



HISTORY AS A REVOLUTIONARY TOOL

Posted on November 1, 2020 by Stanley G. Payne



This month we are so very honored to present the English version of an interview undertaken by Jesús Palacios, with Professor Stanley Payne. The launching point of this valuable discussion is the move by the current Spanish government to "re-fight" the Spanish Civil War by way of lawfare. Versions of this "fight" are to be seen throughout the West. As is widely known, Professor Payne is the [world authority](#) on modern Spain, whose most recent books include, [The Spanish Civil War](#), and [Spain: A Unique History](#). Jesús Palacios is a Spanish essayist and writer and is the co-author, with Professor Payne, of [Franco: A Personal and Political Biography](#).

Jesús Palacios (JP): When [Zapatero](#) came to power, after the state of national shock that was [11-M](#) - the great hidden black hole of democratic time - the subsequent [Law of Historical Memory](#) of December 2007 broke the so-called spirit of Right-Left concord of the [Transition](#); and with it, the reconciliation between all social groups by way of two amnesty laws, promoted and defended by the Left and the Communist Party. Thirty years later, the [PSOE](#) broke all this by linking its political legitimacy with the revolutionary process of the Left in the Second Republic. In that law, the decoy and trap, was the search for, and the burial of, the victims of the Civil War, but exclusively those of the Left. This opened, as a first step, the Civil War as a dialectical confrontation.

Stanley Payne (SP): In the Democratic Transition, the main parties agreed that no one should use historical questions for partisan and confrontational purposes, leaving history to historians, researchers and writers. In other words, a categorical decision was made to leave the Civil War as a fact of history, so as never to enliven it. Later the Left, or a part of them, argued that a "pact of silence" was made so as not to touch "memory" or history. Nothing was more false. During the initial decade of the Transition, more attention was devoted to this fratricidal war than at any other time, with all kinds of research, studies, books, newspaper, magazine articles, public lectures, plays and movies. Quite the opposite of the myth that has been concocted.

JP: Examining the bill presented by the Socialist Party in Congress at the end of January 2020, which has gone practically unnoticed, and whose draft was approved by the Government last September, we must come to the conclusion, given its substance and content, that underlying the misnamed Historical Memory - now updated as ["Democratic Memory"](#) - is the implantation of a new extreme Left regime. It is like a silent revolution that is being carried out by way of power.

SP: The new project represents the ambition to completely dominate the historical and political

discussion, together with the entire educational system, encompassing, in effect, the courts, and with that the entire rule of law. It would be the highest expression of turning history into a political weapon for the greatest sectarianism.

But this new law will constitute the maximum attempt, to date, of the spurious politicization of the Civil War and the Franco regime; the new phase of a process that began in earnest almost twenty years ago, and which must be approached from two perspectives:

The political culture of the West on the one hand, and the current strategy of the Left in Spain on the other. The first represents an almost universal strategy in all Western countries, including Latin America. You hate and you want to repudiate history and "cancel" it, because history has not been Leftist in spreading culture and traditional values, which for the Left are abhorrent. Thus, the United States seeks to repudiate almost the entire history of the country by demolishing statues, a process that becomes so nihilistic that they even demolish statues of historic Leftists.

JP: Based on the culture of so-called victimhood.

SP: Exactly. In this culture of denunciation and the destruction of history, the so-called "victimhood" plays a fundamental role. The unique thought of radical progressivism inverts all cultural and moral values, and unlike the traditional culture that respected and consecrated the heroes, the revolutionary culture extols the victims. For them, history deserves no more attention than that of "unmasking" "oppression," where heroism and heroes do not deserve the least respect, because they cannot be conceived as anything other than "oppressors," giving the place of honor to the victims.

As for the Second Republic and the Civil War, a person outside this culture would think that the recognized victims would be the tens of thousands of people massacred by revolutionaries, since the first republican revolt of December 1930 (even before the Republic itself) - up to approximately 55,000 people murdered - sometimes tortured in the most sadistic way - by the Left during the war.

However, the revolutionary culture intends to "cancel" and "erase" any aspect of history that it does not like. Thus, the only victims are the many thousands killed by the Right wing, or in reprisals, or after military trials during the war, or under Franco. The history of the others disappears, as in the manipulated history in the former Soviet Union.

On the other hand, in the West in general, the destruction of current democratic systems is sought, because with free elections and an objective rule of law, it is always possible for the center or the Right to win. Hence, they want the current system of constitutional and parliamentary democratic monarchy in Spain to be illegitimate, and it seems easier to try to make it illegitimate in its historical origins by discrediting it for its "Francoist roots," than to try to overthrow it directly.

The current Left would have wanted to have another civil war, but that is not what the vast majority of Spanish Leftists believed in 1976. Then there was the true "historical memory" of the Republic and the Civil War, not this ghostly simulacrum, a true fairytale that is now being sold.

JP: Since Zapatero set in motion the machinery of the so-called Historical Memory, it has been insisting in many areas that what the Left wanted was to win the Civil War eighty years later by way of propaganda. But that was a huge mistake. What the socialists, communists and separatists want is to make a revolution by way of power to bring about a new state, a new regime. That and no other is the objective of these laws that are actually perverted memory.

SP: Yes, but they seek to reverse the outcome of the war, introducing another version of the "benefits" of that radical and authoritarian republic that still existed in a quarter of Spain in the first months of 1939. Now, in the form of the monarchy, for the moment, the objective is to connect with the Second Republic, but not with the democratic system that existed between April 1931 and February 1936 (except for the revolutionary attempt of October 1934), rather with the revolutionary process that began from the falsified elections of this last date.

As [Moa](#) has pointed out, the contemporary political history of Spain has developed in cycles of approximately 65 years (1808-1874; 1874-1939; 1939-2004; 2004-). Of these, the last complete cycle encompasses the modernization of Spain under Franco and all the governments from the Transition to 2004.

The current moment is a phase of decline that began with the overturning of the elections as a result of the terrorist acts of 11-M, accentuated by the deconstruction of Spain as a nation that took place under the Zapatero government, followed by the Great Recession and the ravages of the current pandemic, combined with the disastrous [Sánchez](#) government.

JP: Therefore, it is not basically about the Civil War, the victims, Franco and the Franco regime, or the outlawing of foundations and associations. These are tricks, lures.

SP: All of them are mere factors or individual weapons in the struggle to achieve a metapolitical goal. Which is not to say that the Left parties do not take seriously this apparatus that they are setting up. All these initiatives are opportunities to propagandize, repress, intimidate and drug the mind of society.

JP: We are facing a totalitarian project to create a new extreme Left regime that will annul all kinds of protests by the dissenting party, who will be persecuted and silenced with fines, plunder and sentences, under the accusation of exalting the Civil War by those who won it, and of Francoism or dictatorship, promoting the figure of the "snitch," and the creation of a "Council of Memory," a [Checa](#) by way of the "Truth Commission" earlier.

S.P: That's right. It would be a kind of "Western Sovietism;" or, something in more contemporary terms, a "European Chinese system." But, of course, without the Chinese economic strength. It would be more like Venezuela (the country that is the origin of the financing of [Podemos](#)), which is an unmitigated disaster. A basic aspect is that it can be used as a tool to try to stir up the public spirit by creating a system of "agitprop" (agitation and propaganda) as a great element of distraction from social and economic suffering. And, also, to further weaken the already fully weakened leaders of the center and the Right, most of whom have participated so meekly and cowardly in this whole process of intimidation by fleeing from it. It goes without saying that it would be a project confronted by the Constitution, which they don't give a damn about, because in the long term they would impose another constitution of a revolutionary type.

JP: In the totalitarian government project that is being pursued for the new state, education is fundamental, whose curriculum will include "Spanish Democratic History," from primary school to university, by way of which freedom of thought and teaching will be eradicated at the root, without discussion or controversy. We will have new generations indoctrinated from childhood.

SP: Perhaps the most fundamental thing is the elimination of freedom of education and expression. A main part of revolutionary culture is "re-education" with respect to the past and in many other things. The cultural revolution is probably the most important aspect in the long-run, second only to the domination of power itself. They are the steps for the creation of "light totalitarianism," which is emerging as the great danger of the West in the 21st-century. It is an irony of history that after the

triumph of the West over Nazism and Sovietism, it is on the verge of succumbing under its own kind of totalitarianism, a product of the modern West in its last phase, and emerging from the evolution of democracy, itself arising concretely from the radicalism of the 1960s and from all the ideas of deconstruction and postmodernism.

JP: The writer [Iñaki Ezquerro](#) in an essay called this process, "soft totalitarianism."

SP: This was revealed in the United States, the first Western democracy, under the presidency of Obama, the first anti-American American president (while with the Left in Spain it is normal for there to be an anti-Spanish Spanish president). By 2020 this process has reached a well-developed level in the United States, something that is perhaps not so surprising, because the current doctrine of radical progressivism (or "political correctness") is the first modern radical ideology created largely in North America, not in Europe, although Europeans have contributed to it. It is about the new secular religion or "political religion" of a post-Christian society, a doctrine also based, in part, on victimhood, on the evolution and distortion of Christian doctrines.

JP: There have been many thinkers critical of the democratic system in the hands of elites who pervert and degenerate it - Schmitt, Nietzsche, Michels and especially Tocqueville, who predicted that it could become the worst of dictatorships because of the political corruption of its rulers.

SP: The original prophet of this was Alexis de Tocqueville. In his great work [Democracy in America](#), originally published nearly two centuries ago, Tocqueville warned how it might be possible for egalitarian democracy to evolve into what he called "soft despotism," without violence or great repression, but with the distortion of elements of democracy itself. Tocqueville was brilliant, the best analyst of classical American democracy, just as he was the best analyst for the origins of the French Revolution. He was the prophet of our time. Right now, the best American analysts refer to Tocqueville, and his ideas are applicable to Spain as well.

JP: We are facing an extreme situation. We have a generation indoctrinated or stunned in hatred through the machinery of propaganda; an opposition, that has been part of the system's bipartisanship, not only corrupted, but muzzled by the fear of being branded as Francoist; and some groups and political parties who want nothing more than the destruction of Spain - so they support, in this way, a government whose president and second vice president are amoral and are supported by two parties bathed in corruption.

SP: The situation in Spain is unique, in part, as a consequence of its recent history and the existence of not one but multiple separatisms (which are also growing, as in the case of Navarra, where the Basque region is in a position to fashion another entity, with its own identity, like Navarra). However, from a certain level of abstraction, it can be said that, as in 1808, 1820, 1873 or 1936, the current moment in Spain is the most radical or most advanced of what has emerged as a self-destructive process throughout the West.

JP: Stan, as you know, I've been maintaining for a long time that the '78 regime has collapsed. That regime was a partitocratic system, whose institutions were corrupted over time by the interference and control of the two main government political parties (PSOE-PP), but which both are interested in maintaining for the moment, with the PSOE deployed for the conquest of a new revolutionary state, and the [PP](#) used for sheer survival.

Now, there is a new political group ([Vox](#)) that identifies more with a social movement. But if there is not a reaction from society alienated by government propaganda and the media that society finances, a reaction that will prevent this revolutionary process of a totalitarian takeover, things will be very difficult. I am not saying that the battle is lost, but we do see a Church that has surrendered and the crown tacitly kidnapped, although Felipe VI has reacted lukewarmly to the government's ban on traveling to Barcelona. And we have already seen the communist fury, and from the government as a whole that has been unleashed against the King.

SP: Yes, to paraphrase [Cardinal Sarah](#), the hour is late and it's getting dark. Historically, Spanish rights have depended heavily on Catholicism, and in a secular society they are without protection. Its dialectical weakness is truly impressive.

Most seem to lack the desire to make a serious resistance, while the Catholic hierarchy has, as you say, surrendered. In a decadent society, elites collapse and have no real will or capacity to react, which is the definition of decay. With a certain historical perspective, it can be concluded that in the Spanish case the pandemic and its economic depression have created the equivalent of the First World War for Russia.

The extrapolitical crisis offers the conditions for a more centralized and dominant government, to then move on to the revolution, with the difference that Spanish society is very passive, partly because of the crisis, partly as a consequence of constant brainwashing, and partly because of sheer decadence

and inertia. But in Spain the Left does not intend to recapitulate 1917 but rather the Spanish experience of 1936, with the revolution led by a theoretically parliamentary government, although in disguise.

The [image](#) shows a drawing by Mercedes Comellas Ricart, a 13-year old girl caught up in the Spanish Civil War. The caption at the back reads, "Esta escena representa el día de la evacuación cuando al ir a subir al tren vimos a un avión que ya tiraba y tubimos de ir a un refugio de alli cerca" ("This scene represents the day of the evacuation when we about to get in the train, we saw an airplane that was firing and we had to get into the nearby shelter").

Translated from the Spanish by N. Dass.

