

Moving to the post-1975 period (the end of the Second Indochina War) Gareth Porter declares that Vietnam viewed the American defeat as the beginning of a new era in regional international politics in which the SRV would be accepted as a major new socialist power. ASEAN's resistance to Vietnam's plans for Indochina led Hanoi to conclude over the remainder of the decade that ASEAN was simply a surrogate for continued U.S. domination. This view of ASEAN changed, according to Porter, after China's invasion of Vietnam. With Beijing as Hanoi's new major adversary, Hanoi has come to believe that common cause can be made with ASEAN against the PRC, if only the Southeast Asian group accepts Vietnam's hegemony over Indochina. As Peter Polomka notes, however, Vietnam's hopes run afoul of Thailand's insistence, with ASEAN backing, that Cambodia be restored as a neutral buffer between the historic rivals. Prospects for a return to a pre-Vietnam war era balance within Indochina were rated as 'dim' by virtually all Workshop participants. Instead, it was feared that prolonging the conflict would only create strains within ASEAN between those states which see China as the longterm threat to regional stability and Thailand which, as the frontline state, fears the prospect of having to live with Vietnamese soldiers on its Cambodian frontier.

Most participants saw the present polarization of Southeast Asian politics as virtually impossible to alter so long as Vietnam remained in Cambodia. Vietnam's empire depends on Soviet largesse. Even if other countries were willing to provide economic assistance to Hanoi, its military position in both Cambodia and Laos would remain dependent on Soviet arms and petroleum. Moreover, as Carl Thayer notes, the Soviet-Vietnam relationship is also directed against China as part of the Russian encirclement strategy.

The study concludes with Polomka's assessment of the situation. First, because of Cambodia, great power rivalry has once more been inserted into Southeast Asian politics. Second, Chinese influence in Thailand will increase as Vietnam continues to rely on the Soviets, and third, a growing estrangement between Bangkok and the rest of ASEAN is probable if the war continues. From a 1986 vantage point, this assessment remains valid.

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Richardson, R. Dan. *Comintern Army: The International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War*. Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982.

When the Spanish Civil War erupted in July 1936, contemporary observers in Europe and North America generally had little or no difficulty understanding the "true" nature of the conflict. Whatever

ideological preference was chosen to explain the tragic unfolding of events taking place, it was essentially interpreted by partisans from both extremes of the political spectrum as a heroic struggle between the Loyalist Republicans and the Nationalists.

Such a simple dichotomy, asserts R. Dan Richardson, is, to say the very least, extremely misleading; at most, it is nothing more than a hollow myth which the available historical evidence cannot adequately support. This erroneous picture of the Spanish Civil War as a noble fight of good versus evil was carelessly spun by the fierce passions of diametrically opposite political convictions which the armed struggle produced in great quantities on both sides of the barricades. But, as the author points out, the Spanish Civil War also gave birth to an even larger historical fraud, namely that the International Brigades — the term used to describe the collective unit of foreign volunteers who fought on behalf of the Loyalist cause, such as the famous Abraham Lincoln Battalion from the United States and Canada's equally well-known MacKenzie-Papineau detachment — were progressive or embryonic anti-fascist forces which rallied valiantly to the cause of Spanish democracy under siege by right-wing military despots and their reactionary allies. It is irresponsible, notes the author, to "cast the Spanish Civil War as a clear-cut struggle between 'democracy' and 'fascism'"

Actually the Spanish conflict was, as many have shown, anything but a simple and straightforward contest between democracy and fascism. Both sides in the civil war represented a varied amalgam of mutually incompatible ideologies. To say that all who fought for the Loyalists were democrats is to stretch that term beyond meaningful definition. To say that all who fought for the Nationalists were fascists is to do the same. Once this is understood it becomes unnecessary to hold — as the myth within a myth would have it — that the foreigners who fought for the Loyalists were, by definition, fighting for democracy.

The glowing and heroic image of the International Brigades as modern-day Lafayettees and Garibaldiis is completely at odds with the facts. While Richardson does not deny that there were many idealistically motivated young men from, vitually, around the globe who generously offered their fighting prowess — even at the risk of death — for Spanish democracy out of a sincere conviction that fascism, like cancer, had to be surgically removed quickly before it threatened to ravage the body politic of Europe and the rest of the world, he nevertheless contends that the International Brigades were diplomatic and military instruments of Soviet communist policy.

The opening salvo of the bloodletting in Spain coincided with a massive public relations campaign orchestrated by Moscow, "[u]nder the impact of one of the greatest propaganda barrages ever laid down," to picture the civil war as a life and death contest that pitted democratic justice against fascist tyranny. In reality, the Kremlin was more

interested in laying the groundwork of communist influence in the Iberian peninsula than earnestly trying to save popularly elected representative government. "Thus the origins of the International Brigades are to be found in the working out of a Soviet-Comintern policy of worldwide scope and not, as some would have it, in the spontaneous response of world democracy to the threat of fascism in Spain. To put it differently, without the Soviet-Comintern decision to intervene directly in the Spanish War and, as part of that intervention, create a foreign volunteer force for use in Spain, the International Brigades would never have come into existence."

The Comintern skillfully manipulated the western free press to such an enormous extent that it completely succeeded in obscuring its real intentions. Behind an inconspicuous fig-leaf, "the most valuable of the Brigades' propaganda roles in the overall Communist effort in Spain was that of maintaining the interest of large sections of the public in the various western nations in the Spanish conflict."

The constantly reiterated fact that Americans, or Englishmen or Frenchmen, as the case might be, were fighting and dying in Spain exercised an undoubted effect in their respective countries in keeping alive the identification of at least segments of the populations with that war. In that respect the Communists could count on the help of much of the bourgeois press of the various nations, many of whose correspondents in Spain were strongly sympathetic to the Loyalist cause in general and the International Brigades in particular.

For some mysterious reason, journalists covering the war — including Ernest Hemingway, perhaps the most celebrated of them all — curiously "allowed" themselves "to be used, willingly, by the Communists to further their own causes and to add lustre to their image."

The politico-military activities of the brigades came under the iron-fisted control of André Marty, a die-hard member in good standing of the French Communist Party. A devout follower of Bolshevism who "never showed the least inclination to deviate from the party line as laid down in Moscow," Marty acquired a reputation for being more "Stalinist" than even Stalin himself: an intolerant, brutal, even sadistic, party beast who demanded absolute obedience and loyalty. Obsessed with preserving "good" and wholesome communism, Marty regularly executed members from his own entourage for expressing disillusionment with the war or anyone else who intellectually migrated, however slightly, from the official communist dogma which was 'carved in stone' by Moscow. Hemingway captured the quintessential Marty with an especially stinging characterization, describing the "chief commissar of the International Brigades" as a "crazy ... bedbug" whose uncontrollable "mania" for purifying tainted communism, particular among his own troops, far exceeded his enthusiasm for fighting fascism. It was an ironic yet logical *dénouement*: "Marty ... was but the instrument, though indeed a particularly crude one, of the policy of his masters in the

Comintern hierarchy and in Moscow. The hypersuspiciousness, narrow sectarianism, and totalitarian mentality that he epitomized only reflected the system of which he was a part."

Richardson concludes his brilliantly argued and researched monograph with a strident plea that scholars discard "the continuing emotional and ideological associations of the Spanish Civil War."

The greatly oversimplified view of that war as a clear-cut struggle between "democracy" and "fascism" has exhibited amazing staying power despite the work of many historians pointing out the complexities of that struggle. The widespread sympathy for the Loyalist side and the identification of that side with "democracy" have made it difficult for many to accept or acknowledge the key role played by the Comintern in the Loyalist regime. These same emotional attachments have made it difficult for many to accept a sharp focus on the International Brigades as a Comintern-controlled military and political entity. And yet that is what the record shows.

Certainly there were non-Communists in the Brigades. Certainly there were many who joined the Brigades to fight for "democracy" or against "fascism." Neither of these truisms alters the fact that the Brigades were, from beginning to end, a Comintern army.

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