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The School Image of The Spanish Civil War and the Second World War as an Instrument for Collective Memory Manipulation

A Comparative Case of History and Civics Textbooks from Early Francoist Spain and People's Republic of Poland During Stalinism

Summary: This article compares the school image of the wartime past (the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War), created during the transformative early postwar phase of Francoism in Spain and Communism in Poland. Demonstrating the political usefulness of the narratives on war was crucial to the consolidation of both regimes. Legitimisation of the new regime called for emphasising the war effort, not only in defeating the enemy but also in its struggle for social issues. For school-taught history, the early years of both dictatorships marked a period of breaking with prewar educational concepts, introducing and testing new 'revolutionary' pedagogical solutions. This article not only explains the aspirations of political rulers to rebuild the students' memory but also contributes to our understanding of the textbook authors' perception of the recent past. It analyses the meanings of terms specific to mythical stories, such as nation, power, heroes and their deeds, or wartime struggle.

The initial phase of People's Poland and Franco's Spain was thus a period of 'identity formation'. Those in power sought to create a homogeneous 'imagined community' with the leading party, where the right to rule was legitimised by the victory in the recent war. One of the tools used was the manipulation of the collective memory of the students.

The following cross-national study of Spanish and Polish teaching materials, which employs the analysis of over 90 primary sources in the form of History and Civics textbooks, seeks to elucidate the similarities and differences in the pursuit of educational politics in the two Cold War

<https://doi.org/10.18778/3071-7779.2026.1.05> — received: 2025-11-03 — verified: 2025-12-21 — accepted: 2026-03-08

77-95

funding information: PRELUDIUM scientific grant (2016/21/N/HS3/03461) — **conflicts of interests:** none — **declaration regarding the use of GAI tools:** not used — **ethical considerations:** the authors assure of no violations of publication ethics and take full responsibility for the content of the publication — **the percentage share of the author in the preparation of the work is:** [MCh 100%]



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enemy camps. Comparative studies enable the discernment of phenomena that may not be readily apparent in the context of a single country's research.

This study seeks to establish which narratives were used to mark the textual boundaries of war heroes' behaviour that should have served as a moral compass for students in their epistemological orientation in the 'new world'. Questions are posed concerning which discursive strategies were used in the early stages of both dictatorships to memorise the path to victory. This analysis seeks to establish whether, and how, the textbook narratives differed and whether they abounded in arguments that were universal for the consolidation of totalitarian power. The conclusion summarises the usefulness of studying narratives concerning both wars when examining collective memory and group identity.

Keywords: modern history, Spanish Civil War, collective memory, civics textbooks, Poland, fascism, stalinism, political myths

Introduction

This study compares the school image of the war (the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War in Poland) created during the transformative early postwar phase of Francoism in Spain (1939–1951) and Communism in Poland (1945–1956).¹ The theoretical framework utilised in this study encompasses the theories of totalitarianism, collective memory and imagined communities, but especially political myth. The methods employed are rooted in historical research on school textbooks, with a predominant focus on textual and graphic analysis, while the group of sources consists of printed materials, namely textbooks for teaching History and Civics at the primary and secondary school level, published during the period under study in both countries.

The first years of the People's Poland and Franco's Spain was a period of 'consolidation of state power'. The rulers sought to create a homogeneous 'imagined community' with the leading political party, where the right to govern was legitimised by the victory in the recent war. One of the means used was the manipulation of the students' collective memory supported by school manuals.

For school-taught history, the early years of both dictatorships marked a period of breaking with prewar educational concepts, as well as introducing and testing new 'revolutionary' pedagogical solutions. This paper not only explains the aspirations of political rulers to rebuild the students' memory but also contributes to our understanding of the textbook authors' perception of the recent past. Analysed are

¹ The study is based on research conducted as part of the PRELUDIUM scientific grant (2016/21/N/HS3/03461), supported by Poland's National Science Centre. It addresses a previously uncovered research topic, which was only tentatively suggested in the aforementioned project on the educational image of the Polish Workers' Party and the Falange.

the meanings of terms specific to mythical stories, such as nation, power, heroes and their deeds, or wartime struggle.

Demonstrating the complex circumstances of the war, without omitting the detailed descriptions of the enemies' brutality — even in manuals for early grades — as the dramatic background for presenting the political usefulness of the Francoists and Polish Communists was crucial to the consolidation of both regimes. Legitimisation of the new regime called for emphasising the war effort, not only in defeating the enemy but also in the struggle for social issues.

The questions relate to the differences and similarities in the image of war conveyed at the primary and secondary school levels within an asynchronous comparison between the two countries. This study examines the question of whether the image of war conveyed in secondary schools, which were attended by a smaller percentage of the population and were considered elite, differed from the image conveyed at the elementary level as part of the mass education programme. Thus, the question of whether a comparison of the narratives from both countries will reveal more differences or similarities is posed. Finally, potential explanations are posited for the observed discrepancies and analogies in relation to the issue of the internal conflict in Spain and the international conflict in Poland, as well as in relation to the longer traditions rooted in the educational cultures of both countries.

The source base consists of school textbooks for the teaching of History and Civics. A proportion of the manuals were printed in Spain in areas occupied by Franco's troops or in Poland in areas taken by the Red Army, even prior to the cessation of hostilities in both cases. However, the majority did not contain information regarding the recent war in the main body of the text. Instead, passages promoting the new system were included in the introductions or conclusions. It is therefore indicative for the two countries that comprehensive and detailed descriptions of the war, which are relevant and crucial for this research, appeared in school textbooks only after its conclusion. The publication of these textbooks in Madrid or Warsaw was indicative of a broader issue concerning the infiltration of the education system by new political elites.

The period under study, namely the early postwar phase of each regime, can therefore be divided into two shorter periods by an internal turning point. In Spain, the initial period therefore extends from the end of the civil war to the shifts in narrative that accompanied the defeat of Spain's allies, namely fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The second period concludes with significant changes to the Spanish Ministry of Education in the early 1950s, marked by the departure of José Ibáñez Martín from his position, who belonged to the *Asociación Católica Nacional de Propagandistas*, a Catholic group that intensively supported Franco and that nurtured the political cadres of Francoism, although to a much lesser extent than the army or the Falange.

In contrast, in Poland, after a few early post-war years, that were marked by a liberal and inclusive approach to textbook production, the pivotal shift occurred with

political transformations and the declaration of an ideological offensive in the late 1940s. Subsequently, in 1948, Władysław Gomułka was removed from his position of authority and replaced by Bolesław Bierut. The period of intense ideological discourse persisted not only until Stalin's demise but also extended until the October Thaw in Poland in 1956, a time marked by Władysław Gomułka's return to power and the appointment of Władysław Bieńkowski as Minister of Education.²

Theoretical considerations on political myths in textbook writing

Ernst Cassirer points to inflation, unemployment, a sense of injustice and humiliation as the reasons for having caused people to feel frustrated, anxious and in need of order — and these are precisely the needs to which myth responds. It transpires then that myth is not a symbolic form peculiar to a particular stage of human self-knowledge, but is constantly inscribed in humanity, lurking beneath the surface of an ever-unstable social order. Political myths are therefore nothing new. The glorification of heroes has always existed as hero-worship. However, the function and form of language have changed. Cassirer writes of the return of the magic of the word, as constitutive of mythical thinking and practiced by political leaders, who are consequently seen as wizards and prophets, i.e. skilful technicians and conscious creators: new political myths do not grow freely; they are artificial creations, fabricated by very skilful and cunning craftsmen.³ In other words, the myth might have been an investment in a particular meaning to enable specific political orientations and actions, serving as a medium of legitimacy for a community.⁴ Conversely, rational persuasion would have been less useful, since myths evoke emotion, belief and support, which can guarantee a political project's success.⁵ To eliminate discontent or the threat of rivalry, the authorities proposed something to believe in (*credenda*) and something to admire (*miranda*).⁶ As early as 1917, Rudolf Otto stated that such mutually complementary feelings of *tremendum* and *fascinosum* were part of the mythical image of the world in which the people should believe, containing elements of a sacred character.⁷

Relevant to the textbook analysis is the problem of whether a myth is truth or fiction. For Cassirer, a myth was something untrue that was created for current political

2 Notably, Bieńkowski had previously authored school textbooks on civics but was removed from the educational sector during the political purges of 1948.

3 Cassirer E. 1946, 278, 281; Hein H. 2002, 139, 144.

4 Zimmering R. 2000, 119.

5 Flood C. 1996, 4.

6 Merriam C.E. 1964, 109.

7 Bizeul Y. 2000, 17.

purposes.⁸ However, previous research on history textbooks has shown that they are mostly historical accounts with only a small portion of fiction.⁹ Jerzy Topolski added that a myth is a true description of reality, which is given excessive importance.¹⁰

Comparative analysis of the war image in Stalinist Poland and early Franco's Spain

The political myths concerning the war heroes and their deeds were not created in a vacuum. Authors placed their image in the wider context of war — the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. It is true that sometimes the myth of the specific characters or political organisations, such as parties, i.e. the Falange or Polish Workers' Party, was presented in a separate paragraph, but more often it was part of another, broader master narrative that testified to the existence of the Great Story.¹¹ In this study's view, it would be difficult to discuss the image of war in textbooks without providing a broader narrative context or in isolation from other myths. Therefore, in this subsection the focus will be on the political myths, both textual and graphic, prevalent in Spanish and Polish textbooks concerning the main themes related to the war: its beginning and end, its main commanders, the actions of the army and the main events.

While the general political myths of the Spanish Civil War have already been described in scientific studies dealing with the whole Franco era, especially by Spanish-language historians and literary scholars,¹² this work focuses on the early postwar phase of the regime, taking into account the textbooks that have not yet been discussed in the literature. Preliminary research and analysis of the sources revealed several myths. The most important ones concerned the socio-political situation around the outbreak and the end of the Civil War. The former meant that the events of 1936 were presented as inevitable in order to calm the alleged chaos on the political scene, while the end of the war in 1939 was supposed to be historical justice accompanied by widespread enthusiasm. Those myths were accompanied by the myth of Nationalist war effort. The War was presented in a biased narrative, at the textbook authors focused mainly on Franco, the other commanders and the most important battles, practically ignoring the Republican side of the conflict or presenting it only in a negative light.

Political myths regarding the Second World War in Poland have already been tentatively resolved by historians, both on the basis of school textbooks and a wider

8 Cassirer E. 1946, 69; Hein H. 2002, 9.

9 Golka M. 1997, 15–18.

10 Topolski J. 1991, 244, 247.

11 Kivimäki V., Hyvärinen M. 2022.

12 Castillejo Cambra E. 2008; Trappe U. 2011; Rutledge H. 1963; Brinkmann S. 2016.

group of sources.¹³ However, taking into account the research topic and the preliminary research on the content of textbooks, the myths associated with the outbreak and the end of the Second World War were chosen together with the notion of war effort that were most often repeated in school materials. As Joanna Wawrzyniak highlights, the years leading to 1956 were dominated by the myth of the victory over fascism. It is only in the following years that the myth of the unity of the resistance against the Germans comes to the fore, and later the myth of the innocent victim.¹⁴

Myths on the outbreak of war in Spain and Poland

The Alzamiento Nacional of the 18th of July

The Nationalists spread the myth that it was the Soviet Union and the Comintern that had started the Civil War in Spain by launching military aggression on the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁵ The Rebels tried to justify their actions by using the argument of defending Spain against revolution, injustice and external threats ('the yoke of invaders') from France, the Bolsheviks and Jews, who were declared to be anti-Spanish or conspirators sent by Moscow. To emphasise the negative connotations, these groups were called non-humans, animals, plagues, parasites, uncivilised, demons, diabolical temptations or scapegoats. Moreover, the term 'defence of Spain', or, sometimes 'defence of the Republic', was an illustration of the notion that at the beginning of the war many of the Rebels genuinely believed that they were fighting to develop the existing Republic (just like in 1934 during Asturian Revolution where among commanders sent to suppress the rebellion were future Nationalist Rebels from 1936, namely Manuel Goded, Francisco Franco or Juan de Yagüe), and not to end it or create a new state. In their view, the rebellion was about reforming Spain into a new, more conservative and authoritarian country that would be open to some changes, such as a referendum on restoring the monarchy.¹⁶

The rebellion was often described as a Glorious Uprising, but also as the beginning of a crusade or a new war of independence, while the 18th of July was considered a heroic event and only since the end of the 1950s has it been described as a dramatic nightmare. In turn, the Republicans were cruel in battle, used brutal methods of repression and destroyed the national heritage. Moreover, war was seen not only as inevitable but also as necessary, as the purifying fire of battle that would heal corrupt state structures. For this reason, the Rebels recalled the alleged precedent of Spanish

13 Eisler J. 2016, 17, 39, 339–347 (section: *Mity i stereotypy PRL*); Tazbir J. 1997, 302–336 (section: *The Bible of Stalinism*); Prokop J. 1994, 15–42 (section: *Mity fundatorskie Polski Ludowej*); Bäcker R. 2000, 127–138; Kienzler I. 2016.

14 Wawrzyniak J. 2015, 19–25.

15 *Libro de España*. 1943, 291; Payne S.G. 2011, 180.

16 *Libro de España*. 1943, 294; Payne S.G., Palacios J. 2014, 505.

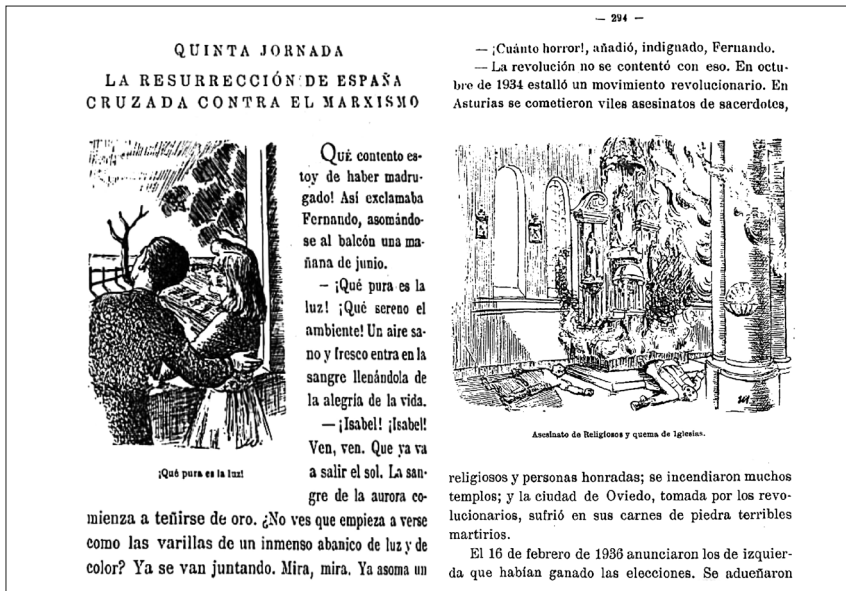


Fig. 1. A visualisation of the pre-war sociopolitical situation in Spain. The postulate to 'revive Spain through a crusade against Marxism' was explained by the murder of priests and the plundering of churches in 1934 and 1936 (Source: *Libro de España*. 1943, 291, 294)

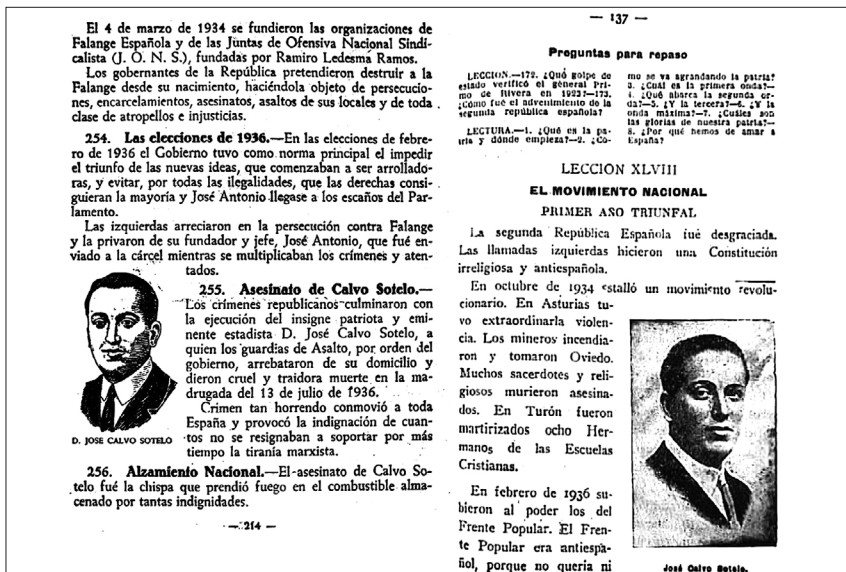


Fig. 2. Emotional and biased language describing the continuity from the Second Republic, through the 1936 elections, to the death of Calvo Sotelo and the outbreak of the Uprising (Source: *Historia de España. Segundo grado*. 1942, 214; *Historia de España. Primer grado*. 1944, 137)

history, believing that national unity had already been achieved by the expulsion or conversion of the Jews in 1492 and of the Moors in 1502. It is worth noting that these assumptions were more apocalyptic than a narrative of a new peaceful nationalist-Catholic era.¹⁷

The beginning of the war and the Brotherhood-in-Arms with the USSR in Poland

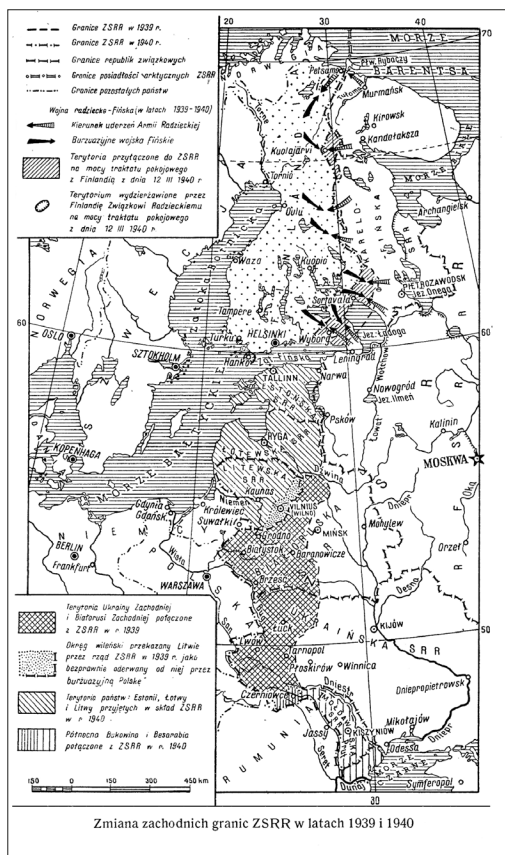


Fig. 3. The illustration of the Soviet 'liberation of eastern Poland' in 1939, found only in the Polish version of a Soviet textbook (Source: Pankratowa A.M. 1955, 413)

The authors of textbooks from the period analysed only rarely mentioned the Red Army's invasion of Poland in September 1939 or Poland's eastern border but avoided the Katyn massacre. Moreover, only occasionally did they mention the liberation of Poland in 1944 or the Home Army. Instead, events directly related to the Communists were described, such as the creation of the Polish Workers' Party, the joint struggle of Polish and Soviet partisans, the creation of the KRN and the PKWN and its manifesto. The USSR's commitment to the Poles was also not overlooked, such as help in the creation of the Union of Polish Patriots and the Polish Army, the Red Army offensive and the participation of Polish troops in the liberation of the country.¹⁸ At the same time, school curricula began to focus on the achievements of Soviet science, taking into account and emphasising that the needs of the state, not of the individual citizen, were paramount.

In order to strengthen the idea of friendship with the USSR, the authors referred to the myth of a strong enemy, more precisely the eternal enemy — Germany. At the same time, the Poles were supposed to feel a sense of brotherhood with other Slavs. In such a constellation, the Battle of Grunwald in 1410 was supposed to be the victory of the Slavic world over the Germanic one, with the allied help of Russia.

17 Serrano de Haro A. 1943, 85; Pemán J.M. 1940, 219.

18 Sternik L. 1954, 124–125; Młynarczyk-Tomczyk A. 2010, 314–315.

Byli jednak plemiona, do których nie docierał nigdy żaden kupiec, tak niedostępne były ich siedziby.

Powien zakonnik niemiecki, pisząc o tych Słowianach, powiedzieć, że „był to lud cierpliwy i twardy, do ciężkiej pracy nawykły”.

Na pewno potrafiliby z czasem zbudować mocne państwo. Nie dali im tego uczynić Niemcy.

3. NAJAZDY NIEMIECKIE

Na lekcjach historii często mówić będziemy o wiekach. Wiek to 100 lat. Inaczej nazywamy go też stuleciem.

Mamy teraz XX wiek. Wiecie, co to znaczy? To znaczy, że od narodzin Chrystusa, od którego to momentu wiekznieć narodów oblicza czas, minęło 19 pełnych stuleci, a zaczęło się dwudzieste. Wypadki, o których zaraz mówić będziemy, działy się w IX i X wieku.

Już od IX wieku zaczęli Niemcy napadać na plemiona słowiańskie i zdobywać ich ziemie. Słowianie walczyli mężnie w obronie swych grodów, w bitwie śmiało rzucając się na wroga.

Różnica w uzbrojeniu była ogromna. Niemcy mieli pancerze z kółek lub łusek stalowych, hełmy na głowach, wielkie obosieczne miecze, topory. Od ciosów wroga zasłaniali się drewnianą, żelazem obitą tarczą, którą nosili na lewym ramieniu.

Słowianie okrywali ciało skórzaną lub płócienną kurtką, mieli noże, długie dzidy, nieliczni tylko wojownicy mieli miecze i tarcze. Chętnie strzelali z łuków, a strzały mieli zatrute trucizną, którą wyrabiali z niektórych roślin.



7

NARÓD POLSKI W SOJUSZU Z ZSRR W WALCE Z NAJAZDEM NIEMIEC HITLEROWSKICH

87. KLĘSKA WRZEŚNIOWA

Już na wiosnę 1939 r. Hitler otwarcie wystąpił przeciw Polsce. Niemcy hitlerowskie domagały się Gdańska i zgody na przeprowadzenie przez Pomorze, przez tzw. „korytarz” gdański, autostrady do Prus Wschodnich. Zaborec żądania hitlerowskie wywołały wzburzenie społeczeństwa polskiego i silny protest mas. Pod ich naporem rząd, który początkowo zataił notę Hitlera, musiał odpowiedzieć odmownie. Wtedy Niemcy hitlerowskie zerwały z Polską układ o nieagresji. Faszystowski rząd polski odrzucił wszelkie propozycje pomocy, ofiarowywanej w marcu i czerwcu 1939 roku przez Związek Radziecki. Zawarł natomiast w kwietniu przymierze zaczepno-odporne z Anglią. Pozbawił w ten sposób naród polski jedynej realnej pomocy, jaką chciał mu okazać Związek Radziecki. Rząd sanacyjny brnął dalej po drodze zdrady narodowej, pechając kraj do zguby.

1. IX. 1939 roku o godzinie 5 rano armia hitlerowska z kilku stron wtargnęła do Polski siejąc śmierć i zniszczenie. Tysiące samolotów bombardowało obiekty wojskowe i otwarte miasta mordując bezbronną ludność cywilną. W ciągu trzech dni

41

Fig. 4. ‘German invasions’ in the 10th century were repelled by a Slavic alliance and in 1939 with the help of the USSR (Source: Dłuska M. 1947, 7; Missalowa G., Schoenbrenner J. 1951b, 41)

Myths on the war effort

The Nationals’ war effort

The Glorious National Uprising, which ‘has saved Spain from Bolshevism’, was presented as a truly momentous event. Part of the narrative was stories concerning war heroes or battles such as the Alcázar and the role of Colonel Moscardó, who was compared to the character of Guzmán el Bueno — a nobleman and Spanish hero in the war against the Moors in the thirteenth century. On the other hand, the fights at the Santuario de Nuestra Señora de la Cabeza were compared to the actions of Hernán Cortés. All the battles were described in reference to imperial traditions, or simply as a ‘continuation of the struggle’. In addition, the authors also mentioned the situation behind the front lines, contrasting the brutality and disorder in the Republican zone with the Nationalist zone, which was credited with order and success in the creation of auxiliary units, social aid, technical junta and military tribunals.¹⁹

In the early postwar phase of Francoism, in the chapters on the Civil War, textbook authors referred to the military officials who were supposedly constantly receiving mass

¹⁹ *Libro de España*. 1943, 301; Serrano de Haro A. 1943, 87.



Fig. 5. The beginning of the Rebellion portrayed in a sublime and monumental manner. The Alcázar, not yet destroyed, symbolised the order violated by the Republicans. Notwithstanding, the text contained inaccuracies: 'G. Moscardó' instead of 'J. Moscardó', who was presented in the paragraph on the siege as 'general' while his rank at that time was 'Colonel' (Source: *Historia de España. Primer grado*. 1949, 68–69)

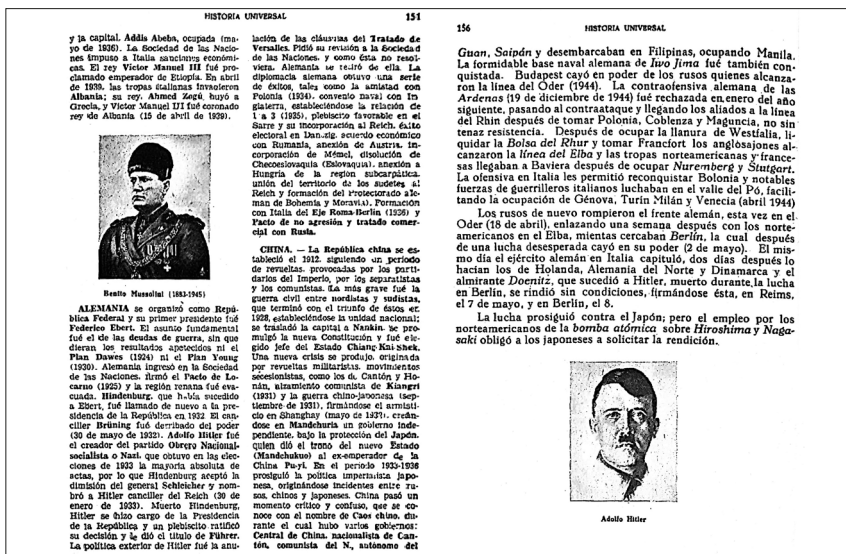


Fig. 6. History textbooks made no mention of German and Italian support for Spain, suggesting an independent Francoist war effort, but both countries were assigned special place in general history textbooks (Source: García Prado J. 1946, 151, 156)

support from the youth, patriotic organisations and 'elements of order'. At the same time, the myth of the *retaguardia* (rearguard) also appeared frequently in textbooks. The Nationals as a whole were referred to as the National Government, while the Spanish historian José Álvarez Osés eventually noted that only one textbook avoided naming both sides of the conflict. Moreover, the names of German and Italian units were also mentioned as 'auxiliary forces cooperating with the infallible Commander in a victorious war'.²⁰

The war effort of the Polish People's Army

The communists were aware that the military and its tradition were highly respected in Poland, so when they created the Polish army in the USSR, they defined the nature of the 'socialist army' in two ways. Externally, it was to defend the territorial integrity,

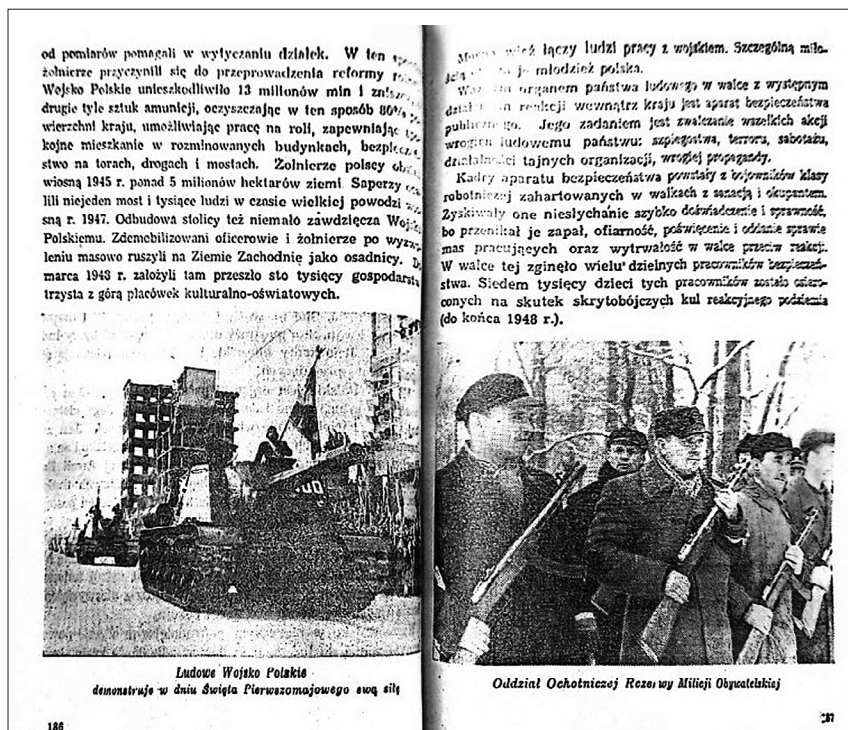


Fig. 7. The image of the military as a force to defend the country from outside was combined with that of an internal law enforcement force (Source: Barbag J. et al. 1950, 186–187)

20 Álvarez Osés J.A. 2000, 170–177.

the interests of the state and the entire Soviet empire, and internally, it was 'an instrument for the protection of the socialist system'. Moreover, from the very beginning of the People's Poland, propagandists popularised the more precise myth of the so called Polish People's Army (*Ludowe Wojsko Polskie*) as a military reservoir of 'national and patriotic' forces, knowing full well that the military still enjoyed a high esteem inherited from the Second Polish Republic. According to this myth, the perpetrators of the greatest misfortunes were the Germans, who could only be stopped by the noble and immaculate army, while Soviet rule and order in Poland was primarily the responsibility of the Polish communist police (*Milicja Obywatelska*).²¹

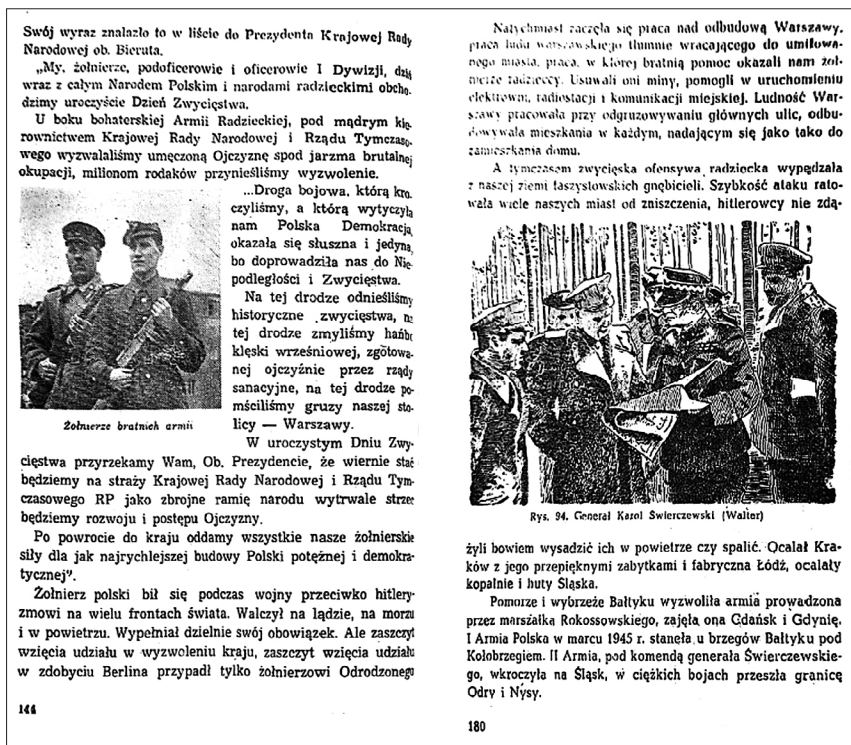


Fig. 8. The Polish-Soviet brotherhood of arms was to apply not only to front-line soldiers but also to senior officers (Source: Barbag J. et al. 1950, 144; Dłuska M., Schoenbrenner J. 1956, 180)

21 Dłuska M., Schoenbrenner J. 1956, 182–183.

Myths of victory

The romantic myth of the victory of 1st April in Spain

Together with the myth of the 18th of July Uprising, the myth mentioned in the title of this subchapter, formed a coherent propaganda discourse on the subject of the Civil War. The narrative of victory was intended to have only positive connotations, namely that it ended the tragedy and brought peace. It was to emphasise that the aim of those responsible for starting the war was not only to win the conflict, but above all to establish a strong new state with solid foundations for a stable and prosperous future. Any association with murderous soldiers, with great human loss and with the destruction of culture and property, was to be justified by the aforementioned myths of a higher purpose.²²

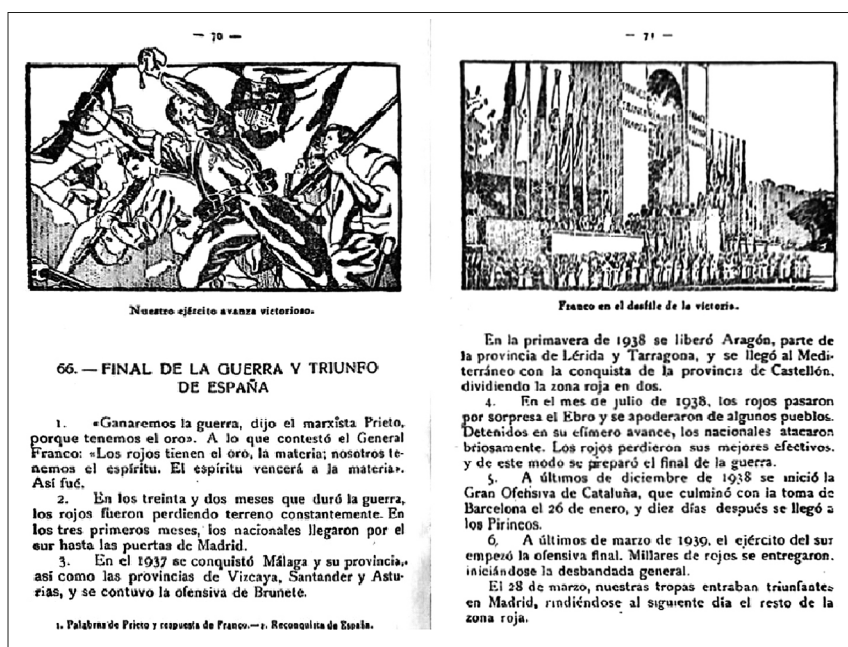


Fig. 9. The army's war effort led to 'Spain's triumph' and entry into Madrid as 'the rest of the Red Zone surrendered' (Source: *Historia de España. Primer grado*. 1949, 70–71)

The New State was the project of a complex group of victors led by Franco, so only messages that presented an image of a united and strong country based on the value of work, with the Caudillo as its leader and saviour, were allowed. The Falange, which

22 Hijos de Santiago Rodríguez. 1940, 34; *Historia de España. Segundo grado*. 1948, 149.

had participated in the Crusade to save the country, was presented as a collective force leading the new Spain, devoting all its strength and skills to its welfare. The narrative claimed that during the war the Party was supported by various institutions and groups, such as the army, full of enthusiasm and devotion to the national cause; the Falangist youth, even their older colleagues, the *camisas viejas* (old shirts) — party members from before the war, among whom in fact were several sceptics to Franco, contrary to *camisas nuevas* (new shirts) — new postwar members loyal to Franco who constituted the majority compared to the ‘old shirts’; the children, who were carefully taught discipline and positive values; the Auxilio Social, which took care of the most needy, especially orphans; the workers who worked tirelessly in the factories; or the farmers, who, thanks to their perseverance, produced abundant harvests. There was no despair, no crisis, no shortage, no lack, only discipline, order and the desire to build a better future. The only negative issue regarding the end of the war was the number of victims. In most of the early Francoist textbooks, the authors put the figure at 1 million. Nevertheless, the 1st of April became the founding myth of the Estado Nuevo in the history manuals.²³



Fig. 10. The victorious ‘new government made a revolution in the social sphere, ensuring fruitful work, banning divorce and cleaning libraries and museums’, while the ‘hardworking Franco’ took care of the needy (Source: *Historia de España. Segundo grado*. 1948. 147; Serrano de Haro A. 1943, 89)

23 *Historia de España. Segundo grado*. 1948, 147; Serrano de Haro A. 1943, 89.

Myths of victory and common joy in Poland

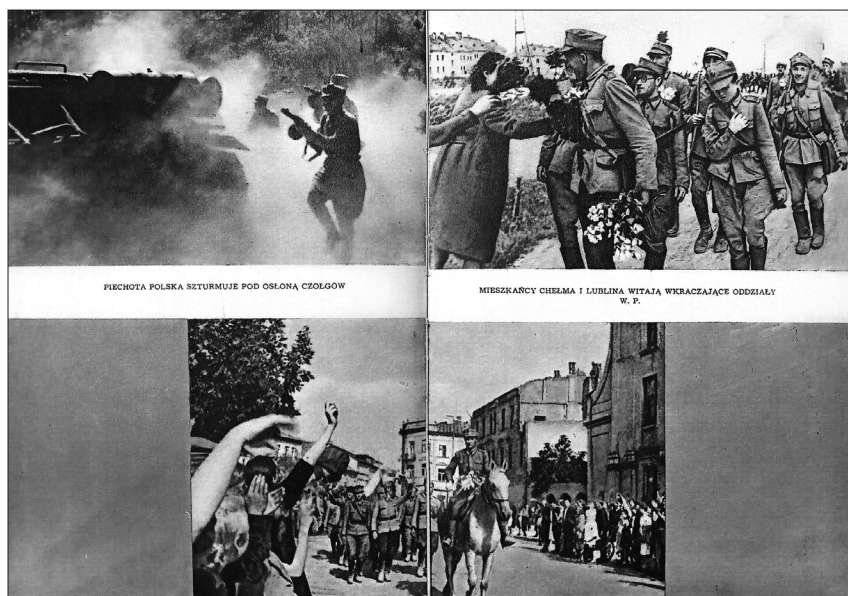


Fig. 11. Universal enthusiasm was to be seen as a natural consequence of the war effort
(Source: Bieńkowski W. 1948, 60–61)

The victory was significant because it was associated not only with the return to the 'motherland' and liberation by the Soviet army, but also with the introduction of the communist system. Propagandists often used the term 'great opportunity' to describe this event. Any atrocities occurred only in the Generalgouvernement, and the only enemy was the Third Reich and its successor, West Germany. In this way, victory was presented as an endangered good that had to be constantly defended against present enemies, whose defeat in the future would ensure complete victory. In this strategy, the 9th of May became a reference point in the history of the Polish People's Republic, as it became the founding myth of the new state. The glorification of the victory over the Germans also served to make the historical legitimacy of the regime more credible. In this symbolic invention, the trauma was to be healed through the recognition of combat merits.²⁴

The propagandists emphasised heroism and strength, which, in their view, were more useful for building the new Poland than a martyrdom narrative. In addition, the myth allowed many meanings to be derived from it, which were useful for

²⁴ Barbag J. 1950, 150–151.

integrating society with the rulers. Thus, the authorities recommended emphasising themes such as pride or specific alternatives to defeat and sacrifice. The assault on Berlin by Polish soldiers was to be a revenge for the defeat of 1939 and the years of brutal occupation. At the same time, it was called the ‘better Grunwald’, which ensured the defeat of the thousand-year-old German threat and allowed the return to the Piast lands. It meant not only the end of the old Poland, but also the birth of a new People’s Poland. Thus, peace could only be linked to an alliance with the Soviet Union and denying it would end in the fall of Poland.²⁵



Fig. 12. Combining historical and political myths in a civics textbook — an example of the ‘better Grunwald’ (Source: Bieńkowski W. 1948, 76–77)

Conclusion

The research discussed herein has proved that both regimes attempted to reshape the social imagery by reconstructing concepts and ideas concerning the past. Thus, the politics of memory is an area where the community of historical fates and experiences of societies is most clearly visible. Based on Tomasz Pawelec’s statements on the communists’ practices, it can be said that the indoctrination processes in both countries were indeed characterised by common features, such as

²⁵ Missalowa G., Schoenbrenner J. 1951a, 285–286.

assumptions shared by those who defined and/or implemented the politics of memory. These were concrete actions conducted within societal spaces (together with their products) aimed at (i) creating new realms of memory, and (ii) deconstructing/transforming/annihilating the realms of memory that had previously existed within the collective memory of a given society. They also offered a final normative structure and shape of the collective memory of that society (one that could be desirable from the standpoint of the communist ruling elite).²⁶

As Joanna Jaroszyk-Pawlukiewicz has noted, an analysis of the review processes and censorship institutions of the two countries, and thus also the image of war conveyed by these institutions, revealed surprising analogies, regardless of the ideological differences that underpinned each state. This is probably due to the limited repertoire of means with which both regimes have tried to control the media of social communication, in different historical periods and in different geographical locations.

The employment of symbols has frequently been demonstrated to be an efficacious strategy. The textbook authors proposed a new image of the past, while enriching it in various ways, such as the employment of historical myths. Moreover, existing schemes and personality patterns were frequently adopted, filled with new content. However, this was not a symmetrical translation, as after the war events that had previously been of secondary importance became much more prominent.

In constructing the school narrative, the textbook authors were guided by the existing patterns of propaganda invented by the central Party organs and aimed at the general public. The transfer of interpretation models occurred in both countries through the implementation of specific directives (*consignas* in Spanish and *wytuczne* in Polish). For this reason, the content of textbooks did not differ significantly from the official propaganda. On the most important issues, the narratives were obviously convergent. However, the textbooks differed in their narrative style and were richer in epithets or complicated linguistic constructions. The actual history of the mythologised events, such as the last war, was irrelevant; what mattered was the conformity with the ideology implemented in the textbooks.

Thus, the dissemination of Communist and Francoist textbook propaganda is an essential issue that is best understood within a comparative framework that highlights certain key nuances of the two apparently monolithic memory policies. Following the American social psychologist James V. Wertsch, Soviet public memory was shaped by master narratives that could be divided into four elements: 'the peaceful life of a community, the initiation of trouble or aggression by enemies, conflict and,

26 Malczewska-Pawelec D., Pawelec T. 2007, 28.

finally, its resolution through the triumph over the enemy.²⁷ It seems to be a justified conclusion, that this template can also be applied to the narratives of the early Franco state.

Such a master narrative was accompanied in both regimes by a conglomerate of facts and legends described as the myth of victory over fascism (Poland) or over the Republicans (Spain). All the battles were presented as strategic to the campaign, without which victory would have been more costly or delayed, but not impossible, since the triumph of the 'right' idea was unquestionable. The analysis of such statements allowed the identification of narrative patterns of legitimisation, such as comprehensive statements that conveyed political goals, which was possible thanks to recurring textual configurations. This therefore allows for another conclusion to be drawn. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, for example, have argued that comparisons are important for theory, that 'societies and even civilisations follow certain common paths or similar patterns and are thus largely the same, even though they differ in space, time and detail.'²⁸

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27 Wawrzyniak J. 2015, 19–25.

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