



**Stanley G. Payne**, “History, Nation and Civil War in Spanish Historiography”, *Journal of the Historical Society*, Vol. 4, Issue 3 (Fall 2004): 335-344.

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The explosion of internal debate about the meaning of the collaborationist Vichy regime that seemingly took over France in the 1970s and 1980s, after the publication of Robert Paxton's *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* and the release of Marcel Ophus' film *The Sorrow and the Pity*, is today being replicated in Spain with reference to the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939-1975). Only in the Spanish case, there's no debate about external factors like Nazi Germany; the Francoist regime is undeniably seen as a product of Spain's own difficult history. Stanley G. Payne's piece, “History, Nation and Civil War in Spanish Historiography” is a review of four recent works on modern Spanish history which he discusses in order to bring a broader audience to the subject of modern Spain's unique path to Western European democracy.

Much of the current debate about Spain's 'special path' revolves around nationalism and ideology. Payne points out that the historiographical excitement of the 1990s centered on whether or not one took a nationalist -- Catalan, Basque, etc. -- perspective on Spain's past or argued for a more “pluralistic but unified” Spanish identity (p.336). Moreover, the Francoist regime, as a conservative, autocratic victor in a civil war over left-leaning, socialist and anarchist forces, imposed its own ideological element to the interpretation of the past, and the necessity of dealing with that fact also came out in the 1990s. Payne examines recent scholarship related to two specific questions- the impact of the nineteenth century Carlist movement and the question of the Soviet Union's involvement in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 -- as a means to assess the current state of English-language literature concerning the nature of the Spanish nation.

Carlism provides a useful platform from which to examine nineteenth century nationalism because it was, in Payne's words, “the most purely Spanish movement in modern politics” (p. 336). Reviews of recent works by Carolyn Boyd and in an edited volume of Marek Jan Chodakiewicz and John Radzilowski, comparing Polish and Spanish nationalisms, provide the context for Payne's analysis.[1] Boyd's study is a very broad one on the teaching of history in the Spanish educational system, detailing the various trends in textbook content that changed with each political and social debate and with each regime. For Payne, how Carlism, as one nineteenth-century movement that embraced Spain's Catholic identity, became a contributor to the emergence of a right -- wing nationalist authoritarian state in the twentieth century is significant; Boyd's detailed examination, he argues, permits one to see why it was that right-wing nationalism in the twentieth century was “never able to move far beyond the Catholic position” (p.339). He is similarly impressed with Chodakiewicz's comparative study with Poland, in which he argues that twentieth-century nationalism in both Spain and Poland drew upon the nineteenth century idea that their states represented “frontier guardians” of Catholic civilization in Europe (p.338).

The ideological aspect of Spanish national identity became much more pronounced, of course, with the Civil War of 1936-1939, when the right was labeled as ‘fascist’ and the left as ‘Communist’, whereas earlier the terms ‘Catholic’ and ‘liberal’ or even ‘socialist’ would have been used (p. 340). The debate over how accurate such terms were has gone on ever since, and a flurry of recent work on the Soviet Union's role in the Spanish Civil War, made possible by the opening of Soviet archives in Russia, provides Stanley Payne with a second opportunity to assess how English-language historians are defining Spanish nationalism, ideology and politics.[2] This is a subject that Payne himself has recently published on as well.[3]

The new work on this subject does answer many questions about the Soviet role in the Spanish conflict, and the inclusion of documents in the edited volume *Spain Betrayed* leads Payne to call it a “breakthrough” publication (p. 341). The Soviet Union organized its Spanish policy in order to fight for victory, which meant aiding the Republic with arms shipments, which are detailed extensively in Daniel Kowalsky's book *Stalin and the Spanish Civil War* (p. 344). Yet the USSR also sought to include other political groups in the government in the hopes of attracting British or French support; in short, it offered a more coherent strategy than other left-wing revolutionaries for trying to defeat Franco (p. 343). Payne concludes that the new research on the Soviet role demonstrates that it was not the Spanish Communists who ultimately “betrayed” Spain, proposing instead that the rapidity with which the Socialists sought to align themselves with the Communists and the USSR that led to the inability of the Republic to gain support from other states and made the Republic dependent on Stalin (p. 343).

The significance of this new research for Spanish nationalism is that instead of blaming external conspiratorial forces for Franco's victory, it seems that Stanley Payne is suggesting that the definition of the nation by left-wing Spaniards as an aggressively revolutionary one sealed the fate of the Republic. Thus if nineteenth century right wing nationalism in the form of Carlism contributed to the fact that twentieth-century Spanish nationalism was unable to define itself without Catholicism, twentieth century leftists, despite Stalin's efforts, were unable to detach themselves from set ideas about the necessity of revolution. The deadly mixture of competing nationalisms and ideologies plagued Spain until the late democratization of the 1970s and 1980s. Stanley G. Payne's interesting and thought-provoking reviews of a somewhat unusual amalgam of recent books helps explain why, in his words, “history and historical debate [are] more of a battle field in Spain than anywhere in the western world” (p. 344).

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[1] Carolyn Boyd, *Historia Patria: Politics, History and National Identity in Spain, 1875-1975* (Princeton University Press, 1997) and Marek Jan Chodakiewicz and John Radzilowski, eds. *Spanish Carlism and Polish Nationalism: The Borderlands of Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth Centuries* (Charlottesville: Leopolis Press, 2003).

[2] Books reviewed by Payne in this category are: Daniel Kowalsky, *Stalin and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Gutenberg e-book/Columbia University Press, 2004) and Ronald Radosh, Mary R. Habeck and Grigory Sevostianov, eds., *Spain Betrayed: The Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

[3] Stanley G. Payne, *The Spanish Civil War, The Soviet Union, and Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

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