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A comment on recent literature on Soviet and Comintern involvement in the Spanish Civil War

In many spheres of twentieth century history, the end of the Soviet Union and the partial opening up of a lot of archives in Moscow and other capitals of the former Socialist bloc have admitted to improve the base for research. Nonetheless, if talking about the former Soviet archives, there have to be made some restrictions to this reappraisal of the situation. First, some of the main Moscow archives have at least partially closed their material again after a short period of nearly complete openness in the first half of the 1990s. Then some of the major archives were either more or less closed as the Presidential Archive or major parts of the archives were made unavailable for researchers because of national security deliberations. Historians could not be quick enough to use the window of opportunity during these two or three years. This situation has not changed very much since the mid-nineties. The second problem is simply a practical problem. Certainly, historians of Russia and the Soviet Union were able to make use of the material, but historians – as in our case on Spanish history – had more problems in using the archives for the lack of Russian (and in the Communist International’s case also German) language knowledge. This implied that only a few of those who were interested in Spanish history and especially the Civil War would be able to use the vast amount of material available even under the aforementioned restrictions. A third problem lies in the interdisciplinary approach needed in order to analyse the Soviet Union’s and the Communist International’s policies towards Spain in the period 1936–1939. It is hardly possible to give a sound judgment on the USSR’s foreign policy without detailed knowledge of the fast-moving historiography on that period.

The first historian to use the newly accessible archives was Pierre Broué who published his book *Staline et la Révolution. Le cas espagnol* in 1993.¹ The book, however, failed to improve the historiographical situation very much, since it quoted only a few new documents from archival funds, which were to be closed anew soon afterwards.

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¹ Pierre Broué: *Staline et la Révolution. Le cas espagnol*. Paris: Fayard 1993.

Additionally, it was mainly written to support the author's Trotskyist interpretation of the Stalinist policies in the Spanish Civil War, which he had consistently put forth for decades.

The nineties on the whole brought very little progress regarding the Soviet and Comintern involvement in this matter. The only other independent publication to come out was the work of the Russian historian Mikhail Novikov, who would be able to look at quite some unknown archival documents, but who would nonetheless fail to draw a comprehensive image and who would remain ideologically tied to the former Soviet interpretation of the Spanish Civil War.² The last remark is even more true for Yurii Rybalkin's *Operatsija »X«* published in 2000.³ Colonel Rybalkin, who gives some valuable information on the military side of the Soviet intervention in the Spanish Civil War, concentrates very much on the question of arms deliveries. He does this always with the connotation to save the prestige of the Red Army. He does say hardly anything about the domestic circumstances of the Soviet military intervention.

Antonio Elorza and Marta Bizcarrondo in contrast have concentrated more on the Communist International's intervention. Since both are specialists in Spanish history of the 20th century, and in spite of the title their book resulted more into a history of the PCE from its inception till the end of the Civil War, than a history of the Comintern in relation to Spain.⁴ Nonetheless, this book can be seen as the first serious attempt at understanding and outlining the policies of the Comintern and certainly also the Soviet leadership towards the Spanish Republic at War. This analysis is based on some of the Moscow material, although one has to state again that this has not happened on a comprehensive basis of the available documents. They take a very important step forward in getting rid of some of the myths and legends surrounding the Communist International's involvement in the Civil War. So they do not follow the conventional wisdom that Prime Minister Largo Caballero became a victim of Communist machinations, contemplated in Moscow, but stumbled mostly over his own incapacities and his tactical awkwardness. On the other hand, they would practically ignore the Soviet background of the Comintern policies, which makes it hard to understand some developments. Thus they would certainly be mistaken in stating that the Comintern's advisor Codovilla would not be subject to Stalinist repression, since he was not easy to replace.

Since the beginning of this decade some more new books have appeared on the market. Amongst them a collection of documents taken mostly from the Russian State Military Archive (RGVA) in Moscow under the title *Spain Betrayed*. Certainly the documentation is correct, but the editors of the archival material are ideologically biased in their comments and the reader very often asks oneself, why these comments say virtually the contrary from what can be read from documents itself. The editors are making an effort to make sense of the title, which they can hardly achieve with the documentation they

² Michail Vasil'evich Novikov: *SSSR, Komintern i Grazhdanskaja voina v Ispanii*. 2 volumes. Yaroslavl' 1995.

³ Yurii Rybalkin: *Operatsiya »X«*. *Sovetskaya voennaya pomoshch' respublikanskoi Ispanii (1936-1939)*. Moscow 2000.

⁴ Antonio Elorza/Marta Bizcarrondo: *Queridos Camaradas: La Internacional Comunista y España, 1919-1939*. Barcelona 1999.

themselves put together. Nonetheless, this documentation is certainly a very important source of information.⁵

Since then some more movement has come into published documents and historiographical works on the Soviet and Comintern involvement in the Spanish Civil War. Beyond the Russian language edition of Comintern documents *Komintern i grazhdanskaya voyna v Ispanii*, which came out in 2001,⁶ and which will be ignored here, one has to mention Ángel Encinas Moral's edition of the final report by Stoyan Minev of his activities and observations during his stay in Spain in 1937-1939. Moral has found and edited an interesting document for the debate on the Communist policies during the Spanish Civil War. Minev, advisor for the Comintern in Spain from January 1937 till the end of the conflict, comments broadly on the problems of the Spanish Republic and its political forces during his stay in the country. Minev's report is the second of a Comintern advisor, after Togliatti's final report was published some years ago. The editor assumes that also at least Codovilla has written a similar account, which has not been found yet. In contrary to Togliatti's report Minev is less polemic and does not emphasise the existence of enemies and spies. Minev goes more systematically into detail. He starts his account with the period before the Civil War, but his account certainly becomes interesting, after he himself has entered the country. In principle, most of the information conveyed by Minev's report is not very original. He describes the organisational insufficiencies of the Spanish Republic, the lack of coordination, the political infighting and the weak mobilisation of human and productive resources for the war effort. But Minev relates some interesting evaluations from the Communist side, questioning some of the conventional wisdom emphasised by some scholars dealing with the Spanish Civil War.

First, Minev makes clear that the process against the leadership of the POUM, which was evolved after the May 1937 events in Barcelona, was insufficient. As also Togliatti has indicated, the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) was outraged about the lengthy preparations of the process, which was postponed several times. When it finally took place in autumn of 1938, the judgment was far below the expectations and infuriated the Communists.

Secondly, Minev describes it as a mistake that the Communist Party subjected itself to Negrín's leadership. This stands contrary to Bollothen's thesis, that the Prime Minister was an agent or at least a puppet of the PCE. Minev sees the Communists following Negrín's leadership and cooperating closely with him, but thereby losing their own room for manoeuvre. The Communists tied themselves to Negrín's fate, since there was no alternative. This happened although the Communists found Negrín's measures for the mobilisation of resources unsatisfactory and saw the declaration of martial law in January 1939 as a major mistake, which harmed their own party most.

This is closely related with a third interesting interpretation. Contrasting with most of the historiography on the Spanish Civil War, Minev indicates that the Communist Party

⁵ Ronald Radosh/Mary R. Habeck/Grigory Sevostianov (eds.): *Spain Betrayed. The Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War*. New Haven/London 2001.

⁶ Rossiiskaya Akademiya Nauk, Institut vseobshchei istorii, Federal'naya sluzhba Rossii, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (eds.): *Komintern i grazhdanskaya voyna v Ispanii. Dokumenty*. Moscow 2001.

was well-represented in the rank and file of the Popular Army and amongst the field commanders, but it lacked any major hold amongst the high-command and especially in the general staff. This made the martial law dangerous for the Party, since military commanders inimical to the PCE, such as Casado, could take over the control of the country.

Fourthly, Minev emphasises that the control of the *Fifth Column* behind Republican lines was lax. This only partially changed, when the Military Intelligence Service (SIM) was introduced in 1938. Again in contrast to the general knowledge conveyed in some parts of conventional historiography, Minev does not claim any strong Communist influence inside the SIM, but he mentions it several times even as a threat to the security of Communist cadres.

Fifth, Minev indicates that the Comintern advisors were dissatisfied with the role of the Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya (PSUC). The Party, founded in the initial days of the Civil War, did not follow the general line of the Spanish Communists, but it tended to evoke conflicts amongst the political forces of Catalonia and followed a rather independent regionalist political agenda, which brought it into contradiction with the PCE and Comintern line.

Sixth, the Communists were so absorbed with state matters that they were not able any more to deal comprehensively with the Party itself. Thus the Party could infiltrate some parts of the state apparatus, but the recruitment stood on shaky ground, which became clear toward the end of the Civil War, when those who had entered the Party *en masse* at the start of the conflict, deserted from it as quickly as they could. Additionally, the absorption with governmental matters let the Communist Party vanish from the public scene and this reduced its influence beyond the capital and the army drastically.

On the whole, Minev's report does not put forth an awful mass of new facts, but nonetheless it brings up some interesting evaluations, which are not easily to be found elsewhere. Nonetheless, one has to keep in mind that the report was formulated in order to justify himself. Minev, having been in Spain for more than two years, could not be completely sure, if the Soviet secret police would not take an interest in his activities in Spain, as it had done with many others before. Beyond this, he had been criticised by his companion in Spain, Togliatti, who, for instance, despised his influence on the PCE, while he himself was absent for a short period. Thus Minev's long report represents certainly also a piece of self-justification as is true for Togliatti's own report.

The next two books, presented here, are linked in a very peculiar way. Daniel Kowalsky, who published one of the first books on the Soviet intervention in the Spanish Civil War, was Stanley Payne's student. Payne however managed to publish his own book on a very similar topic a year earlier than Kowalsky. Kowalsky, however, who worked in some of the former Soviet archives in the 1990s, is more original than Payne in that sense. He concentrates in his publication very much on the military side of the Soviet intervention, but he includes some issues of Soviet-Spanish relations, but limiting it mainly to Soviet cultural influence on the Spanish Republic. There are some major problems with Kowalsky's analysis. First, his approach to the topic is not consistent. He maintains, that he would say something about the diplomatic relations between the USSR and the Spanish Republic. But when it comes to it, he mainly deals with the Spanish ambassador's presence and personal well-being in Moscow. For some reason he did not make use of the archival material, which is at least partially accessible in the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, neither did he bother to have a

look at the documents dealing with Soviet-Spanish relations or the Non-Intervention policy, published amongst others in the collection of Documents on Soviet Foreign Policy, which have been edited in the 1970s and the 1990s. Thus his analysis of the Soviet-Spanish ties during the Civil War period lacks important aspects. Kowalsky supplies us with some important and new information about Soviet arms being sent to the Spanish Republic, but he would not say anything substantial about the internal situation of the group of military personnel in Spain. The Comintern finds its only broader mention with regards to the solidarity campaign, which was organised through its sections all over the world. Part of the solidarity campaign, which saved lots of human lives, was the evacuation of Spanish children to the Soviet Union, which Kowalsky is completely right in mentioning. As a reference to the fashionable tendency towards cultural history, Kowalsky prefers to spend quite some space on the cultural ties between the USSR and the Spanish Republic. This constitutes certainly a part of the relationship between the two states, but it seems questionable if this is one of the main aspects, while others as indicated above are not touched by Kowalsky at all. Strangely enough, Kowalsky would not deal in detail with the question of the *Great Terror* going on in the Soviet Union in parallel to the Civil War in Spain, although it certainly influenced very much the conditions for the Soviet intervention in the country at the other end of Europe. Kowalsky also says very few things about the decision-making process inside the Soviet top leadership.

Since decades, Stanley Payne is well known for his research on the Spanish Civil War and other phenomena of the European interwar history such as Fascism. Payne tries to give his account of the influence Spanish and foreign communists as well as the Soviet Union tried to establish in the Second Republic. The basic thesis of his work goes more or less into the direction of Burnett Bolloten's interpretation, to whom he dedicated the English language version of his book. He would also continue the fateful tradition to rely on such a highly dubious source as Kriwitzky, who did not have any first-hand access to information from the inner circles of the Kremlin, but certainly pretended to do so in his memoirs. To put it in a nutshell, during the whole period from 1931 till 1939, the Communists aimed at destroying the Republic and at overthrowing the social order in Spain. They were actively helped to do so by the Socialist Party. The right wing of the Socialists as well as the liberal Republicans were only the intellectually and organisationally incompetent assistants to the Communist masterminds. Azaña is more than once characterised as the Spanish Kerenskii:

The main source of breakdown in the Republican polity was stemmed from the revolutionary process that paralleled the establishment of the Republic, at various times sought to overthrow the system, and first presented a major though unsuccessful challenge in October 1934. To this must be added the destructive machinations of a president [i.e. Alcalá Zamora], who though liberal in sympathies, intervened in the political process in inappropriate ways of dubious legality, as well as the fixed Kerenskyist orientation of the middle-class left Republicans, who insisted on an exclusively leftist regime despite all opposition and therefore felt they must always rely on and support the worker left, no matter how destructive its actions. [...] Just as the left Republican government was leveraged by the worker parties, the more moderate Socialists would be effectively frustrated by and to some extent leveraged by the caballeristas. On the other hand, the differences between the two sectors of Socialists have sometimes been exaggerated. [...] The prietistas' respect for constitutional niceties was sometimes only marginally greater than that of the caballeristas, but they had a more realistic sense

of the limitations and requirements of leftist power, and they lacked the arrogance, blindness, and hubris of the *caballeristas* (pp. 84-85).

He even goes so far to equate the Matteotti murder organised by the Mussolini regime with the murder of Calvo Sotelo, which happened evidently without the participation of the democratically elected government. All the talk about the Popular Front, the fight against Fascism was certainly – as once coined by Burnett Bolloten – a “grand camouflage”.

Payne does not, however, rely on archival sources himself. He quotes from the doctoral thesis of his student Kowalsky, when it comes to referring to the Soviet side. In contrast to Kowalsky, who does not display any orientation but post-modern arbitrariness, Payne remains stubbornly insistent on a position which has been taken up by quite a number of historians from the beginning of the Cold War latest. Payne tries to squeeze into his ideological scheme the facts, which have been extrapolated by the historiography of the Spanish Civil War since the end of the Franco Regime as well as the research on the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement since the opening up of the archives in Central, Eastern Europe and Russia itself. After having read the book, one can only come to the conclusion that Franco was correct to start a war of attrition against a large share of the Spanish population. Franco, as the implication of Payne’s line of argument, did the right thing, in order to prevent further chaos, more bloodletting and a left-wing revolution. Payne is neither original in the thesis he is defending nor has he contributed with this book to the research on Soviet and Communist influence in Spain in the 1930s, since he is relying widely on the findings of others. Why he has received a prestigious prize on Soviet and Eastern European Studies for this piece of work, remains mostly obscure.

Ángel Viñas has started to publish a three volume work on the international relations of the Spanish Civil War. The first part deals with the beginning of the Spanish Civil War and the circumstances driving the Spanish Republic into the arms of the Soviet Union. Viñas is one of the most renowned historians on the international implications of the Spanish Civil War. He has amongst others published important pioneer works on Hitler’s decision-making regarding the German intervention in the Spanish Civil War and on the Spanish gold deposit being transferred to the Soviet Central Bank in Moscow in late 1936. Viñas’ research was extremely helpful in refuting one of the basic myths not only of the Franco dictatorship with regards to the expenses financed by this gold deposit.

Viñas’ trial to synthesise on the international implications of the Spanish Civil War has however two problems. First, the project seems to be very extensive. This leads the author to dwell on questions which do not really appear to be of relevance for the real course of history. So he would broadly explain that one of the leading figures of the Spanish Socialist Party, Fernando de los Ríos, would plan to go to Moscow in the initial stage of the Civil War, but eventually not do it. He also would not hesitate to criticise other authors for not mentioning this episode without effect in a history, which is full of complications and which needs to be simplified anyway in order to make it understandable for the reader. Viñas likes to deal extensively with counterfactual deliberations, thereby not necessarily contributing to the clarity of his explanations.

Secondly, his main topic in the first volume, the relationship between the Spanish Republic and the Soviet Union, is not the territory on which Viñas can feel safe. What is

to some extent true for the other authors becomes evident in this case. One has to have a detailed understanding in order to analyse the Soviet Union's internal and external conditions and the functioning of the Communist International during the second half of the 1930s. And one has to broadly take into account the newer literature, which has been published on Soviet home and foreign policies of that period since the opening-up of the archives. Therefore Viñas' attempt at giving a comprehensive approach of the Spanish Republic's foreign relations during the Civil War do not seem to work out completely.

A lot of literature on the Spanish Civil War deals with the International Brigades. After some spontaneous movement at the start of the civil strife, the Communist International took the initiative in mid-September 1936 and decided to organise a troop with foreign volunteers to fight on the side of the Spanish Republic. Presumably, this was the start of the most cited aspect of the Spanish Civil War and the only success in the history of the Comintern. After Andreu Castell's early but comprehensive study of the 1970s, the main step forward in the history of the International Brigades was made with new material being accessible in Moscow, Berlin, Vienna and some other places since the beginning of the 1990s. Most notably studies on the national groups inside the International Brigades such as the Americans, the British or the French⁷ have been published during that decade. These studies could especially draw profit from the archive of the International Brigade which after some odyssey was brought to Moscow, where it remained virtually untouched till the end of the Soviet Union. Uhl has undertaken a further step in relation to the research on the International Brigades. He has asked, what happened afterwards. This is a pioneering study on one of the national groups inside the International Brigades, namely the Germans who would after the Second World War live in the Soviet zone, later to become the German Democratic Republic. Uhl presents a very interesting insight into the fate of the group of International Brigade soldiers, who would find themselves mostly voluntarily in the Soviet zone. Uhl can hereby confirm that the International Brigades – especially in the German case – were a mainly Communist undertaking. The great majority of the former International Brigade soldiers were Communists already during the 1930s. Some notable exceptions are mentioned by Uhl of former Anarchists and former Social Democrats living rather quietly in the GDR, becoming accepted as veterans of the International Brigades and participating in the privileges being conceded to this very special group. The former volunteers could organise themselves, but certainly did so in close coordination with the leadership of the United Socialist Party. Several former International Brigade soldiers themselves became part of the Party leadership, such as Franz Dahlem, or most prominently Kurt Hager and certainly Erich Mielke, who held important positions till 1989. Uhl comes to the conclusion that there never existed a friction between the group of former participants of the International Brigades as such and that the cases of former volunteers being subject to repression such as the tragic incident with the director of the GDR's railway system Wilhelm Kreikenmeyer, who simply disappeared as a consequence of the German repercussions

⁷ Peter N. Carroll: *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Americans in the Spanish Civil War*. Stanford 1994. James K. Hopkins: *Into the Heart of the Fire. The British in the Spanish Civil War*. Stanford 1998. Rémi Skoutelsky: *L'espoir guidait leurs pas. Les volontaires français dans les Brigades internationales, 1936-1939*. Paris 1998.

of the Noel Field affair, were an exception and not part of a comprehensive move against the volunteers. Ironically, in these cases the veterans found themselves on both sides – amongst the prosecuted as well as amongst the prosecutors.

The International Brigades developed a very high profile in the GDR. The myth of the Brigades became part of the legitimating narrative about the antifascist tradition of the GDR in contrast to the Federal Republic, where veterans of the International Brigades were treated much worse than those of the *Condor Legion*, for instance. This myth was produced and used in order to compensate for the lack of a broad resistance and liberation movement in Nazi Germany. So names of International Brigade volunteers, who were either killed during the Civil War such as Hans Beimler and Artur Becker or died later such as Hans Kahle or Heinrich Rau, were used for streets, schools or army barracks.

Uhl also takes up the issue of Beimler's death close to the Madrid front, on December 1, 1936. For decades, there were rumours about a murder, since Beimler had come into conflict with the German Communist Party leadership in Spain. Uhl, as also some other authors have suggested, could not find any hard evidence for such a suspicion. Tragically enough, Beimler, who had a high reputation as a fighter against the Nazis and as a former concentration camp inmate, was most probably shot by Franco's troops, who were attacking Madrid at that time.

On the whole, one has to state that the books analysed form some step forward in the direction research and the historiography of the Spanish Civil War. There are however some common weaknesses and in some cases some ideological obstacles which limit their insight into the relationship between the Soviet Union, Communism and the Spanish Civil War.

None of the authors – leaving aside Uhl's work and Minev's report – having published works on this complex have been dealing in detail neither with the international communist movement nor with the Soviet Union – be it on the home front or with respect to her foreign policies of the 1930s. This leads to four major deficiencies common to these works. First, the authors widely ignore the decision-making process, as far as it can be reconstructed today. They do not deal in detail with the discussions inside the Moscow institutions leading to the decisions first to supply the Republic with oil and then to send airplanes in September of 1936. The interaction between the different institutions such as the Red Army, the People's Commissariats of Defence, of the Interior or of Foreign Affairs or the Communist International headquarters are not analysed in detail, therefore the conclusions drawn from this are not necessarily going into the right direction.

Secondly, the Communist International as the main body for discussing the Spanish events and ideologically preparing and accompanying the decisions of the Soviet leadership is widely ignored. This is hardly understandable, since Comintern discussions and decisions, which certainly were not taken without close coordination with the Central Committee, reflect the decision-making process in the CPSU and the Soviet government. Even though larger parts of the documentation have either disappeared or are not accessible now, the internal processes of the Moscow institutions can be widely reconstructed without them.

Thirdly, the literature mentions from time to time, but widely underestimates the *Great Terror* as one major defining factor in every decision-making process in the years 1936–1938. It was not the case that the Soviet Union and the Comintern have transplant-

ed the *Terror* from the Soviet Union to the Spanish Republic, than the *Terror* in the USSR itself determining a lot of circumstances or decisions in relation with the policies applied to the Spanish problem. As is clear nowadays, the *Terror* would seize most of the important state and ideological structures in the Soviet capitals but also the provinces. The high turnover of party secretaries on the local and regional level would find its equivalent on the top level. This would also be true for important parts of the industrial sector. But in contrast to earlier perceptions of the process, not the whole of Soviet society would be subject to the *Terror*. Besides stigmatised groups at the margins of this society, it would be especially and paradoxically the elites, who would be devoured by the *Terror*. It was, as Gábor Tamás Rittersporn has coined it, “a kind of civil war within the ruling elite itself”.⁸ Not only the leadership of the Red Army was decapitated, but also the People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs was subject to the purge, which would mean that at least half of the diplomats would be dismissed, if not arrested or even executed. The same is true for the Comintern headquarters, which lost more than half of its former functionaries during 1936 and 1937. The *Terror* heavily restricted the ability of the most important Moscow institutions themselves to act adequately and timely. This distorts the whole picture, since the awkward Soviet policies towards the Spanish Republic receive a sinister side. The development of the Soviet society in the 1930s was much more complex than the Stalinist surface would allow to be seen and this has to be taken into account. Foreign policy capacities tend to be determined by the strengths and weaknesses at the home front. The Stalinist leadership which weakened itself as much as it did with disorganising major institutions by dismissing, arresting and executing experienced functionaries and thereby wasting human lives and human capital in an absolutely irrational manner.

Fourthly, the literature mentioned above does not deal a lot with the foreign policy conception of the Soviet Union and it does not even take into account the published Documents on Soviet Foreign Policy with the volumes (selectively) documenting events till the year 1938 being published available in Russian since the 1970s. These documents together with the archival material available from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive give some insight into the matter, which is widely ignored by the literature analysed here.

In the fifth place, ideological changes tend to be ignored especially by Stanley Payne. The Popular Front conception and the strategy of Collective Security, which were evolved by the Comintern and the Soviet leadership in parallel and are certainly intertwined, constituted a major change. Certainly, the framework of the Stalinist formula as Fascism “as the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital”⁹ for the Popular Front conception did have hardly anything to do with reality, but the coalition building potential of this approach was rather high. And sometimes in politics it is not analytical conciseness that counts, but the things – as in this case – one can offer to potential partners. It was the fate of this conception that

⁸ Gábor Tamás Rittersporn: *Stalinist Simplifications and Soviet Complications. Social Tensions and Political Conflicts in the USSR, 1933–1953*. Chur 1991, p. 18.

⁹ Georgi Dimitroff: *Against Fascism and War. Report before the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International*, 1935. Sofia n. d., p. 14.

it collided with a systemic crisis inside the Soviet Union which made most of the efforts to approach Socialist and Liberal parties defunct. These potential partners were rebuked by the Show Trials and the aggressive tone towards other parties coming up in 1936. The same is very much true for the Collective Security approach, which corresponded to the Popular Front approach on the state level. Its coalition building potential was also high, but again the *Great Terror* as well as the anti-Communist stance especially of the British Conservatives prevented this approach from succeeding. The Soviet Union however – not ignoring all self-interest and ensuing ambiguities – did indeed support the democratic Spanish Republic and tried to show to its potential Western partners that it was a reliable ally in confronting the aggressive dictatorships in Germany and Italy.

Sixth, there remains, especially in Payne's analysis, the suspicion that the Soviet Union and the Communist International promoted the *Terror* exerted back in the USSR also in the Spanish Republic. The idea of a major involvement of the Soviet or other foreign Communist functionaries in imposing a regime of *Terror* in Spain has been, however, refuted thanks to recent literature. Mainly due to a strange combination of Francoist and extreme left-wing propaganda, which had a major impact on the historiography in the period of the Cold War, this construction has influenced the major part of the historiography on the Spanish Civil War. Some parts of the Spanish political spectrum – the Spanish Civil itself is an important indicator – were prone to using political violence also without Soviet inspiration, as widely exercised by Anarchists as well right-wing extremists for several decades before the armed conflict broke out. (However, I would not say, that Stalin and his group would not have *wanted* to transfer the *Terror* to Spain, but they had only limited capacities and were too absorbed with internal processes.) The Spanish events as well as the *Great Terror* of the Stalinist dictatorship were cruel enough and cost more than enough human lives, thus exaggerations do not seem to be necessary. Anyway, a historiography, which cannot throw off the ballast of the Cold War, does not even contribute to the 19th century German historian Leopold von Ranke's basic demand to explain, "how it was in fact". Sometimes taking into account newly accessible or even older published material could be helpful in this.

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