

REVIEWS

Acta Poloniae Historica
110, 2014
PL ISSN 0001-6892

Cristina Álvarez González

HISTORICAL STUDIES ON EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: AN OVERVIEW FROM SPAIN

That the East-Central European reality has not been one of the most analysed issues in Spanish academia is no secret. The reasons for the relatively small amount of publications on, and scarce interest in the history of the region until the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s in our country have much to do with the linguistic barrier (unfortunately still existent nowadays, though in a lesser extent), the lack of a consolidated institutional and academic tradition, and the difficulties experienced in access to sources before 1989. Moreover, it is a fact that East-Central Europe, for historical, cultural and strategic reasons, has not been a priority area in Spanish foreign policy. However, during the last 25–30 years this apparently discouraging panorama has improved significantly and many gaps are being, or have already been filled from different angles and in a variety of disciplines.

In the last decade, East-Central European countries have acquired more visibility in Spanish media, and general present-day knowledge about them is increasing. This is due, firstly, to the EU enlargement towards the East and, stemming from it, to the new opportunities offered to study or work abroad, as well as to the growing number of cultural and sports events organised and promoted in Spain¹ by the Polish and Romanian cultural institutes, the Russian Centre of Science and Culture, or the Hungarian Embassy, among others.

The present review² will deal chiefly with the contributions of Spanish historiography to this task, particularly to the study of communism and state

¹ And also beyond: the Euro 2012 competition, e.g., became a way for many Spanish football fans to visit and get to know better Poland and Ukraine.

² This brief overview is most indebted to the following works, which I highly recommend for a broader and deeper knowledge on the topic, as well as for further references: Carlos Flores Juberías, 'Dos décadas de estudios sobre la Europa Oriental en España: un intento de sistematización', in Carlos Flores Juberías (ed.), *España y la Europa Oriental, tan lejos, tan cerca: actas del V Encuentro español de estudios sobre la Europa Oriental (Valencia, del 20 al 22 de noviembre de 2006)* (Valencia, 2009), 713–74; José M. Faraldo, 'Ad marginem. Historische Osteuropaforschung in Spanien. Ein Überblick', *Osteuropa*, 56, 3 (2006), pp. 95–103; Raquel Sánchez,

socialist era in East-Central Europe and the former Soviet Union,³ though without excluding some key, indispensable guiding references to other regions (like the Balkans), periods, and academic fields.

The course of historical events and their present-day relevance has conditioned to a considerable extent (and still does) the peaks and valleys of Spanish academic interest in East-Central Europe, as well as the specific topics that researchers have focused on. Between 1939 and the end of the 1980s, many experiences that shaped Spanish perceptions of East-Central European countries were closely related some way or another to the anti-communist propaganda plan carried out by the Francoist regime, from 'the Blue Division' to the testimonies and recollections of 'the children of the war'⁴ or of the Spaniards who exiled in 1936–9 and eventually returned to Spain after their stay in East-Central Europe. During the first decades of Francoism, specialised knowledge about the region was built upon the sources produced out of diplomatic activities, the initiatives of the Institute of Political Studies and of the Centre for Eastern Studies (Centro de Estudios Orientales), and the views about state socialist regimes provided by East-Central European émigrés and refugees (predominantly right-winged and anti-communist) with journalistic, propagandistic or merely informative goals. Hardly any of the latter, however, reached a long-lasting outstanding position in Spanish academia.⁵

'Historiografía española sobre Europa Central y Oriental. Nacionalismo, transiciones postcomunistas y relaciones culturales', *Revista de Historiografía*, vi, 1 (10) (2009), 42–50; Ricardo M. Martín de la Guardia and Guillermo A. Pérez Sánchez, 'La Europa del Este en la historiografía española de las relaciones internacionales', *Ayer*, 42 (2001), 12–48.

³ For a brief display of the spatial terms used in Spain to define the different regions of the former Eastern Bloc ('Europa Oriental', 'Europa Centro-Oriental', 'Europa Sur-Oriental', 'Europa del Báltico-Oriental', 'Europa del Este') and a definition distinguishing communist studies (focusing on politics and international relations) from studies in state socialism (as history of the Eastern Bloc): José M. Faraldo, 'Jesús Pabón, *Bolchevismo y literatura. La novela soviética en sus creaciones típicas*. Madrid/Santander, Antonio Zúñiga Editor, 1949', *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 30 (2008), 367, fn. 1.

⁴ The Spanish 'Blue Division', formed in theory by voluntaries, was sent by Francoist regime to Russia to help the Axis powers in the Eastern battlefield during WWII, under the pretext of fighting against communism. Xosé M. Núñez, 'Als die spanischen Faschisten (Ost)Europa entdeckten: zur Russlanderfahrung der "Blauen Division" (1941–1944)', *Totalitarismus und Demokratie*, iii, 2 (2006), 695–750. The 'children of Russia', also known popularly as the 'children of the war', were sent to the Soviet Union from the Republican war zone in order for them to be safe during the Spanish Civil War.

⁵ The contributions made by the Romanian Georges Uscătescu (1919–95) and the Polish writer Józef Łobodowski (1909–88) for a better knowledge on East-Central

Jesús Pabón (1902–76), professor at the University of Madrid (later rebaptised as Universidad Complutense de Madrid, UCM), is known in Spanish historiography especially thanks to his biography of the Catalanian politician Francesc Cambó (1876–1947), but he was also the author of two of the earliest historical reflections about the Bolshevik Revolution and Soviet Union in our country, published precisely in the darkest period both of Spanish autarchy and post-war Stalinism. According to José M. Faraldo, who revisited these infrequently remembered works six years ago, Jesús Pabón, from his Catholic, liberal, monarchic position, analysed and tried to understand Bolshevism, which he conceived, in an essentialist way, as the result of the fusion of two antithetic realities: communist ideology, on one hand, and the Russian Empire, on the other. Based upon sources and secondary literature translated to Spanish and French, the three essays Pabón compiled in *Zarismo y bolchevismo* (1948), and chiefly the complex interpretation he made of six Soviet literary works in *Bolchevismo y literatura* (1949), set an important milestone, Faraldo esteems, not only in Spanish academic production on Eastern Europe, but also in Spanish historical studies in general, due to Pabón's 'proto-semiotic' approach and as one of the first samples of cultural history produced in Spain, in contrast with the idealist and fact historiography that was typical at the beginning of Francoism.⁶

Further on, beside the purely ideological or propagandistic publications, the intellectual contributions to the study of state-socialist countries were determined by Cold War and Spanish internal contexts: the frustrated liberalisation attempts of the 1950s and 1960s, above all the Czechoslovakian case, became a fleeting focus of interest. Once Franco's regime was over, sociologists like Pere Jódar and Andreu López, or historians with well-defined anti-Francoist political affiliations, such as Javier Tusell (demo-Christian) and Fernando Claudín (critical Marxist), provided different views of communist ideology and the Eastern Bloc, especially of its dissidents and opposition movements.⁷ Moving onto the most conservative side, some of Luis Suárez's

European realities should nonetheless be highlighted. Further references: Sánchez, 'Historiografía española' and Matilde Eiroa's articles and book: 'Una mirada desde España: mensajes y medios de comunicación de los refugiados de Europa del Este', *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, xvii, 2 (2011), 479–97; 'España, refugio para los aliados del Eje y destino de anticomunistas (1939–1956)', in *eadem* and María Dolores Ferrero Blanco (eds.), *Las relaciones de España con Europa Centro-Oriental (1939–1975)*, *Ayer*, 67 (2007), 21–48; *eadem*, *Las relaciones de Franco con la Europa centro-oriental (1939–1955)* (Barcelona, 2001).

⁶ Jesús Pabón, *Zarismo y bolchevismo (tres estudios)* (Madrid, 1948); *idem*, *Bolchevismo y literatura. La novela soviética en sus creaciones típicas* (Madrid and Santander, 1949). See Faraldo, 'Jesús Pabón', 367–72.

⁷ Fernando Claudín, *La oposición en el "socialismo real". Unión Soviética, Hungría, Checoslovaquia, Polonia: 1953–1980* (Madrid, 1981); Javier Tusell, 'Los disidentes

historical works in the 1980s contained relevant information about the back then little-known (and less researched) topic of Francoist-Soviet contacts, as well as a general overview of the communist world.⁸

Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union, together with the transformations that took place in East-Central Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s, became the next landmark and turning point in Spanish academic production about the area, not only due to the intrinsic impact and relevance of the events, but also due to the recent memories of Spain's own transition, culminated less than a decade ago (1975–82). The journalistic chronicles, followed by more deliberate and wide-scoped publications, of Spanish correspondents in East-Central Europe and the Soviet Union, as well as some early works on Soviet changes by social scientists (such as the prolific political expert Carlos Taibo, Félix Bayón or Rafael Bardají), historians (Fernando Claudín yet again) and other journalists, paved the way for further studies.⁹ If we give priority to the topics and approaches of the research developed since then, we can venture a classification in four groups.

1. First, we have general historical works that cover a broad chronological scope and deal either with the whole East-Central European area, or with a specific country within the region. These studies have heterogeneous characteristics, are based upon different sources and might tend to didactic and popularising aims, or to a deeper and more specialised research level. Among their authors, we can find Francisco Veiga (the Autonomous University of Barcelona, UAB), Guillermo Á. Pérez and Ricardo M. Martín de la Guardia (University of Valladolid), Gabriel García, Julio Gil (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, UNED) or once again Carlos Taibo (the Autonomous University of Madrid, UAM).¹⁰

del este vistos por la izquierda', *Cuenta y razón*, 3 (1981), 164–6; Pere Jódar Martínez and Andreu Lope Pena, *Polonia. Por qué luchan los obreros* (Madrid, 1982). See also the work written by the journalist and Catholic priest Jesús Infiesta, *Este es Walesa, líder de un sindicalismo nuevo* (Madrid, 1982), or the one by José Comas, *Polonia y Solidaridad* (Madrid, 1985).

⁸ Luis Suárez Fernández, *Franco y la URSS: la diplomacia secreta* (Madrid, 1987) and his prologue to Bohdan Chudoba, *Rusia y el oriente de Europa* (Madrid, 1980).

⁹ Fernando Claudín, Konstantin Mozel, and Manuel Azcárate, *La era Gorbachov* (Madrid, 1988); Fernando Claudín, *La Perestroika ¿A dónde va la Unión Soviética?* (Madrid, 1989); Carlos Taibo, *La Unión Soviética de Gorbachov* (Madrid, 1989); Félix Bayón, *La vieja Rusia de Gorbachov* (Madrid, 1985); Miguel Ángel Aguilar and Rafael L. Bardají, *La perestroika y el poder militar soviético* (Madrid, 1989); Emilio Romero, *Gorbachov y el huracán de las libertades* (Madrid, 1990).

¹⁰ Francisco Veiga, *L'Europa Oriental (1945–1991): el bloc de l'est* (Barcelona, 1999); Francisco Veiga, Enrique Ucelay Da Cal, and Ángel Duarte, *La paz simulada. Una historia de la Guerra Fría, 1941–1991* (Madrid, 1997, last reedn. 2010); Ricardo M. Martín de la Guardia and Guillermo A. Pérez Sánchez, *La Europa del este, de 1945*

2. The second group of works (the most extensive of the four) pays especial attention to the transitional period and the multiple transformations that took place in East-Central Europe during the late 1980s and the 1990s, rather than concentrating exclusively on the previous communist era. Many of these works comprise the whole region but deal with each national case separately, whereas others resort to a comparative approach between Central-Eastern European countries or with other areas that have experienced similar or comparable transitional processes in the last decades of the twentieth century. Apart from the interesting goals achieved in the spheres of law studies (Manuel B. García and Juan Ferrando Badía, since the late 1970s) and economics (thanks to several research groups or to the works written and coordinated by Enrique Palazuelos), in the field of political science we can highlight the researches of Carlos Taibo, Carmen González, Josep M. Colomer, Carlos de Cueto, and Miguel Herrero, focused in Central and Eastern European countries and Russia. In addition, Paloma Aguilar and Alexandra Barahona have edited a volume on transitional justice around the globe that includes the cases of East-Central European communist dictatorships (Carmen González's contribution) and separate chapters dedicated to Russia and the GDR.¹¹

Turning now towards historical analysis, but without leaving completely the question of how to deal with a dictatorial past, it is worth to mention 'Diktaturbewältigung und nationale Selbstvergewisserung', an international project with Spanish contributions (coordinated by Krzysztof Ruchniewicz of the Willy Brandt Centre, University of Wrocław, and Stefan Troebst of GWZO, University of Leipzig) that studies from different angles, including a comparative perspective, how the recently bygone PRL (communist Poland) and Francoist dictatorships were remembered and perceived during Poland's *transformacja* and Spain's *transición*.¹² This has not been the only proposal to

a nuestros días (Madrid, 1995); Guillermo Á. Pérez Sánchez and Ricardo M. Martín de la Guardia, *Derechos Humanos y comunismo* (Madrid, 1999); Ricardo M. Martín de la Guardia and José R. Díez Espinosa, *Historia contemporánea de Alemania (1945–1995)* (Madrid, 1998); Carlos Taibo, *La Unión Soviética, 1917–1991* (Madrid, 1993), i.a.; Gabriel García Voltá, *Aproximación a la historia del Comunismo: biografía de una frustración* (Barcelona, 1995); Julio Gil Pecharromán, *Historia contemporánea de Europa centro-oriental*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 2002); María Teresa Martínez de Sas, *La lucha por la diversidad en la Europa central y oriental* (Barcelona, 1999) (a commented collection of 19th and 20th-century documents); Marcello Flores and Jesús de Andrés, *Atlas ilustrado del comunismo* (Madrid, 2007).

¹¹ Alexandra Barahona de Brito and Paloma Aguilar Fernández (eds.), *Las políticas hacia el pasado: juicios, depuraciones, perdón y olvido en las nuevas democracias* (Madrid, 2002).

¹² Krzysztof Ruchniewicz and Stefan Troebst (eds.), *Diktaturbewältigung und nationale Selbstvergewisserung. Geschichtskulturen in Polen und Spanien in Vergleich* (Wrocław, 2004).

compare the Polish and Spanish transitions: Beata Wojna, specialist in the history of international relations and currently working at the Polish Institute of Foreign Affairs [PISM] in Warsaw, also approached this topic, within her field of expertise, during and after her academic stay in Spain at the UCM.¹³

In addition to these examples, Spanish historians, together with invited foreign researchers, politicians and intellectuals, have as well dedicated several collective books and journal dossiers to East-Central European transitions, among which the volume coordinated by Ricardo M. Martín de la Guardia and Guillermo Pérez – an outcome of a summer conference held by the University of Alicante – can be highlighted together with no. 15 (1993) of UCM's contemporary history journal *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, plus nos. 40 (1992) and 100 (2004) of *Debats*.¹⁴

As far as the transitions in specific countries are concerned, it is social scientists again, rather than historians, that have taken the lead in the research. The USSR, with its reforms, disintegration and ethnic conflicts, is probably the most studied case in the area not only among Spanish political scientists (Cesáreo Rodríguez, Carlos Taibo), sociologists (Manuel Castells), economists (Jesús Lizcano, Enrique Palazuelos) and law experts (Manuel B. García, Hermann Oehling, Antonio Blanc, Juan Miguel Ortega, and others – from international law and constitutional law perspectives), but also among historians, like Francisco Carantoña and Gustavo Puente (Universidad de León) or the above-mentioned Ricardo Martín de la Guardia and Guillermo Pérez. On the other hand, contemporary history professors, like Antonio Fernández (UCM) and Juan Avilés (UNED), chose to focus during the 1990s on the origins of the Soviet Union instead of on its recent collapse and dissolution.¹⁵

Up until now, Polish transitional process and 'Solidarność' movement have aroused considerable interest in comparative terms, with publications

¹³ Beata Wojna, *La política de seguridad en España y en Polonia en la transición hacia la democracia: un análisis comparado* (Madrid, 2004); and *eadem*, *El camino de España y Polonia hacia la Alianza Atlántica* (Madrid, 2006).

¹⁴ Ricardo M. Martín de la Guardia and Guillermo Pérez Sánchez (eds.), *La Europa del Este. Del Telón de Acero a la integración en la Unión Europea* (Madrid, 2002); special issues of: *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 15 (1993), *La transición en la Europa del Este*, <<http://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/CHCO/issue/archive>> [Accessed: Nov. 20, 2014]; *Debats*, 40 (1992), *Cambio y transformación en la Europa del Este*; and *ibidem*, 100 (2004), *1989 y el final del socialismo*.

¹⁵ Francisco Carantoña and Gustavo Puente, *La perestroika, problemas y perspectivas de las reformas en los países socialistas* (León, 1991); Ricardo M. Martín de la Guardia and Guillermo Á. Pérez Sánchez, *La Unión Soviética: de la Perestroika a la desintegración* (Madrid, 1995); Ricardo M. Martín de la Guardia, *Crisis y desintegración: el final de la Unión Soviética* (Barcelona, 1999); Antonio Fernández García, *La revolución rusa* (Madrid, 1990); Juan Avilés Farré, *La Revolución rusa* (Madrid, 1997).

by Xulio Ríos (Instituto Galego de Análise e Documentación Internacional), Mercedes Herrero (journalist working at the Universidad Antonio de Nebrija), sociologist Izabela Barlińska and international relations historian Beata Wojna.¹⁶ GDR, Bulgarian, Hungarian and Romanian transitions have also been studied economically, politically and sociologically by experts such as Juan Carlos Monedero, Manuel Roblizo, Carmen González, Raúl de Arriba, Fernando Alonso Guinea, Fernando Luengo, or Silvia Marcu. Historians, on the other hand, have chosen to analyse other relevant – though less recent – events related to the opposition to Soviet rule and communism, like the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, as well as some aspects of Romanian home and foreign affairs, from a political and international relations point of view.¹⁷ Unfortunately, Spanish academia still lacks historical monographs about the transitions of former Czechoslovakia and the ex-Soviet republics (Ukraine, the Baltic republics, Belarus, etc.).¹⁸

3. Following the classification suggested at the beginning of the review, we now move on to the third group of works: those that aim to study East-Central European and Russian communist past from a Spanish perspective, and thus focus on the different kinds of contacts and connections that developed between Spain and these countries. Some historians, such as Antonio Elorza (UCM), Marta Bizcarrondo (1947–2007), Ángel Viñas and Juan Avilés, have paid especial attention to the intertwinement of communist ideology, home and foreign affairs in our country through the study of Spanish-Soviet relations during Spain's Second Republic and Civil War, while Magdalena

¹⁶ Beata Wojna, 'La transición en la política exterior polaca (1989–1997)', *Cuadernos constitucionales*, 43–44 (2003), 233–59.

¹⁷ Ricardo Martín de la Guardia, Guillermo A. Pérez Sánchez, and István Szilágyi, *La Batalla de Budapest. Historia de la insurrección húngara de 1956* (Madrid, 2006); María Dolores Ferrero Blanco, *La revolución húngara de 1956. El despertar democrático de Europa del Este* (Huelva, 2002); *eadem*, 'Las contradicciones entre las políticas interior y exterior en la Rumanía de la guerra fría (1956–1975)', *Historia Actual Online*, 9 (2006), 153–78; *eadem*, 'La crisis del socialismo real. Semejanzas y diferencias entre las disidencias del bloque del Este', *ibidem*, 11 (2006), 65–86; plus her coordination in no. 10 (2006) of the dossier '1956, año clave en la Historia del Tiempo Presente', *Historia Actual Online*, 99–153 (available online at: <http://historia-actual.org/Publicaciones/index.php/haol/index>). It is also worth to mention the contribution of the journalist Patricia González Aldea, *Helsinki 1975. Începutul sfârșitului – Degradarea regimului din România și singularitatea lui în blocul de Est (1975–1990)* (Bucharest, 2008).

¹⁸ We only have the UNED historian Marina Casanova's compilation of texts produced by Czechoslovakian opposition intellectuals; Marina Casanova (ed.), *Intelectuales de la disidencia y literatura Samizdat en Checoslovaquia bajo el comunismo: antología de textos de Havel, Vaculík, Simečka, Klíma, Kohout, Klíment, Trefulka, Hutka* (Madrid, 2003).

Garrido's (Universidad de Murcia) PhD research is devoted to the different friendship associations developed between Spain and the USSR. José M. Faraldo (UCM) and Matilde Eiroa (Universidad de Carlos III), on the other hand, have preferred to concentrate on the Francoist period: the latter has studied the relations established between Spain and East-Central European countries through official and unofficial diplomatic channels, including émigré groups in Spain, while the former analysed specifically the life and activities of members of the Polish émigré community.¹⁹ Eiroa has also directed the international Research Group 'Red Temática: Movimientos Intraeuropeos', whose target was to study the flow of East-Central European refugees, émigrés and exiled towards Spain between WWII and the downfall of the Berlin Wall.²⁰ In a complementary way, but with a different theoretical and methodological framework, historians Alicia Alted (UNED) and Encarna Nicolás (Universidad de Murcia), on one hand, and social anthropologist Marie-José Devillard (UCM) and her team, on the other, have carried out research devoted to the inverse migration flow, particularly to the experiences of the above-mentioned Spanish 'children of the war', many of whom stayed to live in the Soviet Union for good.²¹

4. The fourth, and last, group of contributions has approached the questions of nationalism, minorities and ethnic conflicts in East, Central and

¹⁹ Marta Bizcarrondo and Antonio Elorza, *Queridos camaradas. La Internacional Comunista y España, 1919–1939* (Barcelona, 1999); Ángel Viñas, *El escudo de la República: el oro de España, la apuesta soviética y los hechos de mayo de 1937* (Barcelona, 2007); and, Viñas' prologue to Yuri Rybalkin, *Stalin y España. La ayuda militar soviética a la República* (Madrid, 2007), 13–20; Juan Avilés Farré, *La fe que vino de Rusia: la Revolución bolchevique y los españoles (1917–1931)* (Madrid, 1999); Magdalena Garrido Caballero, *Las relaciones entre España y la Unión Soviética a través de las Asociaciones de Amistad en el siglo XX* (Murcia, 2006); Matilde Eiroa, *Las relaciones de Franco con la Europa centro-oriental*; José M. Faraldo, 'Defending the Nation in a New Fatherland. Polish Émigrés in Franco's Spain (1939–1969)', in *idem, Europe, Nationalism, Communism. Essays on Poland* (Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe III, Geschichte und ihre Hilfswissenschaften, 1051, Frankfurt am Main, 2008), 93–109.

²⁰ The results of these researches have been published collectively and individually in many journals. We can highlight the monographic numbers of *La Musa. Pensamiento, Universidad y Red*, 6 (2004): Matilde Eiroa (ed.), *El exilio de Europa Central y Oriental*; and of *Ayer*, 67 (2007): *eadem* and Ferrero Blanco (eds.), *Las relaciones de España*.

²¹ Alicia Alted, María Encarna Nicolás Marín, and Roger González Martell, *Los niños de la guerra de España en la Unión Soviética. De la evacuación al retorno (1937–1999)* (Madrid, 1999); Marie-José Devillard et al., *Los niños españoles en la URSS (1937–1997). Narración y memoria* (Barcelona, 2001); *eadem, Españoles en Rusia y rusos en España. Las ambivalencias de los vínculos sociales* (Madrid, 2006).

Balkan Europe. Included in this corpus are works of some of the most reputed and internationally-known Spanish experts, such as the historians Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, Francisco Veiga and José M. Faraldo, from Galicia, Catalonia and Madrid, respectively. Thanks to their linguistic skills and to the years they have worked in, or collaborated with foreign institutions, their research is based mainly on first-hand primary sources and cover a wide range of topics, something which, together with their specialised lectures and the initiatives they promote in Spanish universities, will hopefully render some continuity to the research paths they have opened in Spanish historical field. Núñez, taking the Spanish case as a starting point, has gradually widened his geographical and chronological scopes in order to study the role nationalist movements played in twentieth-century Europe in a comparative perspective. From a different angle, Francisco Veiga, expert in history of the Balkans, has studied the nationalist conflicts of the region, as well as the Romanian ultranationalist Iron Guard. Similarly to Núñez, his researches have preferably focused on phenomena that took place either before the formation of the Eastern Bloc or after its decomposition.²² Such is the case, too, with a majority of the contributions to the collective volumes on ethnic conflicts and minorities edited by political scientists Ruth Ferrero (UCM) and Carmen González, and with the publications of Carlos Taibo.²³

²² Xosé M. Núñez-Seixas studies, i.a., the Slovak, Yugoslav and Ukrainian cases in his monograph *Movimientos nacionalistas en la Europa del siglo XX* (Madrid, 1998). Some of his works on nationalism: *Entre Ginebra y Berlín. La cuestión de las minorías nacionales y la política internacional en Europa, 1914–1939* (Madrid, 2001); *idem*, 'Internationale Politik, Minderheitenfrage und nationale Autonomie. Der Europäische Nationalitätenkongress 1925–1938', in Heiner Timmermann (ed.), *Nationalismus und Nationalbewegung in Europa 1914–1945* (Berlin, 1999); *idem*, 'Das Europa der Nationen? Nationalitätenprobleme und europäische Öffentlichkeit zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen (1918 bis 1939)', in Jörg Requate and Martin Schulze Wessel (eds.), *Europäische Öffentlichkeit. Transnationale Kommunikation seit dem 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 2002). Francisco Veiga has published, i.a.: *La mística del ultranacionalismo (historia de la Guardia de Hierro), Rumanía, 1919–1941* (Barcelona, 1989); *idem*, *Els Balcans: la desfeta d'un somni, 1945–1991* (Vic, 1993); *idem*, *La trampa balcánica: una crisis europea de fin de siglo* (Barcelona, 1995).

²³ Ruth Ferrero Turrión (ed.), *Nacionalismos y minorías en Europa Central y Oriental* (Barcelona, 2004); Carmen González Enríquez (ed.), *Minorías nacionales y conflictos étnicos en la Europa del Este* (Madrid, 2004). As for Carlos Taibo: 'La cuestión nacional en la Europa Central y Oriental contemporánea: una guía de estudio', *Cuadernos constitucionales de la Cátedra Fadrique Furió Serriol*, 28–9 (1999), 79–94; *idem*, 'Federalismo y cuestión nacional en la Unión Soviética', in Alfons Cucó, Joan Romero González, and Joaquín Farinos i Dasi (eds.), *La organización territorial del Estado. España en Europa: un análisis comparado* (Valencia, 2002),

Additionally, José M. Faraldo, starting from his research on nationalism (his original field of expertise), has studied the symbolic aspects present in the formation of communist regimes, East-Central European citizens' perceptions of communist systems, daily life aspects, the definition of 'the other' in Cold War propaganda, or the ways in which people assumed the values promoted by communist authorities through the school, the army, the *lieux de mémoire* and the symbols. His most recent works include a volume, co-edited with Paulina Gulińska-Jurgiel and Christian Domnitz, about the image of Europe in the Eastern Bloc, and a monograph entitled *La Europa clandestina. Resistencia a las ocupaciones nazi y soviética (1938–1948)*, where he develops a joint analysis of Western and Eastern European resistances to Nazi and Soviet occupations up until the first post-war years.²⁴

To summarise what has been said so far, some dominant trends can be appreciated (beyond general handbooks) in Spanish historical studies on Eastern and Central European countries. These include special attention paid to the USSR and the Balkans; a notable interest in periods prior to 1945 and from the 1980s onwards;²⁵ or, thematically, the focus on international contacts and common (or, comparable) experiences shared by Spain and East-Central Europe (migrations, refugees, nationalisms, diplomatic, ideological and cultural relations, transitional processes, EU accession processes, etc.), together with prevalence of political and international relations approaches.

Thus, much of the communist and state-socialist past of the region remains yet to be explored in Spain. To fulfil this middle- and long-term task, however, it is increasingly necessary to have a functional command of one or more East-Central European languages: linguistic competence

143–58; and Carlos Taibo, 'La desintegración del Estado federal yugoslavo', in José Girón and Slobodan Pajović (eds.), *Los nuevos estados de la antigua Yugoslavia* (Oviedo, 1999), 89–112.

²⁴ José M. Faraldo, 'Formulación del paisaje en la Unión Soviética: arquitectura y espacios de vida (1917–1929)', *Memoria y civilización: anuario de historia de la Universidad de Navarra*, 4 (2001), 205–39; *idem*, 'La escritura simbólica de la realidad social: el ejemplo de la Constitución estalinista de 1936', *Cuadernos constitucionales de la Cátedra Fadrique Furió Ceriol*, 36–7 (2001), 133–60; *idem*, *Nación, estado y construcción social de la realidad: fragmentos de la experiencia soviética (1917–1991)* (Madrid, 2003); *idem*, *Europe, Nation, Communism*; *idem*, *La Europa clandestina. Resistencia a las ocupaciones nazi y soviética (1938–1948)* (Madrid, 2011); *idem*, Paulina Gulińska-Jurgiel and Christian Domnitz (eds.), *Europa im Ostblock. Vorstellungen und Diskurse / Europe in the Eastern Bloc: Imaginations and Discourses* (Vienna and Cologne, 2008).

²⁵ I have hardly mentioned the works concerning later periods, but many historians (not to mention social scientists and law experts) have taken an interest in the changes that took place in the region after the 1990s, and especially, all that had to do with the EU enlargement process.

spectacularly widens the range of documentation available and provides a much desired autonomy, allowing each researcher to develop his or her own way to select, contrast, and work with primary sources, apart from being a window offering further involvement and knowledge about a given country or area. Nevertheless, positive steps have already been taken towards the development of more specialised research, either focused exclusively on East-Central European questions or continuing with in-depth comparative approaches to the Spanish and East-Central European dictatorial pasts, and based upon other historiographical trends, such as intellectual history, cultural history, or the so-called *memoria histórica* – as the latest meeting organised on the subject has shown.

Precisely in order to come up with the state-of-play and present the latest advances in historical analysis of communist Eastern Europe, the symposium ‘Eastern Europe in Communist times: contributions from Spanish historiography’ was held on 25th–26th October, 2012 at UCM’s Faculty of Geography and History. Conceived as an extensive working session within an academic framework, its main goal was to gather junior researchers interested in the communist period of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, together with senior experts on this field. Ángel Luis Encinas of UCM was in charge of delivering the keynote speech, in which he reflected upon the rebirth of Jewish life in Poland.

In the papers dealing with the Balkan area, UCM’s Carlos González Villa analysed how the United States’ change of foreign policy towards the Soviet Union has influenced Yugoslavia since Ronald Reagan’s presidency (1981). Enrique Uceda (Universidad de Alicante) presented his project about repressed nationalisms in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, whereas Alfredo Sasso (Institut Català de la Pau, UAB) studied, in a complementary fashion, the causes of the defeat of non-nationalist parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the transition from communism to a multiple-party system. The rest of the works presented at the symposium covered different aspects of the communist past in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Lithuania, as well as Russia.

To mention the research the undersigned is involved in, it studies the ways in which Polish intellectual opposition milieus approached Poland’s past and present, through the analysis of historical discourses and debates available in printed media, especially uncensored publications (*drugi obiegi* – ‘second circulation’), between 1976 and 1989. This includes Polish opposition intelligentsia’s replies to questions such as what their country’s ethos is or which aspects of the past should be kept alive and which should be definitely overcome, together with a historicisation of the present time or the milieu’s perception of time in relation to the country’s past.²⁶ Amelia Serraller’s (UCM) paper was also linked

²⁶ Early approaches in Cristina Álvarez González, ‘La historia de Polonia en la oposición: 1976–1989’, in José Manuel Aldea Celada *et al.* (eds.), *Historia, identidad*

to intellectual history, as well as to her training as a philologist, for it dealt with the life and output of Polish journalist and writer Ryszard Kapuściński. Her study took us back to the origins of a very popular genre in Poland, i.e. nonfiction (called in Polish the *literatura faktu* [literature of facts]), and provided an overview of several episodes of Kapuściński's biography, with its journalistic, literary, and even philosophical turns.

Verónica Gama (UCM) took us for a virtual tour around the Museum of Genocide Victims (Vilnius, Lithuania), the Memorial to the Victims of communism and to the Resistance (Sighet, Romania) and the House of Terror (Budapest, Hungary) in order to show how violent pasts are remembered and recreated through museums and memorials, and what effects in people's identities this way of putting traumatic pasts in scene may have.

Also based upon a comparative approach, but this time going across the Iron Curtain, Carolina Rodríguez (UCM) presented the project she is developing together with José M. Faraldo, in which they compare the nationalist policies of reconstruction of the Old Town and downtown areas of Madrid and Warsaw after the Civil War and the WWII, respectively (1939/1945–1956). On the other hand, Carlos Domper of the University of Zaragoza aims to compare the electoral systems of Communist Hungary and Francoist Spain with a view to demonstrate the existence of a transnational model of elections and plebiscites, rooted in nineteenth-century liberalism that was distorted and used by post-1945 European dictatorships for their own benefit.

Turning back again to international relations, but still concerning Spain, Magdalena Garrido, revisiting her recent PhD research, talked about the image of the Soviet Union Spaniards had during and after Francoism, using a case study of the Soviet-Spanish Friendship Association, with the purpose to highlight the importance of culture as a vehicle both for communist political propaganda and for the image of the Soviet Union abroad in a Cold War context. Finally, Francisco José Rodrigo's (UCM) paper aimed to prove the existence of links and transfers between Polish, Czech and Russian opposi-

y alteridad. Actas del III Congreso Interdisciplinar de Jóvenes Historiadores (Salamanca, 2012), 685–711 (CD format, downloadable at <<https://sites.google.com/site/temasyperspectivasdelahistoria/2-historia-identidad-y-alteridad/sociedad>> [Accessed: Dec. 12, 2014]); *eadem*, 'Europa en el horizonte de la historiografía polaca (1978–1989): una aproximación comparativa con el historiador español José María Jover (1965-1975)', in Alejandra Ibarra Aguirregabiria (ed.), *No es país para jóvenes. Actas del III encuentro de jóvenes investigadores de la AHC* (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2012) (CD format, and a previous similar paper available at <http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/hcontemp/textos_seminario/alvarez_gonzalez.pdf> [Accessed: Dec. 12, 2014]); *eadem*, 'Facing history: Polish Opposition Intellectuals' Approaches to the Past (1976–1989)', in *XII Congreso de la Asociación de Historia Contemporánea: Pensar con la Historia desde el siglo XXI, 17–19 de septiembre de 2014* (forthcoming).

tions around the claims for Human Rights in Eastern Europe after the Conference of Helsinki (1975), and whether these contacts exerted any pressure or had any influence, for instance, on the U.S. Congress Helsinki Commission.

Inspired by the previous conference series *Encuentros Españoles de Estudios sobre la Europa Oriental*,²⁷ UCM's Symposium on Communist Eastern Europe has not only given the chance to all those who have recently began their research careers to publicise their works but also provided a meeting space for them to share their ideas and experiences and to improve their ongoing projects, promoting the creation of networks between future specialists in the humanities and social sciences who will certainly contribute to a better and more widespread knowledge of Eastern European history in Spain.

proofreading Tristan Korecki

²⁷ Five interdisciplinary conferences about Eastern and Central Europe, coordinated between 1998 and 2006 by the law specialist Carlos Flores Juberías. Certainly an unprecedented and much worthy effort to bring together the disperse research proposals of the different specialists on the area, that materialized in several volumes: *idem* (ed.), *Actas del I Encuentro Español de Estudios sobre la Europa Oriental* and *Actas del III Encuentro español de estudios sobre la Europa Oriental* (Valencia, 1999, and 2002–4 respectively); *idem* (ed.), *De la Europa del Este al este de Europa: actas del IV Encuentro Español de Estudios sobre la Europa Oriental, Valencia del 22, 23 y 24 de noviembre de 2004* (Valencia, 2006); finally, *idem* (ed.), *España y la Europa Oriental*.