

The Beginning of the Civil War in Spain (1936-1939) in the Russian Emigrant Vision



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Abstract: *The article examines the assessments given by the Russian Overseas' press, in connection with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939. The main reasons related to the internal and international aspects of the events in Spain, the adequacy and depth of their coverage by the leading Russian political emigrant press of the main socio-political trends are analyzed in a comparative context.*

Keywords : *Civil War in Spain (1936-1939), Russian political emigration, emigrant press.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The civil conflict that began in Spain in 1936 caused a violent reaction in the Russian political emigration. This war has not only generated numerous discussions in the periodical press and journalism, but also prompted a number of representatives of political emigration to take part in it directly. In this connection, the perception of the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939 events by the émigré press, is relevant and scientifically significant.

Among the Russian political emigration, there were three main socio-political trends: right (conservative), left (revolutionary) and neutral (liberal), each of which had its own printed media reflecting ideas. The degree of objectivity (or subjectivity) of emigrant periodicals directly depended on their affiliation to a particular political trend, which was also evident in the coverage of the Spanish Civil war, 1936-1939 problems. In the article, six emigrant media of various directions were subjected to analysis.

The political situation in Spain in the mid-1930s attracted the Russian emigrant conservative wing representatives' attention even before the civil war. This is eloquently evidenced by a series of publications of the monarchist newspaper "Vozrozhdenie" in early 1936. Thus, on January 2, 1936, a political crisis in the country was reported, doubts

were expressed about the possibility of holding fair elections, and the disastrous consequences for the country the victory of the Republicans in the elections to the Cortes were emphasized [1]. The Popular Front was already regarded by "Vozrozhdenie" as a negative factor, as the union of "Spain's main enemies": regional separatists, masons and Marxists (with a predominance of the latter) [2-6]. Throughout January-February 1936, the newspaper regularly published reports on the course of the election campaign, and summing up parliamentary elections results, while criticizing the Popular Front parties in every possible way [1-9].

Information about the Soviet Union involvement to the victory of the Popular Front was posted; later, during the Civil war, such information appeared repeatedly on the pages of "Vozrozhdenie" [9-19].

The editor-in-chief of the right emigrant magazine "Chasovoy" V.V. Orekhov also gave a negative assessment of the situation in Spain, noting that "the recent events in Spain ... have disgusted the whole world". Similarly, he commented on the victory in the elections of the Popular Front, explaining it with the intrigues of the Comintern and "Communist Moscow" [20].

One from leaders of the Russian emigrants conservative wing General A.I. Denikin, also held a similar view of the events on the Iberian Peninsula: the "legitimate (allegedly) government" of Spain was able to win elections in the February 1936 only as a result of falsification and support from outside [21].

II. METHODS

The research methodology of the study is based on the principle of historicism, that is, the consideration of all events in historical conditioning. The paper also used the principle of objectivity, which assumes that historical reality is objective, sources and facts have objective content and historical comprehension, which allows to recreate the historical picture of the past. The realization of this research would not have been possible without the use of a set of various general scientific methods (analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction) and special methods of historical science: historical and genetic method, which allowed to see the Russian emigrant community attitude evolution to the Spanish Civil War problems during the conflict; comparative-historical, which helped to examine and compare the various emigrant ideological and political camps views; problem-chronological,

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used to divide the studied problem into a number of smaller ones; descriptive-narrative, applied to the disclosure of the historical context of the period under consideration.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It should be noted that negative assessments of events in Spain were widely spread in European and world public opinion, and were not only the result of the conservative Russian emigration camp fiction.

Living at that time in London, a prominent representative of the Russian emigration, a former diplomat E.V. Sablin claimed that "long before the initiative of Franco, Soviet agents intervened in the internal affairs of Spain, and not without success" [22].

In the summer of 1936, the publication periodicity of the monarchist's printed organ "Vozrozhdenie" changed - from daily it became weekly. Therefore, the "Vozrozhdenie" number with the announcement of the beginning of the Spanish Civil War came out on July 25 (that is, a week after the start of the conflict). Most of the "Vozrozhdenie", July 25, was devoted to Spanish war with the undisguised sympathies for insurgents [23]. Editor Y.F. Semenov's note "The National Revolution in Spain" on the front page of a newspaper with the subtitle "the leaders of the national revolution" was accompanied by photographs of the leaders of the insurgents generals E. Mola, F. Franco and J. Sanjurjo [24-29].

The situation in Spain was mentioned in the July issue of the magazine "Chasovoy", although the first full-fledged publication about the Spanish war appeared only in the August issue of the magazine [30]; [31]. Since that time, Spanish events regularly covered on the pages of these periodicals with a steady interest in confrontation.

The representatives of the conservative camp of the Russian emigration considered the Comintern and the Soviet Union to be the main culprits for the unleashing of the fratricidal war in Spain with the aim to establish a Pro-Communist regime in Spain and thereby fomenting the fire of the world revolution [32-39]. This version was most fully described in the pages of "Vozrozhdenie". According to it, the leadership of the Communist International developed a strategic plan for the Sovietization of France and Spain, as well as their colonies in Africa [24-27, 36, 38-40]. The victory of the Popular Fronts in Spain and France, thus, was interpreted as the first steps towards their Sovietization.

The Spanish Civil War was viewed by the Russian conservative emigrant press as a world-scale event, the last bid of the Comintern [13, 41-44, 36]. The victory of one party, in the opinion of the right-wing publications, had far-reaching consequences for the whole world community: in case of the victory of the "reds" - "it will be the whole world Bolshevization", their defeat must lead to the collapse of the Comintern, the imminent fall of Soviet power in Russia and the expected national revival of the country [10, 31].

In this context, the right Russian emigration and the press under its control greeted the rebels with glee [32-33]. The anti-government rebellion in Spain was characterized by periodicals of such direction as "the reaction of the healthy forces of the nation" to attempts to establish in the country "a

Soviet system with all its consequences" [30, 38, 45]. On the pages of right emigre publications, analogies were often drawn between the Civil Wars in Russia and Spain: the opposing camps in Spanish events were called "red" and "white", the reform of the armed forces by the Popular Front government was presented as Bolshevik experience usage of the old army isintegration [28, 31].

F. Franco was compared with general L.G. Kornilov, the rebels, in general, were called the Spanish "Kornilov movement". Moderate Republicans (including President M. Azaña) seemed to be "the Spanish Kerensky", who gave the country to the Marxists power, and the working militia protecting them was likened to "the essence of our Red Guard" [24-26].

In another camp of the Russian emigre community - the left - the conflict over the Pyrenees did not meet such a unanimous assessment as in the conservative wing. Thus, on the side of the Spanish Republican government was the pro-Soviet part of the emigrants, and, above all, the "Union of Homecoming", while the National Revolutionary Young Russians took the open pro-Franco position in the Spanish conflict.

Compared with the right-wing publications, the so-called press of Young Russian paid much less attention to the conflict in Spain, in particular, it was made by the main newsletter of Russian national- revolutionaries - "Bodrost!" For the first time the Spanish war was mentioned in the issue of this edition on August 2, 1936, that is, 2 weeks after its beginning [46]. The newspaper sympathized with the putschists, motivating its position by the fact that the "new order", the "new world" for which they were fighting, was more progressive than the Soviet-style socialism, the right to which the Republicans were defending [47]. However, in "Bodrost!", unlike most other right-wing print media, the conflict was regarded as actually the Spanish problem, generated by internal contradictions, and not provoked by the actions of the Comintern or the Soviet Union [48-49]. The war in Spain, according to the publication, was a "typical feud", similar to which it could happen in other countries. The edition condemned the fratricidal slaughter as such, every civil conflict was terrible because "the very instincts of blood and destruction, which you usually do not suspect in a person, erupt onto the surface of life, filling and burning everything". Taking into account the national characteristics of the Spaniards, "Bodrost!" visibly pointed to the Spanish conflict prolonging prospects and its sluggish character: "On the Iberian Peninsula, the war will not end with a single blow" [46].

Another was the position of the pro-Soviet emigrant press. "Nash Soyuz" called international fascism as the main culprit of the unleashing of the Civil war in Spain, accusing Germany and Italy in preparing the military rebellion of Franco. The publication welcomed the "heroic struggle of the Spanish people" against the putschists. At the same time, it was recognized that the war in Spain "was a cruel war, bloody and inhuman", in which the pro-Soviet and youth press positions coincided [50-51].

IV. CONCLUSION

Social Democrats of the Russian emigrants from the Civil War in Spain, 1936-1939 very beginning unconditionally took the side of the Republic. In the Spanish question, Russian emigre socialists associated themselves with two influential international organizations of the left kind, with whom they actively cooperated: The Workers' Socialist International and the International Federation of Trade Unions, the Amsterdam International of Trade Unions.

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