1954:**

“This Reader stands by the censorship administered on November 2 of this year and repeats that Sin camino does not affect Christian dogma at all. However, could the protagonist’s case and story cause unhealthy confusions? We think not. The seminary student from Comillas has no priestly vocation. Precisely for that reason the novelist makes him abandon the seminary in the final moments for the sake of himself and his future. A man with a priestly vocation does not incur the protagonist’s confusion, nor does he renounce his beliefs for so many human and despicable things. It is undeniable that the very disagreeable circumstances sometimes confronted by the seminary student could occur in life. There is no novel more rich in contrasts and aberrations than Life itself, and it has been thus said that if the confessors had a novelist’s talent, they would be the most eminent novelists in all literature”.

With the publication of Sin camino having been denied in Spain in 1950 and 1954, Castillo-Puche felt obliged to publish the novel in Buenos Aires in 1956 with Emecé Editores.

The third file corresponding to Sin camino in the Archivo General de la Administración is file number 1173-63 from the year 1963. This file contains two reports on the novel, which was authorized for publication in Spain in 1963, seven years after its publication in Argentina.

Following are the texts of the two censors’ reports in file 1173-63. The page numbers in both reports in file 1173-63 correspond to the edition of the novel by Editorial Bullón, a copy of which is included in the file.

**File 1173-63. Sin camino. First report. February 7, 1963:**

“SIN CAMINO, by Castillo-Puche.—The novel tells the story of the youthful crisis of a seminary student at Comillas, named Enrique, which leads to his leaving the seminary just before being ordained. Essentially, this

is all. Except for the novelist's talent in getting through his work, we must clarify the following pages that I refer to the consideration of the Superior Council, which has the final word.

Page 17 about the 'Opus Dei'.

Pages 73-78 about the State and Church.

Pages 91-97 the author makes fun of the Jesuits (spirit of sacristy surrounding the religious play honoring the Eucharist during the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Comillas.)

Page 211-216 judgments about the ecclesiastical hierarchy”.

**File 1173-63. Sin camino. Second report. March 11, 1963:**

“SIN CAMINO, the biting novel by Castillo-Puche, recalls Valera's 'Pepita Jiménez' and Ramón Pérez Ayala's 'A.M.D.G' because of the plot, the contents, and the psychological analysis emanating from the personality and mistaken vocation of the seminary student Enrique.

Throughout the plot that stresses the vocational crisis, and the plot about the very youth of the seminary student at Comillas, Castillo-Puche seems to take pleasure in pointing out—at times with acute irony, and at others with harsh clarity—how much the common people, the non-believers, and the anti-clerics understand about the Jesuits.

Nor are there lacking marginal allusions to Spanish political reality, to the union between State and Church, to the worldly pursuits of some prelates—more concerned with themselves and the 'official truth' than with the Truth of Christ—and other such charming words.

For which reason, in our judgment, the following cuts, at the very least, must be made—or the author must be charged with modifications—to the passages marked on pages 13, 15, 17, 54, 64, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 82, 83, 84, 92, 93, 94, 95, 97, 99, 101, 102, 148, 211, 212, 213, 215, and 216. We defer to the better judgment of the Superior Council for final authority in this matter.

From our point of view, this is the least that can be done with Chapter V, for example, devoted almost entirely to a chronicle of the religious play honoring the Eucharist—staged in Comillas, during the celebration of the

fiftieth anniversary—and more than a traditional chronicle or story, it seems to be a deliberately burlesque commentary on everything that occurred there on that occasion”.

The fourth file corresponding to Sin camino is that numbered 6932-76. This file is from the year 1976, the year after the death of Franco, and it contains no reports by the censors. This file has only a deposit slip for a new edition of Sin camino.

### **3. Paralelo 40**

Besides the case of Sin camino, Paralelo 40 was another novel by Castillo-Puche that suffered from Franco’s censorship in an exaggerated way. The Archivo General de la Administración has two files corresponding to Paralelo 40. File 1850-62 consists of nothing more than an empty envelope on which the following words have been written: “Annulled-See file 6179-62”. The second file corresponding to Paralelo 40 is precisely file 6179-62.

Inside file 6179-62 are two reports corresponding to the annulled file 1850-62 and one report corresponding to file 6179-62 itself. The two reports from the annulled file 1850-62 include attachments in the form of typed pages stapled to the standard report filled out by the censors. The report prepared for file 6179-62 has nothing original but rather a copy of one of the reports corresponding to file 1850-62.

The two reports and their attachments from file 1850-62 resulted in the denial of the publication of Paralelo 40. The report from file 6179-62 resulted in the authorization of the publication of the novel, and Paralelo 40 was published in Spain by Ediciones Destino in the year 1963.

Following are the texts of the censors’ reports on the novel Paralelo 40. All of the reports are found in file 6179-62 although some reports correspond to file 1850-62, which was annulled.

#### **File 1850-62. Paralelo 40. First report. April 14, 1962:**

“Tries to depict the impact of the presence of American troops in Madrid,

describing their rights and abuses. Particularly the contrast between the life they lead and the misery exuded next to their residential zone. The protagonist, nevertheless, is a Spaniard, a worker, resentful, imbued with revolutionary ideas, who is constantly stirring up protests and retaliatory projects. Many of the things narrated are doubtlessly true and have even occurred; but without a doubt they require a strong palate. Politically he criticizes various individuals protected by the 'situation'. Morally he paints what there is; but that is too realistic at times in content and language, resulting in some cases one thing and in others even obscene. The author is constructive, and the work is basically moralistic; but by means occasionally reprehensible. At least we think it is so because of what he does on pages 13, 126-127, 149, 202, 267-268, 397; 15-17, 88-90, 452, 576-580. On those pages some points should be cut or corrected according to that which has been crossed out in red".

**File 1850-62. Paralelo 40. First report-Attachment. May 7, 1962:**

"PARALELO 40 is a voluminous novel of a social nature which enlarges, deforms, exaggerates, falsifies and invents a combination of reality and fiction, presented as though lived in this 'poisoned document'.

Castillo-Puche himself tells us, in the introduction to the 602 typed and completed pages, that even without wanting to, he has produced a 'biting, discordant, brusque and almost subversive' novel.

The four adjectives are the author's and they are rigorously exact for the judgment this novel deserves if the adverb 'almost' is deleted, and it is added that the novel is also obscene, immoral, profane, perverse, irreverent and threatening to the good taste, respect and consideration deserved by the citizens of Madrid—the novel's action takes place in Madrid—by Spaniards, Spain, and the Franco Regime that currently governs.

Following are some of the many passages that could be copied to validate the preceding affirmation:

'Samaritans of the Spain of the Bible and the disinfectant, of the fake penicillin and the condoms that broke, chicken Spain, which surely sought to infect itself with polio in the heat of the Americans, because what this

brave Spanish people needed, more than likely, so its rulers and bishops slept peacefully, was to have weak muscles and carry crutches' (manuscript page 57).

'and of course, the Valley of the Fallen, a unique monument of its kind after the Pyramids of Egypt, which as they had explained to Genaro, had both been built at the expense of slavery' (manuscript page 126).

'You think the labor union here is like in your country, as I think it should be. Our labor union does nothing for unemployed workers. The labor union serves only to collect funds, to charge dues from the employed workers. That's why it has so much money' (manuscript page 132).

'the other who loans money at 15%, but who presides over I don't know how many religious brotherhoods and is always the first in the religious processions, carrying the banner; another good guy a cocky sergeant major in the Civil Guard, which is screwed and likes to screw others; a woman from Catholic Action who places inside her vagina a portrait of one of those quite virile saints with a beard to cure her menstrual flow, she says, and then she blames the saint for becoming pregnant; an aristocratic woman, very supportive of the monarchy, who spends the day drunk and then goes to bed with the maids; and town councilmen who live a grand life attending bullfights and visiting the capital to eat for free; and Falangists who strictly follow the original ideology because of the benefits they receive, those who worked for a little cash digging graves for those who killed or made others kill; then there is also the CNS, life insurance that some have found at the expense of the sweat of the worker and the seminarian, many seminarians like spatulas, surely because of their predilection for the National Movement, like whores, but another kind' (manuscript pages 267-268).

'They are a pious bunch. They bring the Host to the old lady in bed. She must take it with yoghurt, the fine old lady' (in response to a complaint by neighbors about the drunken parties in the Americans' apartments).

'The United States is a rich, strong, fearsome power. Because of only one thing, because it is a free people, free and united in liberty. That must be the reason—answers Genaro—why you are helping this regime here. Because if it were not for you . . . the defenders of freedom' (manuscript page 437).

‘but here the Catholics are not common folk, like in my country. Here the Catholics are those who run things and it seems that being a Catholic is an obligation imposed from above. Do you know how we look to Americans? We act like Jesus was born here, it is as though he had been born here’ (manuscript page 438).

‘He is an American, a yankee, an invader, an ally of the tyrants’ (manuscript page 474).

The novel’s main character is a Communist released from jail, a fearsome and resentful construction worker, whose father was shot by the Nationalists. The plot of all the action described, emphasized, and narrated consists of the presence of the Americans in Spain, by virtue of ‘that thing called the Hispano-American treaty, as pompous as it is enigmatic’. ‘Massive’ presence of Americans in a corrupt and cowardly Spain, with their own headquarters, and with air and naval bases that are theirs exclusively, given that joint utilization is never even mentioned. Occupation of a Spain which has sold its sovereignty, without sacrifice or glory and with no economic benefit, where many defenseless Spaniards sacrifice their self-respect to serve the blonde and black soldiers in a docile and servile manner. The Spaniards are confined by the extreme poverty of their homes, or by their lot as pimps and whores and nymphomaniacs, or by their lack of better national prospects.

And alongside this rigid scheme—it could be no other way—in which one can see the novel’s cloudy—or too clear—intention, the allusion to the airplanes that constantly fly over the skies of Spain, loaded with atomic bombs, to arouse fear, aversion, and terror. The greatest obscenities, the harshest descriptions of animalistic love involving the depraved beings who abound in the novel; the roughest, rudest, most unbearable language we have stumbled upon in any novel, the most bullyish and roguish acts imaginable.

Definitively, a vision of Madrid and Spain through the prism afforded by the destructive mentality of a Spanish Red consumed by resentment and by the defeat of his kind; of an uneducated anarchist, of a construction worker with no training or education at all; of a Communist who serves the Party by turning the Spaniards against the Americans, under the pretext of patriotism and the feeling of national independence, to create conflicts and difficulties

for the current Regime and thus be able to further the aims pursued by international Communism in Spain.

It is regrettable but true that the novel by a writer as reputable as Castillo-Puche serves this cause and something more. Nobody questions the author's extraordinary worth in the field of Spanish letters. It is a shame that he handles this historical reality, which is not exclusive to Spain, to serve the enemy, even if this is not at all the author's private and personal intention.

On the other hand, neither would he be justified if he wanted to promote nationalist sentiments typical of the nineteenth century, nor if he tried to awaken the beginnings of patriotism, as though we faced a Napoleonic invasion. Now a cultured man like he should know whether or not there is a Napoleonic invasion, or whether or not there is a sale of national territory or forfeiture of national sovereignty. In the flow of historical life, there is an imperative of industrial power and economic wealth that places the United States in a position of leadership in the West, in opposition to the Communist bloc of nations, in order to save Christian civilization. And because a political stance can create a dilemma, Spain has aligned itself with the Christian West, in keeping with its tradition and the principles of its nationality, and sharing naval and air bases with our allies does not make us blush. We share in a supreme effort to counteract the dangers that Communism offers for souls, for humanity. There are also American bases in democratic countries, always considered a model by politicians with a liberal education. One should consider that the issues of alliances, the concession of bases in national territory, and national sovereignty must all be assessed on a universal scale, and cannot be understood in terms of a narrow geographical focus. These issues must be assessed in terms of all Europe, the West, and Christianity, all of which are seriously threatened.

Some of this could have come out, at the very least, in a brilliant novel from the brilliant pen of Castillo-Puche.

In keeping with the preceding, the undersigned reader judges that it is not appropriate to authorize the novel PARALELO 40.

We should say also, that a conscientious expurgation, by means of the system of deletions, would leave the novel vacuous and possibly senseless.

Furthermore, the author, in the ‘Warning to the Editor’—shouldn’t this be interpreted as a warning to the censor?—affirms categorically ‘that, because I have written this work responsibly and with a clear conscience, for nothing in the world would I accept as valid a corrected and mutilated edition, especially if my consent has not been sought for any deletion’”.

**File 1850-62. Paralelo 40. Second report. June 15, 1962:**

“Given that, from the careful and objective reading of Paralelo 40 one notices concepts that attack the fundamental points indicated above which merit absolute deletion, as the Superior Council can check, and which this reader submits to show how the alleged violations have been censored precisely to ‘clean up’ the rest of the novel’s plot.

Considering that Paralelo 40 is throughout a game of the genre of Tremendismo, full of coarse pornography allied with a keen political hate of class. Politically anarchist subconsciousness and Freudian sexuality, all combined in the morbid and depraved central character Genaro, and in the majority of the characters portrayed by the author, can be perceived throughout almost the entire work, albeit less so in the secondary scenes. From the first page until the last chapter he tries to imbue our current moment in Spain with an aura of deformity. He would have to make broad modifications to achieve a book that can be read peacefully.

If the Superior Council considers it appropriate, its authorization may proceed with the deletions indicated in this report and also the prologues in their entirety (Warning to Reader, and Warning to Editor)”.

**File 1850-62. Paralelo 40. Second report-Attachment. No date:**

“This work that bears the title Paralelo 40 has a social dimension that attempts to portray the present-day Spanish working mass as ‘emaciated with hunger, sad and defeated’ (page 2) but he offers this to the reader in a harsh and brusque manner, with shameless wording, caustic and immoral in the descriptions, and indicating the absolute lack of all individual and collective ethics in our current Spain, with constant attacks on society from the mouth of the worker Genaro—the axis of the novel—who sets himself up as a clandestine Communist militant in the severely critical index of all

that is truth or falsehood in the current moment in Spain. A character created by the author with the psychology and complex of one who is resentful, who has ideas, thoughts, and soliloquies superior to the capabilities of the uncultivated mind of a modest worker presented to us by the Author throughout this ‘novel of crime’ which presumes to be a reflection of current Spain.

The novel’s premise is presented within a frame in which are mixed the rudest and most trite pornography—this time between black and white Americans of the American Mission who live in Madrid, in the zone called ‘Korea’—with attacks upon Spanish social classes and institutions—Church, Clergy, Army, Labor Unions, ruling classes, etc.—to direct the reader to the conclusion that in today’s Spain, there exists no clean and healthy conscience, and that all is a cheat, rubbish, lies, and neglect.

The author employs a vocabulary and turns of phrases by which ‘sons of bitches’, ‘little whore’, ‘big whore’, ‘queers’, ‘bastards’, and ‘sons of shit’ jump into the reader’s view at every moment to the point of causing fatigue.

There is no concept of moral integrity nor of respect for the Spanish woman, given that for ‘hunger’ or for her disposition for ‘pleasure’ she offers herself up ‘for three nylon stockings’, and because there exists another ‘thing’ called: ‘clitoris’: (j!) (see page 103).

There are long passages and even entire pages of immorality in which the most brazen pornography finds its place comfortably (see pages 9, 15, 16,17, 42, 43, 44, 46,49, 56, 57, 61, 81, 82, 83, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 103, 113, 171, 181, 206, 247, 267, 269, 308,309, 310, 335, 382, 452, 509, 576, 578, 579, 580).

The Church and its Ministers are attacked, as are those who practice religion (see pages 5, 52, 84, 149, 202, 267, 397, 456).

From the mouth of Genaro emanates an attack on the political regime (see pages 3, 37, 52, 59, 60, 169, 234, 238, 263, 267, 382, 459).

Contemptuous attitude towards the Crusade of liberation: ‘our little war’, ‘the widows of Fascists are already mothers of Communists’ (page 112).

‘it is clear that even the national character had been lost, the spirit of the common people, the country’s balls’ (see 127).

Criticizes the American Mission in Spain and the leaders in the person of the ex-President Eisenhower (pages 57, 129, 198).

‘servility of the Spaniards to the Americans’ (page 103)’.

#### **File 6179-62. Paralelo 40. Report.**

This report consists of a copy of the first report from file 1850-62 dated April 14, 1962 [see above].

#### **4. Conclusion**

José Luis Castillo-Puche’s novels succeeded in awakening the conscience of the censors. More than any other Spanish author, Castillo-Puche wrote novels that demanded that the censors examine the validity of their own criteria. Upon addressing themes such as religion and foreign affairs, Castillo-Puche knew that he ran the risk of seeing his novels’ being denied publication. But Castillo-Puche knew also that he had to confront reality in his novels although the censors did not allow it. Indeed, in some of the reports cited above, the censors complain that Castillo-Puche’s novels are too realistic, and so much reality is not admissible for the Spanish readership, according to Franco’s bureaucrats.

One of the censors’ reports criticizes Paralelo 40 because the novel describes how the American military airplanes loaded with atomic bombs fly over Spain causing fear among the Spaniards. When one reads this report now and realizes it was written four years before the nuclear accident involving an American airplane in Palomares in the year 1966, then one realizes that Castillo-Puche is virtually a prophetic novelist.

Upon reading these reports about Sin camino and Paralelo 40, one notices that the censors always praised Castillo-Puche’s great stature as a novelist at the moment they were censoring his novels. One must ask how the censors confronted the dilemma of having to delete and censor the words of someone they respected. Why did they feel obliged to acknowledge the merits of the author Castillo-Puche in a report crafted to deny the publication of one of his books? The answer is that Castillo-Puche forced the censors to acknowledge the futility of their own task. Today the entire

institution of censorship seems absurd, and Castillo-Puche's novels read like prophecies of democracy. The censors' reports in the Archivo General de la Administración prove that José Luis Castillo-Puche always has fought for liberty of conscience and for freedom of expression.

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