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Spanish Civil War and Syria (I)

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3/1/2016



In July 1936 a violent coup d'état was launched by elements of the Spanish army led by General Francisco Franco against the recently elected centre-left Popular Front government in Madrid. Within a matter of weeks Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany committed men and arms to support the military forces led by Franco.



Could Republican Spain alone defend itself against foreign intervention? If Italy and Germany were rushing to back Franco's fascists, who was going to support the legitimate Republican government in Madrid? Well, it was not Britain, led by a Tory cabinet, fearful of the establishment of a communist Spain, and concealing a not so secret admiration for fascism as a bulwark against the left in Europe. And it was not France either, though the French had just elected a Popular Front government, a coalition of the Socialist, Communist, and Radical parties. Unfortunately, the Popular Front was a weak political coalition, whose instability was exacerbated by the centre-right Radical party's opposition to any intervention in Spain to defend the Republican government. The French right declared openly that it preferred German fascism to the Popular Front. «Better Hitler than Blum» was the right's defiant cry, referring to the new socialist premier Léon Blum. British Tories saw Blum as a kind of French Alexander Kerensky, the precursor of the Bolsheviks in Russia, and they worried that France could go communist. Blum himself feared civil war in France if his government intervened in Spain to support Madrid. So Britain and France, bastions of European «democracy», refused to go to the aid of a democratically elected government in Spain, threatened by a fascist uprising supported openly by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. At least in France there were some clandestine operations to aid the Spanish Republicans.

If the so-called European democracies would not support Republican Spain, who would? Only [the USSR](#), as it turned out, went to the aid of the Madrid government. Arms and advisors were sent to help defend the Spanish capital from a fascist offensive in the autumn of 1936.



A bloody civil war continued until March 1939 when Franco's fascists emerged victorious. Soviet aid could not compete with that of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The USSR was too far away. Some historians say, the Spanish civil war was the opening campaign of the Second World War.

What has all this got to do with the war in Syria? The Anglo-American Mainstream Media (MSM) has drawn attention to apparent similarities between the Spanish civil war and the Syrian conflict in order to suggest the possibility of «the world» intervening to stop the «butchery» in Syria. «Should we intervene or stay out?», one commentator [asked](#), already in 2013, pointing to the Spanish paradigm. More recently, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, those preeminent MSM bullhorns, have also made the Spain-Syria comparison. «*Once again*», says the [Times](#), «*we have liberal powers seemingly helpless to bring the conflict to an end*».

In 1936 the so-called «liberal powers» were far from «helpless», they chose not to intervene in Spain out of sympathy for fascism or in the case of France, because of political weakness and fear of civil war. «*What about the helpless liberal powers now?*», the Times asks in so many words. In fact, they are not «helpless» at all; the United States has from the outset led the aggressors attempting to overthrow the Syrian government. To be sure, not everyone in the United States supports intervention in Syria. Some US conservatives have fastened onto the Spain-Syria nexus [to argue](#) against US intervention. Even the *Times* seems to hesitate although it condemns «*Russia's brinkmanship with Turkey*» as if it was Russia which ambushed a Turkish fighter aircraft and not the other way around. Truly, there is nothing so stupefying as American double standards and hypocrisy.

When you hear the MSM raise the Spain-Syria connection, watch out for the messages between the lines. Are we reading a fresh call for western intervention in Syria or a warning against escalation? Recently, western intervention has been dressed up as humanitarianism to help the long suffering Syrian people, whose plight, it should be noted, was created by western humanitarians. If all this sounds like a renewal of «Responsibility to Protect» (R2P) under a different, pseudo-historical guise, it probably is. R2P is based on the principle that most western public opinion can always be fooled.

How well does the Spain-Syrian comparison hold up? The Spanish civil war erupted in the wider context of a rapidly rearming Nazi Germany threatening European security. Indeed, it polarised what might be called the European civil war between right and left. The elected Republican government in Madrid chose to fight in the first great campaign of the Second World War. It drew support from anti-fascist forces in Europe and North America and from the USSR while Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy backed Franco, and conservatives in France and Britain hoped for his success.

In Syria the conflict was planned, funded, and directed from abroad from the very beginning. As early as 2001, the United States began preparing plans to overthrow the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad. Ten years later, a legitimate protest movement was hijacked by the United States and its regional vassals, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.



Snipers and armed gangs **fired on** crowds or attacked police and government buildings. It is the standard *modus operandi* of US engineered colour revolutions, the same as was used in Kiev in 2013-2014. Portrayed in the west as a brutal dictator, Assad actually attempted to settle peacefully the 2011 public protests, to no avail. The West likes to present the conflict in Syria as a «**religious war**», Sunni vs Shia and all others. «*Most major powers are reluctant to intervene*», so the MSM line goes. In fact, Syria is besieged by a coalition of aggressors led by the United States, which has not at all been «reluctant» to overthrow the Syrian government.