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## The Prague Spring in the Spanish Press during the Franco Regime

**Emilia Martos-Contreras** [\[C.V.\]](#) Department of History, Geography and History of Art - Research fellow at the University of Almería for the Cajamurcia Foundation, Spain - [emiliamartoscontreras@gmail.com](mailto:emiliamartoscontreras@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** Choosing as key event the Prague Spring, bounded between January and September 1968, this article presents a comparative analysis of three Spanish newspapers: *El Alcazar*, *Patria*, and *La Voz de Almería*. The study demonstrates that the strong guidance of the Franco regime was the basis on which the newspapers articulated the reform process in Czechoslovakia and also its tragic outcome. However, despite of the absence of freedom of expression, the study found that in the approach of the newspapers there were differentiating shades that demonstrate the existence of cracks through which new ideas surfaced. Although in many cases they end up suffering the reprisals of the Franco regime, they opened up new horizons for understanding the ambiguity and contradictions in the 1966 Press Law.

**Keywords:** The Prague Spring; pro-Franco Press; censorship; 1966 Press Law

**Summary:** 1. Introduction. 2. Methodology and Sources. 3. The 1966 Press Law. 4. The Prague Spring. 4.1. New Czechoslovakian government. 4.2. Threats over Czechoslovakia. 4.3. End of the Prague Spring. 5. Conclusions. 6. Bibliography. 7. Notes.

Translation by **Cruz Alberto Martínez-Arcos** (University of London)

### 1. Introduction

1968 was a troubled year in which thousands of young and not so young people dreamt of making a better world. What began as a protest against the Vietnam War and in favour of equality in the United States became, almost inexplicably, a contagious social movement. Mobilization groups unexpectedly emerged in different parts of the world with demands, proposals and disparate actions, which seemed to have as a common denominator the desire for change. In Spain, in spite of the strong hand of the Francoist regime some agitation emerged with the aim of exploiting all the possible ways towards freedom. Parallel to some major strikes, student groups mobilized in the universities and from the media some professionals attempted to take the greatest possible advantage from the questionable Press Law presented by the Ministry of Information and Tourism in 1966.

Meanwhile, on the other end of the European continent, Czechoslovakia, which had a political and economic regime opposed to the Spanish one, shared the desire for freedom and democracy, and lived with optimism the new airs of openness. In 1968, the horrors of Stalin had begun to see the light, and in spite of the chastisement of Hungary, several Soviet satellites tried to gain greater independence and freedom in the administration of their internal affairs. In Czechoslovakia, the arrival of a new politician to power, the Slovak Alexander Dubček, marked the start of a period of reforms, known as the Prague Spring. The most important reforms, based on their symbolism and actual scope, were the establishment of the freedom of expression and a slight political aperture. However, the proposal did not have enough time to consolidated because it was crushed in late August by 2,300 Soviet tanks, which not only destroyed the hopes placed on the new socialism but also definitively reduced the credibility of Moscow's communism. Due to its political and symbolic implications and the unexpectedness of the action, the invasion of Prague became the sole protagonist of the mainstream media in the world.

The objective of this study is to analyse the coverage given in Spain to the Prague Spring, based on three newspapers of that time. Aware of the antagonism of the Spanish Government towards the regime in Moscow, the study explains how the Spanish government approached the Czechoslovak demands, which opposed the guidelines of the Soviet Union, but were also contrary to the values of the Francoist "National Movement" (the totalitarian mechanism of Fascist inspiration that aimed to be only way of participation in the Spanish public life). In addition, the study also looks for a possible plurality in the different newspapers to demonstrate the influence of the Press Law, which came into effect two years earlier. Finally, the analysis helps us to verify once more how the international policy section is an extremely important information space, in which the publishing company pours its ideology to have a direct impact on national policy.

Since the 1980s the Francoist press has been studied, and these studies have evolved from the first findings of Terón Montero to the complex analyses made by authors like Elisa Chuliá. Many of these works have devoted special attention to the press law, either to define the start of the change or to highlight the institutionalised *continuismo* (i.e. the practice of keeping the same political party in power during long periods of time). There are also abundant monographic

works on certain newspapers, which highlight those that played a decisive role in the process of transition to democracy. However, in most of the examples the study of the press has focused on national news, while research dedicated to news on international politics is scarce. [1] Importantly, the specific subject of this investigation, the Prague Spring, has not been addressed in any other study. This is not surprising considering that Spain authors have not paid much attention to the Prague Spring, because almost all literature in circulation in Spain about the subject is of foreign origin. In short, this research aims to enlarge the list of studies on the Francoist press, but through the little exploited via of the international news section and focusing on a topic so rarely addressed as the Prague Spring.

## 2. Methodology and Sources

Despite having the media as its primary source and objective, this research is primarily a historical study. The complex and important relationship that unites the media with the society that creates them has not passed unnoticed to many historians, which explain the increasing research activity in this area. Therefore, the methodology used in this research does not follow the typical parameters of communication studies, but rather seeks for a qualitative result based on the comparative analysis, which is the methodology used by the classic historian.

The newspapers selected are *La Voz de Almería*, *Patria*, and *El Alcázar*. This election is based largely on practical criteria, which has not prevented the sample from having a number of characteristics that favour the comparative analysis. On the one hand, *La Voz de Almería* and *Patria* both belonged to the network of newspapers managed by the National Movement, and circulated in two neighbouring Andalusian provinces: *Almería* and *Granada*, respectively. On the other hand, *El Alcázar* newspaper was created in Madrid had a national circulation and a private character.

The selected time period extends from the arrival to power of the new Czechoslovakian leader, Alexander Dubček, on 6 January 1968 until the end of September of the same year. For a better follow-up of the comparative study, this article includes a chronological outline that links the historical events with the newspapers' news, which will facilitate understanding the arguments presented in the final conclusions.

## 3. The 1966 Press Law

We support with full conviction the thesis of Elisa Chuliá (1999: 199-200) which demonstrates that the press law was the result of a long and complicated operation driven by the internal actors of the system, prompted by particular interests and the belief in the need for institutional changes. This explanation does not exclude the classic theories highlighting the European or economic pressures, but emphasises less-abstract actors and gives back an active and conscious role to the Francoist Government towards the law. The 1966 press law recognised that the 1938 law had become obsolete and filled with hope many with its preamble about the freedom of expression, commerce, and director designation. However, the law emerged within a dictatorial regime that was aware of how imperative was to control the public opinion for its legitimacy and continuity. Therefore the law, which had taken more than a decade to see the light and had been the result of careful wording and tense negotiations, conditioned these freedoms through various mechanisms, including the prostration of information to the article two which made obligatory the respect for the law of the "Fundamental Principles of the Movement". In addition, having eliminated the previous censorship, the law developed a punitive system that applied to three sources -the director, the writer and the publishing company- through fines, penalties, and suspensions. In 1967 the criminal code was amended with the inclusion of article 165 bis, which penalised as crime the breach of the obligations of article two of the press law, which in practice meant an intensification of State repression. The following year the Official Secrets Law granted the Government the right of declaring an event as a secret affair, which further restricted the freedom of the media.

Nevertheless, 129 new publications emerged thanks to the liberties of the new law, and among those publications were some that historians have considered essential for understanding the democratic process. Most of them experienced at some point a fine or a suspension [2]. However, the risks taken by the newspapers when publishing criticisms had their reward and this was demonstrated by the levels of circulation, which rocketed after a provisional suspension (Chuliá 199: 217). As a consequence, state-owned newspapers were unable to compete with commercial ones and lost increasing numbers of readers.

Before the law was passed, but already with the spirit of the new times, *El Alcázar* newspaper had already begun to change conspicuously. Until 1963 this newspaper, which was born during the civil war, had a little outstanding journalistic history with an informative work so boring and spoofed as the state-owned newspapers. *El Alcázar* never managed to sell more than 20,000 copies. However, in 1963 a new director, José Luis Cebrían, took over the publication and give it a new and attractive format and an increasingly independent and interesting background. The newspaper increased dramatically its circulation with a great interest in international politics, reports on social issues, and a rigorous sports and bull-fighting news section. Linked to the Opus Dei, its Catholic editorial line became in the heat of the press law more open, critical, and defensive of certain freedoms. Readers welcomed this trend with interest and the evidence of this was the circulation quota of 1968 which reached 115,000 copies (Davara 2005: 141).

However, the newspaper did not have time to provide a profound response to the problems in Spain. In September 1968, the newspaper's former owners, the Alcázar de Toledo's Brotherhood sent a judicial order to the Press General Office requesting it to stop *El Alcázar* being edited by the company *PESA*. The Alcázar de Toledo's Brotherhood argued that *PESA* was not complying with the clause of "fidelity to Franco", which was included in the lease of 1949. The Minister of Information and Tourism, Manuel Fraga and the Minister of the General Secretary of the Movement, José Solís, agreed to the request of the Brotherhood and since October of the same year *El Alcázar* was controlled by the leaders of the Brotherhood, and edited by the company *DYRSA, diarios y revistas S. A.* With the direction of Lucio del Alamo, President of the Press Association of Madrid, and with the falangist Antonio Gibello in the sub-direction, the newspaper became a refuge for the most ultra-conservative ideas of the Franco regime. As a result, in 1969 the

newspaper had already lost half of its circu

#### 4. The Prague Spring

##### 4.1. New Czechoslovakian Government

lation (Davara 2005: 142).

On 5 January 1968, the first Secretary of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party and also President of the Republic, Antonín Novotný, was removed from office, and Alexander Dubček was proclaimed the new leader of the Slovakian party. The change constituted a victory for the most reformist wing of the Politburo, which in spite of its heterogeneity started to design a plan of openness that attempted to alleviate the major problems ravaging the country. One of the first measures of the Czechoslovakian President was to put an end to the situation of dependency and underdevelopment suffered by the country. In March 1968, the Politburo took another big step towards the elimination of censorship and the instauration of the freedom of expression in the Communist country. According to many analysts this approval was essential to the discontent of the Soviet Union, which was openly reluctant to have within its bloc media allowed to criticize the rigid communist system and bring to the light the terror of the Stalinist era.

In April, the new Government, which was strengthened after the removal from office of the conservative Antonín Novotný, decided to design the so called "Plan of action", a kind of political action route. This plan specified some timid democratic measures that incorporated a small minority of parties to the political game, but also other liberalization measures related to the media, and the citizens, which could travel freely from then on. On the other hand, however, the action plan reiterated Czechoslovakia's adherence to the Warsaw Pact, and aimed to convince a quite annoyed Soviet Union that the country was primarily Socialist and had no intention of changing its allies.

These first events were followed with relative interest by the Spanish newspapers and since these moments they showed persistent differences that characterized them throughout the conflict. On the one hand, the two newspapers belonging to the national movement used a similar discourse, which is due in part to the fact that they shared stories and editorial columns. However, it should be noted that as it will be shown later, there were certain differences between the two Andalusian newspapers, and that the Almería newspaper was most resounding in the segregation of the news. It is also important to add that even in these newspapers, the reports written by foreign correspondents constituted a largely independent space, which contrasted strongly with the ideas dictated directly by the publishing house and the news in the rest of the newspaper [3]. This particularity is relevant when questioning the permeability of the news and the ambiguity of the message received by the readers of that time.

On the other hand, *El Alcázar*, which from the first moments showed special interest in events occurring in Prague, gave an interpretation of events diametrically opposed to the publishing companies of the national movement. Thus, since the fall of Novotný, the newspaper noticed the importance of the event and also ventured to assert that "the elimination of Novotný marks the end of the first phase of communism, when, once the opponents are defeated and system is stabilized by force, the country demands the welfare that it deserves" [4].

The most striking thing is that for the Madrilenian newspaper, Prague was experiencing a new way of socialism, giving credit to the possibility of an increase in the welfare within a communist state, and supporting the Czechoslovakian initiative in all of its aspects. Thus:

"What is occurring is not a revolutionary movement, but a strong evolution movement aimed to improve a system that has been operating with deficiencies and has been, until now, unable to guarantee citizens' freedoms. The new leaders of Prague, the liberal communists, have tried to show the world that communism is no perfect" [5].

To understand the differences between *El Alcázar* and the newspapers of the movement, one just has to compare the previous opinion with the following that appeared in *Patria*:

"Through these changes Czechoslovakia seems to become the second Eastern European country, after Romania, that departs from the Marxist orthodoxy and moves towards more liberal ways of government" [6].

For the newspapers of the movement, Prague pursued a clear break from Marxism in search of a liberal economic policy more similar to the Western European countries. In fact, the separation from Moscow became the main concern of the newspapers of the movement, which virtually devoted zero space to inform about the reforms proposed by Dubček. In addition, as Carlos Rivas (the main columnist in the two newspapers and a supporter of the movement) defended, this rupture sank their roots in nationalism: "We are witnessing that the impulse of the independence that is based on national identity is proving to be too powerful" [7].

##### 4.2. Threats over Czechoslovakia

Moscow followed suspiciously the reforms promoted by the Czechoslovakian Politburo, and in spite of the efforts of Dubček to demonstrate their adherence to the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet Union was suspicious. In early May, the main broadcasting body in Moscow, *Prawda*, published a lengthy accusatory article that warned about the existence of

“enemies of the Socialist development” in Czechoslovakia, which had “intentions to minimize, and deny, the progress made by the Communist Party” [8]. Just ten days later the first alarm of the mobilization of the Soviet troops in Poland arrived to the Spanish newspapers [9]. *La Voz de Almería*, which so far had not given much attention to the events in Prague, devoted its cover to the tanks. Although the Almería newspaper, just like *Patria*, believed a Soviet invasion was impossible, because it was “too late to impose its hegemony”, [10] it considered the idea of an attack and the possibility of “a second Budapest” [11].

The Madrilenian newspaper, however, flatly denied the possibility of intervention and considered that:

“The parallelism with Hungary barely resists a serious analysis and things in the Eastern bloc have evolved significantly so it is unlikely that Moscow is able now to undertake an act of force that would set them back the cold war and the worst moments of the post-war. Russians cannot ignore the sympathy cause by the measures in the western communisms and Dubček’s popular support” [12].

*El Alcázar* even dared to criticize those who continuously speculated on the entry of Russian troops, which can be interpreted as a direct attack on the attitude of the other newspapers: “it seems that certain Spanish minorities secretly desire a Russian intervention in Czechoslovakia... in order to be able to prove the wickedness of doctrine”. The newspaper asked for “a little restraint”, considering the attitude as “a crime, because it does not suppress a nation in abstract terms but its men, and by millions” [13].

*The Alcázar* maintained a very optimistic vision throughout the conflict, betting on Dubček’s victory even in the tensest moments of the summer. According to this newspaper “the liberalization policy undertaken by Dubček has echoed throughout the country, and no one wants to go back in this road that has been taken” [14], and regarding the diplomatic clashes it stated: “Dubček has won the battle. In the war of nerves the common sense has been victorious” [15]. This optimistic vision was consolidated after the Bratislava agreements made at the beginning of August, and which were interpreted as a “happy ending in Bratislava” [16] Even the sceptical correspondent of *El Alcázar*, José V. Colchero, believed in the postponement of weapons:

“the Russians have played their card more intelligently, in exchange for these countries not leaving their bloc, they have no objection to start giving rope and more rope to the proponents of the experiment of Czechoslovakia, in the hope that, eventually, the reforms will fail and the Czechoslovakian communism will have no choice but to return to its traditional procedures” [17].

### 4.3. End of the Prague Spring

Yesterday, 20 August 1968, at about 11:00 PM the troops crossed the borders of the Czechoslovakian Republican State and broke the Warsaw Pact. This was done without the knowledge of the President of the Republic (...) The presidium of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party considered this event not only a violation of the principles of relationship between the socialist states, but also a transgression of international law.

Radio Prague, 21 August, 1968. 1:55 hours

In spite of the on-going speculation, the world was perplexed by the Soviet invasion. The headlines of two Andalusian newspapers after the invasion were: “Czechoslovakia, invaded” [18], “Russia occupied Czechoslovakia. Outrage in the free world” [19]. *El Alcazar*, which had already shown its concern for the subject, surprised its readers by bringing forward the newspaper’s publishing hour and making four special editions on the day of the invasion. As the publisher itself explained:

“In view of the events occurred in Czechoslovakia, so important for the political future of this country, and of so much resonance for the maintenance of peace in the world, *El Alcázar*, once more, exceeded itself to serve its readers and to keep them informed in details and in-depth about events that have shocked not only the Spanish opinion but everyone” [20].

The three newspapers devoted broad space to the events in the Soviet bloc during the rest of summer, and the condemnation of the invasion and the support to the Czechoslovakian people were unanimous. However, such unanimity in the condemnation did not involve, as we have previously seen, a homogeneous informative discourse.

For the newspapers of the movement what happened in Prague was a clear lesson for “so many clumsy optimisms without basis” [21]. They blamed: “all those who, moved by cowardice, resentment, pedantry and the desire for changing their posture and be sensationalists, those who have distorted the reality in sight, and created this false image of communism and the Soviet Union... Communist leaders as well as the demagogues at all levels are the ones to blame in this coup against the security of Europe and the world” [22].

Therefore, for these newspapers, Prague was a clear lesson, from which conclusions should be drawn and lessons should be learnt:

“this operation has to wake the sleeping consciousness, it is a magnificent alarm signal and, once again, sets the record straight, which was necessary for the salvation of the West. Very often it is true that “when something bad happens, somehow, some good comes in exchange” [23].

Is not difficult to find direct references to Spanish national policy in these moral lessons, and in fact some examples

prove that the analysis of international policy is just an extension of the defence of a particular national policy:

“All that is happening, and their threats, comes to optimise, for all Spaniards, that Communist campaign over Spain, which is directed by the *Pasionaria* and Santiago Carrillo, among other ‘Communist Patriots’ from Moscow, and which aims to form a new popular front to ‘liberate’ our country from the ‘tyranny’ of Franco and the movement and to impose a democracy where freedom illuminate everything. And, we must ask, whether this freedom that Carrillo and the Dolores propose will collide with the Soviet interests. Will the Soviet troops also come here, as they did in 1936 and 1937 to teach us what freedom is, as they are doing it today in Czechoslovakia?” [24].

In the newspapers of the movement, except for certain occasions, communism was a synonym for the Soviet Union and in any case incompatible with freedom and democracy. The Soviet invasion only validated this discourse. The fact that the reform proposals of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party were omitted especially in *La Voz de Almería* suggested that as the newspaper asserted repeatedly, the country led by Dubček simply battled to separate itself from Moscow. The newspapers of the movement strived to transmit this lesson to the students demonstrating at the universities:

“May our students and our poisoned intellectuals think about the Czechoslovakian reality and learn this lesson taught today from the borders of a country that committed the crime of wanting to be free from internal and external oppression of communism” [25].

As we have seen, the newspapers of the movement followed the thesis of Carlos Rivas, and considered the Prague Spring as a resurgence of nationalism, a feeling that is built in opposition to communism, to perpetrate the simplified imaginary of the civil war as a justifier matrix of the regime.

“The solidarities out of Orthodox groups or well-paid officials have a more national and patriotic tone than a political one. These days, in Prague, Bucharest, Belgrade and many other places of universal geography, the discussion has focused more on the countries’ patriotic feelings than on the reasons of Marxism. This is another important lesson for many ‘progressive’ and naïve people from the Western world who had already believed that the patriotic discourses did no longer existed as force capable of mobilizing people. This is another thing that must be learnt in the middle of the tragedy” [26].

At the opposite side, after the invasion *El Alcázar* continued defending the thesis already outlined throughout the year. Dubček’s reforms were part of a struggle for a more free socialism, and therefore the invasion of Moscow was not the fight of communism versus liberalism:

“the barbarian invasion to Czechoslovakia has not been the defence of communism, but the selfish Russian interests as a powerful colony. Russia is afraid of freedom and infection, and suspected the Czechoslovakian experiment, the socialist road to freedom, could shake the foundations of the Soviet bloc” [27].

For *El Alcázar*, the Czechoslovakian experience

“came to restore the liberating and humanist spirit of the socialist revolution. It was a desperate proof to prove that an alliance between the economic socialism and the political liberalism was possible... With political freedom socialism could subsist. But the Soviet hegemony in no way would have been able to survive” [28].

After the troops entered the country, the publishing company offered one of the most interesting and illustrative reflections to understand its discourse:

“In recent days there has not been a lack of highly qualified voices that warned the Spaniards about the risk involved in a possible mythologization of Alexander Dubček... for these commentators, Dubček is as communist as Breznev, and both of them, therefore, are equally perverse in their intentions and purposes. For Western people, who are sure about the intrinsic evil of communism, the Czechoslovakian experience of “socialism in freedom”, in this way, was not attractive in any way. We believe that these arguments are too simplistic. It is undeniable, for example, that socialism, in the economic field can facilitate many realizations of undoubted social content... Czechoslovakia was going to show whether it was possible or not for socialism to respect freedom, to stay away from the individual conscience, to condone auto-criticism, to promote democracy instead of drowning it and suppressing it authoritatively. Therefore among the ideas of Dubček and Breznev there was an abyss. Dubček’s policy has constituted a very important step towards a possible reconciliation between the most positive aspects of both systems” [29].

On the other hand, it is significant that the Madrilenian newspaper maintained, in some details, the positive personality that had characterized it so far. Thus, in view of the strong criticism from the newspapers of the movement, *El Alcázar* was the only one to highlight the “drop outs” of the Soviet troops [30] and trusted that once the soldiers had returned “they will tell what the invasion was about, and it is even possible that they return ideologically contaminated with ‘Dubčekism’, that communist ideology that had gone to compete with weapons”. In addition, despite condemning the deaths, it asserted that although “the invaders were ordered not to shoot to death, but some had failed or lost the nerves” [31].

Along this *El Alcázar* followed with enthusiasm the passive resistance of the Czechoslovakian people, and while the

newspapers of the movement gave special attention to the discourses of the political elites, the newspaper from Madrid dedicated its space to the citizens' resistance, young "long-haired and courageous" people [32]. This interest led them to put in the cover the great "sentada de Wenceslao" (Wenceslao's sit-in [protest]) [33], which gave all protagonist role to the resilient young people. This choice also allows a reading in national tone, so while we saw that for the newspapers of the movement Prague was a lesson to demobilize youth, *El Alcázar* seemed to be encouraging the new generations to do the opposite.

In addition, after the invasion, the Madrilenian newspapers insisted on showing the protests of leftist groups, underlining the antagonism between the invading Soviet imperialism and communism: "In Europe only the 'mini-party' of the tiny state of Luxembourg has applauded the aggression of the 'five' of the Warsaw Pact. The others have agreed to condemn the intervention, (...) and this is the case of the Spanish Communist Party in exile, which has also censored the invasion with energy through its Moscow wing (...) The attitude of protest of Santiago Carrillo and the *Pasionaria*, is all the more significant if one considers its absolute economic dependence, and a dependence of almost all kinds, on Moscow" [34].

The discourses of the newspapers of the movement, on the other hand, equalled communism with the Soviet invasion and silenced the protests of the Communist parties and the Western youth [35]. They identified the workers as the organizers of the protests against communism and in this way opposed the "spoiled youth of Paris", these "liberal students have not protested against the authorities, in this case the Soviets, threatening with weapons the freedom of Czechoslovakia" [36].

The newspapers of the movement stated in an editorial that:

"it has been in factories, and not only in the invaded country but also in Paris, London, Rome, etc. where the protest has had the highest tones, which is forcing the Communist parties that do not have the power to join in some way the general outcry, perhaps moved a little by sincerity and a lot by the discomfort of their masses that start to see the truth" [37].

In opposition to *El Alcázar's* exaltation of the passive resistance was the request to NATO's hard intervention made by the newspapers of the movement. Considering that "the threat of war in Central Europe prevailed"[38], Carlos Rivas stated that:

"The obvious is that the free world, regardless of the atomic power, must possess a conventional power that is superior to the Soviet possibilities. We need to start convincing people of the need for a sensible attitude, that involves the strengthening of the military defences, a little old-style, although this would demand the need for more soldiers, and units on stand-by, more percentages in the military budgets and perhaps some limitations in the level of life" [39].

To the support for a military policy was added the natural aversion to pacifism, which was underlined in statements like the following: "The powers of capitalism, frightened by their own and current problems, and poisoned by the most coward 'pacifism', are unable to provide this aid and on the contrary abandon Czechoslovakia" [40].

However, in one of his reflections, Carlos Rivas denies wanting an armed intervention, and offers the Spanish policy as an example for the Communist bloc to follow. This discourse has the underlying assertion that Spain is a Western country where there is freedom and democracy, and that it is the greatest exponent of the unsustainable double standards of the regime:

"Of course we do not support an armed intervention; this is different; the idea is that, at least, the Western world must have available in due course the exact explanation of what happens in the Eastern bloc, to understand it, to overcome it, and to avoid it... The aim is that Europe will be able to provide the Socialist world, not so much a diplomatic or strategic position, but rather an example of life and liberty; an example aimed primarily to its societies, its people, and its men. It seems that the Socialist world is debated with many internal contradictions. Thus, we should offer in return a serene image of coexistence and freedom in the social justice" [41].

## 5. Conclusions

As we have seen, the Prague Spring and its tragic end occupied a great deal of space in the Spanish press of the time. The description of the panorama of international politics was used by each newspaper to expose their ideology. In the case of the newspapers of the movement, the events in Czechoslovakia were used to demonstrate the perversity and falsehood of the Communist postulates. The events also served to compare the youth groups that demanded greater freedom in the French and Spanish universities, with Moscow's oppressive policy. To perform this parallelism, the newspapers examined the policy proposed by Dubcek, and tried to demonstrate that the country wanted to leave socialism through a nationalist fight.

The discourse was quite complicated to maintain and ended up falling in certain contradictions and a clear double standard. Thus, the newspapers of the movement ended up defending democracy and freedom as if they were their own. On the other hand, they surprised readers with the publication of the chronicles of international correspondents, which broke the uniformity of the editorial discourse with texts that were more free and, sometimes, opposed to the tone of the newspapers.

However, we found some differences between the two newspapers of the movement, in spite of the clear existence of parallelisms, a result of the repetition of columnists in both newspapers. The Almería newspaper was so much more reactionary to support the release of the socialist state, and omitted any reference to the internal politics that simply translated as a rise of nationalism and desires of emancipation from communism. The Granadian newspaper, *Patria*, also followed this trend, but included some references to Dubcek's democratising measures between its texts.

On the opposite side of the newspapers of the movement was *El Alcázar* newspaper, which did not hesitate to qualify the Czechoslovakian demands as an attempt to democratise socialism, considering it a new path that could put an end to the great disadvantages of socialism. *El Alcázar* showed a sincere support to the democratisation process, and contrary to the newspapers of the movement, it did not fall into the double moral of faking the existence of democracy in Spain, but rather seemed to bet on its national implementation. As it has been shown, in many cases there was certain sympathy towards communism. Moreover, while the state-controlled newspapers used the events to criticise the young people that protested in the Spanish universities, *El Alcázar* closely followed and praised the peaceful resistance of the Prague youth.

*El Alcázar's* interesting informative work shows the opportunities offered by the 1966 press law since, at least in the investigated aspect, the newspaper seemed to have enjoyed a great freedom of expression. Finally, it is important to highlight the richness of the messages that were offered more or less implicitly by *El Alcázar* to its growing number of readers. We can say that *El Alcázar* participated, even if for a reduced period, in the building of a society that was hungry for freedoms. When the publication was suspended its readers had already decided the type of information that they wanted to read, and turned their backs to the new conservative publishing house.

In conclusion, we believe that the 1966 Press Law had a clear *continuist* character (i.e. it supported the practice of keeping the same political party in power during long periods of time), but its coming-into-effect accelerated a process already latent in the Spanish society and showed that many citizens were seeking more ambitious changes.

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## 7. Notes

[1] We could highlight the article of Karima Ait Yahia about the Francoist press and the French Independence war

[2] The Ministry of Information and Tourism issued 339 sanctioning dossiers in this period, 180 of which ended up in fines or suspension. (Sinova, 2006: 137).

[3] News articles such as "Czechoslovakia without curtain" of Luis Quesada, which appeared in both newspapers of the movement during August, described a communist country that does not seem to have problems: religious freedom, modest but comfortable homes, absence of poverty, beautiful and decent women.

[4] *El Alcázar*, 6.1.1968.

[5] *El Alcázar*, 13.3.1968.

[6] *Patria*, 6.1.1968.

[7] *La Voz de Almería*, 23.7.1968.

[8] In Moscow's strategy the enemies were agents led by Western countries, and thus the Czechoslovakian politicians were never blamed; instead they were considered victims. Thus this article emphasizes that the anti-socialist attempts had been severely "condemned by the Czechoslovakian Government". Parts of the *Prawda* article were published in *Berliner Zeitung*, on 2 May 1968.

[9] *La Voz de Almería*, 10.5.1968.

[10] *Patria*, 17.7.1968.

[11] *La Voz de Almería*, 13.5.1968.

[12] *El Alcázar*, 10.5.1968.

[13] *El Alcázar*, 29.7.1968.

[14] *El Alcázar*, 15.7.1969.

[15] *El Alcázar*, 17.7.1968.

[16] *El Alcázar*, 13.8.1968.

[17] *El Alcázar*, 5.8.1968.

[18] *La Voz de Almería*, 22.8.1968.

[19] *Patria*, 22.8.1968.

[20] *El Alcázar*, 22.8.1968.

[21] *Patria*, 22.8.1968.

[22] *Patria* 23.8.1968 and *La Voz de Almería*, 24.8.1968.

[23] *Patria*, 22.8.1968.

[24] *Patria*, 22.8.1968.

[25] *Patria*, 23.8.1968.

[26] *La Voz de Almería*, 28.7.1968.

[27] *El Alcázar*, 27.7.1968.

[28] *El Alcázar*, 28.8.1968

[29] *El Alcázar*, 29.8.1968.

[30] *El Alcázar*, 26.8.1968.

[31] *El Alcázar*, 3.9.1968.

[32] *El Alcázar*, 24.8.1968.

[33] *El Alcázar*, 24.8.1968.

[34] *El Alcázar*, 7.9.1968.

[35] Except for *Patria* newspaper that reported the news of what it called "Striptease against the Soviet occupation", which related how "four girls stayed naked outside the building of the United Nations and danced the Salome's dance (...) A crowd that look at them ecstatically, promised a bright future for this kind of events" (*Patria*, 10.9.1968).

[36] *La Voz de Almería*, 2.7.1968.

[37] *La Voz de Almería*, 28.8.1968 and *Patria*, 30.8.1968.

[38] *Patria*, 30.8.1968.

[39] *La Voz de Almería*, 17.9.1968.

[40] *La Voz de Almería*, 25.7.1968.

[41] *La Voz de Almería*, 4.9.1968 and *Patria*, 15.9.1968.

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