

## **ABSTRACT AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **The Hispano – Soviet Relations through the Friendship Societies with the USSR in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century\***

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#### **Abstract**

The research deals with the official and unofficial contacts between Spain and the Soviet Union, focussing particularly on those perceptions of the latter disseminated through the various Friendship societies, such as the Spanish Friends of the Soviet Union and the Spain – USSR Society. As a way of assessing their impact in Spain, a chapter is dedicated to the British Friendship societies, which will compare the relative successes of these societies in the two countries.

The present work will seek to overcome many of the biases of past studies on the nature of identity formation and culture practice in the Soviet Union and abroad.

The main sources utilized have been the VOKS and SSOD files from Russia, private documents of the societies and testimonies, which have been crucial to understanding these associations, the problems they faced, as well as their successes and failures.

The friendship societies with the Soviet Union were a way of spreading ideals – antifascism and peaceful coexistence – championed by the Soviet government. As such, these societies were a type of popular diplomacy. Broadly speaking, people who believed in a different model than capitalism joined these associations and they

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provided examples of respect in a multicultural world. Because of that, their message is not obsolete in today's world.

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Key words (palabras clave): Friends of the USSR, *Amigos de la URSS*; Spain-USSR Society, *Asociación España – URSS*; Soviet Union, *Unión Soviética*; Cultural relations, *Relaciones culturales*; Foreign Affairs, *Asuntos Internacionales*; Cultural studies, *Estudios Culturales*; Propaganda, *Propaganda*, refugee children from the Spanish Civil War; *Los Niños de la Guerra Civil española*; 20th Century History, *Historia del Siglo XX*.

### **Sources and methodology**

The Soviet regime has provoked polemics amongst both scholars and armchair observers ever since its inception. There is a prolific historiography in which biased views about the Soviet Union are left unchallenged, and many of these studies distort our image of the Communist regime, and have focused on political themes. This characteristic reflects a more general trend in historical research in the West, and recent studies based on research in newly opened archives have diversified our view and corrected some of the old misperceptions. Nevertheless, the works are still primarily concerned with the political aspects of the Soviet regime. The cultural focus of the present work, therefore, aspires to offer new perspectives on both Russian history and the nature of Soviet society through the Friendship Societies.

The primary focus of this study deals with the processes that moulded Soviet Russia's image abroad, particularly within Spain, and the role that the various friendship societies played. In other words, I will attempt to uncover the ways perceptions about the Soviet model were formed amongst people with different cultures,

ideologies and experiences, and how the various friendship societies influenced not only popular opinion, but also official diplomatic relations between states.

I have consulted a wide variety of sources for this work. Amongst the most relevant were the VOKS and SSOD files in the Russian Federation archives, and those documents related to the friendship societies in the Spanish and British national archives. Also important were those newspapers published by the societies, interviews that I have conducted with former members, published memoirs and internal documents found in private archives of the societies. All of these sources have been crucial to understanding these associations, the problems they faced, as well as their successes and failures.

This study is primarily an historical one. The historical approach is one of the methodological tools of the Social Sciences, and is one that is characterized by the need to observe and interpret the general processes that shape society. Nonetheless, the variety of sources requires an interdisciplinary methodology. Thus, this study is not solely a historical one, but also ventures into the disciplines of Anthropology, Sociology and Statistics, amongst others.

The applied techniques have been both qualitative and quantitative. Therefore, the elaboration of databases has been necessary in order to produce the relevant statistics and then interpret them. Questionnaires were drawn up and distributed to various groups – members of various friendship societies, refugee children from the Spanish Civil War and diplomats, amongst others – and the information provided has been systematized and contrasted. As a result, it is possible to identify certain commonalities from the responses of the interviewees. The members of the friendship societies were idealistic, most of them belonged to left-wing organizations and believed in the Soviet model. Although they admitted that the Soviet Union had its flaws, they believed in its

fundamental values and recognized its achievements. On the other hand, the responses of the Spanish refugees who were forced to relocate to the USSR due to the civil war in their home country were mixed. Many had traumatic experiences that had marked the rest of their lives. They were not always comfortable with life under a dictatorship, not all of them were communists, and many suffered from homesickness. Nonetheless, many of them appreciated the educational training they received under the Soviet system.

This thesis is divided into five sections. The first describes the foundation of the friendship societies. It is important to note the attraction that the Soviet experiment exercised over workers and intellectuals. Social movements such as “Hands off Soviet Russia” supported the newly-established and beleaguered Bolshevik government against those foreign governments that intervened in the Russian Civil War. After 1927, friendship societies were created to regularize and institutionalise support for the USSR. Yet, these societies, while unified in their cause, were not unified necessarily as associations. Indeed, in Britain there were two different groups, the private “Fellow of the Communist Front”, the British-Soviet Friendship Society (BSFS), and the Great Britain-USSR Society, which was created by the British government in 1959 to encourage cultural exchanges between the two countries.

The second section is devoted to specifically cultural undertakings, such as educational and cultural institutions set up in foreign countries, like VOKS and SSOD. The first organization, established in 1925, played an important role in the Second World War as a beacon of the anti-fascist cause. They also aided the improvement of relations between Spain and the Soviet Union during the Second Republic. After the death of Stalin, and with the beginning of the “thaw” under Khrushchev’s era, this institution was renamed the All Union of Friendship Soviet Societies with Foreign

Countries in 1958. Its primary focus became that of fostering dissent from Western Cold War policies and encouraging the 'peace movement'. In this part, one chapter is dedicated to the Spanish section of the Friends of the Soviet Union, created during the II Republic. Particularly, it is focused on the spread of the Soviet Union's influence in Spain through the association's activities. The Spanish Friends of the Soviet Union was very active in the Spanish Civil War, indeed, the relations between both countries improved.

The third part discusses what should have been the nadir of these cultural efforts, given the lack of official bilateral relations between Spain and the USSR during the Franco dictatorship. One remarkable feature of this period was that, despite the efforts of the Spanish state to vilify the Soviet regime, there still continued to be considerable public interest in the Communist state. Henceforth Spanish people knew the Soviet regimen through false myths and what is more, they were prejudiced against it until the Spanish transition to democracy.

The fourth section describes the changing relations between the Soviet Union and Spain as the latter embarked on its transition to democracy, with the consequent improvement in diplomatic ties.

The last part deals with nature of these cultural exchanges with the disappearance of the Soviet regime in Russia, discussing those institutions that remained as well as the role of Spanish Civil War refugee children within the Spanish Centre in Moscow.

## **Conclusions**

The international movement that was the friendship societies offers the researcher a wealth of experiences that add to the complex jigsaw of cultural relations between countries, of which the Spanish section of the Friends of the Soviet Union, the Spain-

USSR Society and the British Soviet Friendship Society (the former British Section of the Friends of Soviet Union, FOSR) are only a small piece.

The October Revolution lifted the hopes of the global proletariat, many of whom, in turn, alongside some intellectuals, were staunch supporters and defenders of the Soviet project. Afterwards, some of them kept this ideal alive, while others tempered their enthusiasm with time and some eventually became alienated from the Soviet model. However, the events in Russia attracted the attention of the world, both positive and negative, with the Soviet Union presented as being either “the Soviet paradise” or “the Soviet threat”.

This thesis attempts to demonstrate the variety of ways in which Western perceptions of the Soviet Union were formed, using the available resources – largely documents and contemporary statements of different eras-. In addition to this, some attention is given to the image of Spain within the former USSR.

The Friendship Associations were created in order to coordinate the defence of the Soviet Union, both in terms of propaganda and from actual invasion. The Soviet regime and its sympathizers were certain that such an invasion by the so-called capitalist countries was only a matter of time, and strove to prevent their individual countries from taking such action. These associations had their origins in those movements that mobilized in support of the October Revolution and against the foreign intervention in the Russian Civil War. These movements, such as Hands Off Soviet Russia or the first Friends of Soviet Russia, exercised a significant influence during the consolidation process of the Bolshevik regime. Eventually, these movements, which were of on a global scale, became institutionalised in 1927, that is, the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. From this point onwards the various pro-Soviet groups, which were made up of workers’ groups, Communist parties and left-wing intellectuals, came

under the control of the Comintern and of the Commission of External Relations of the USSR. This centralized structure continued all the way up to the demise of the Soviet Union.

These associations served a double purpose of political-cultural diffusion of the Soviet ideology to the outside world, and as small windows to the outside world within the USSR. While the existing historical literature focuses on the rigid censorship under the Soviet regime and its imposition of a uniform socialist model that marginalized avant-garde ideas or experimental revolutionary methods, in fact, there also existed a sincere interest in developments in the wider world, with some public discussion of international issues – though admittedly within the boundaries allowed by the Kremlin-. In this sense, the impulse towards perestroika derived from this need for the Soviet regime to be understood and accepted beyond Russia's borders. Indeed, perestroika went further than any previous attempt at reform and established stronger links with other countries, allowing greater transparency, and criticism of the past. With this, the central state surrendered its previous role as being the sole informer of opinions, which in turn provoked confusion and a certain de-legitimization of the Soviet system. Nonetheless, this process had roots that preceded Gorbachev's reforms, and help explain what many historians had seen as unforeseeable and rapid change.

The Associations are still viewed as the forward guard of the Soviet Union, as the agents of Moscow abroad. In fact, their activities and rationale were more than this simplistic characterization, though, admittedly, they tended to ignore or justify the more negative aspects of the Soviet regime, as they felt the Communist state's enemies already fulfilled this role. It was this need to combat the Soviet Union's critics, alongside their own faith in the Communist project, which led them to present an uncritical image of the Soviet regime, of the superiority of the Soviet model. However,

this is not to say that they were marionettes, with Moscow pulling the strings. Their members joined the friendship societies of their own free will, and were not blind to certain negative aspects of the Soviet regime; yet, they did experience certain despair with the collapse of the same Soviet Union that had been the guiding principal of their lives.

Nevertheless, the Soviet Friendship Societies not only transmitted the cultural wealth of the USSR but also its political message, which was linked to the achievements obtained in all spheres of Soviet society. Thus, periodicals such as *VOKS Bulletin*, *Culture and Life* and *Moscow News*, championed Soviet political principles. These publications corresponded to the different phases of Soviet Russia's history. The first of these (the *VOKS Bulletin*) belongs to the Stalinist period and carried out an important function in the 1930s during the antifascist fight, and in the post-war period gave accounts of the atrocities committed by the Nazis as a way of underlying the moral as well as martial victory of the Soviet armies in the Second World War, or The Patriotic War as it was known to the Soviet citizens. The second magazine belongs to the Khrushchev's period, in which editors emphasized certain aspects such as the Cuban Revolution and peaceful coexistence, and along with *Moscow News* (since 1962), persisted with their task until the fall of the USSR.

Until glasnost allowed for greater freedom of the press, the Communist Party's instrumentalization of these periodicals meant that these reflected the official views of the Soviet state. Besides, Soviet editions linked to the Soviet friendship associations constituted the best testimony of the image of the Spanish culture in the Soviet Union. Not only did editors circumscribe their articles to the associative experience between both countries, when was feasible, but they also wrote about Spain as result of the interest in certain Spanish artists, in spite of the political disagreements.



There was a considerable variety of friendship associations in the United Kingdom; there were associations established by the state and by private initiative. In Spain there were several associations, but they were created only by private initiative, while the official cultural relations between Spain and the Soviet Union have been set up by agreements. Moreover, official proposals such as the Cervantes Institute were created to resemble other cultural institutions that had been functioning for several decades, and with great success and prestige across the world. In the English case, the financial support of the British Council was important for the establishment of the Great Britain – USSR Association, created in 1959 as a cultural commission to elaborate the first cultural agreement between both countries.

The British associations enjoyed a lengthy existence, from the first movements sympathetic of the Bolshevik Revolution and the creation of the Friends of the Soviet Union in 1927, to those that supported the anti-fascist cause in the interwar period and the pro-Soviet Union committees that sprung up during the Second World War. These organizations aided in improving the image of the USSR amongst the British during the war. The British-Soviet Friendship Society was born in 1946, in the increasingly difficult conditions of the post-war period. Since its establishment and despite the difficulties posed by the Cold War, it became linked to various committees, and remained in force until the collapse of the Soviet Union, continuing to publish the *British Soviet Friendship* magazine.

In fact, the relations between Great Britain and the Soviet Union had moments of tension, with mutual accusations of espionage, and the British-Soviet Friendship Society was banned by the Labour Party in the beginning of the Cold War, leaving those Labour members affiliated to the Society in contravention of their own party's orders and were dubbed "fellow travellers of communism". Nevertheless, in spite of

these tensions, the friendship associations were able to continue to operate in the western democracies. The reasons for this lie in the fundamental pragmatism of the foreign policies of countries such as the United Kingdom. In Michael Clark's words, "The United Kingdom was a country that can deal with the Soviet Union but that never has been very enthusiastic of this one".<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the British government maintained its own cultural association, the Great Britain-USSR Society, which competed with the unofficial associations in order to manage relations with the Soviet Union and filter its official propaganda against the West.

The Spanish friendship associations with the USSR had serious obstacles of political character for their existence. Thus, the Spanish section of Friends of the Soviet Union was only possible in 1933, during the Second Republic, their force declined in 1938 with the Republic agony, although it was popular and counted with 110.000 associates in its last moments. During the Spanish Civil War the contacts of diverse kind were narrower between Spain and the Soviet Union and test of it was the existence of AERCU, a cultural association more elitist than the Spanish section of Friend of Soviet Union, formed by intellectuals and Scientifics, whose organ of expression was *Soviet Culture*, an illustrated magazine about cultural relations.

After the Spanish Civil War and during almost forty years of Franco's regime, in which an anti-communist and anti-Soviet propaganda prevailed, the Friends of the Soviet Union was unable to continue its work in Spain. Nevertheless, it resurfaced during the transition to democracy and were in force from 1979 until 1990-1991, depending on the particular branch. For example, the Zaragoza section was one of the most active branches and continued after 1991, despite the dissolution of the national organization. Associations were pluralistic in character, with heterogeneous

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<sup>1</sup> CLARK, Michael: "Anglo-Soviet Relations: A World Order Problem", en FLYNN, G. (Ed): *The West and the Soviet Union. Politics and Policy*. London, Macmillan Press, 1990, p. 19

memberships whose interest in the Soviet Union was varied. An intellectual and renowned scientist such as Faustino Cerdón was the first Spain-USSR chairman, and directed the association for several years. A public prosecutor, Vicente Chamorro, succeeded him in the post. Ordinary workers also joined the cultural association, as did left-wing students.

The Spanish transition to democracy supposed a rediscovery of the Soviet Union through the friendship associations that advertised to Spanish society the Soviet model and its achievements, and it had a greater impact on cultural aspects than official relations. They carried out an important task through exhibitions; they also gave presentations on Soviet literature, folk groups and other cultural activities such as lectures, shows of Soviet films and gastronomic fairs.

The Friendship societies with the USSR were the suitable way to know the USSR from other perspectives, an alternative to the anti-Soviet propaganda that prevailed in the western countries within the orbit of the American alliances, including members of NATO, such as the United Kingdom (since 1949) and Spain in the 80s. The activities of the friendship societies with the former USSR are still visible. The British societies have survived the collapse of the Soviet Union and they have renewed their relations with Russia in the post-Soviet era. Associations such as the Britain-Russia Centre and the British East-West Centre (since 1991); and the Great Britain-Russia Society, with a clear cultural agenda in its activities, are the offspring of the old friendship societies, even if the attraction they draw are distinct from earlier times.

The friendship associations have remained characterized as bastions of support of the foreign Soviet politics, a way of protection from the anti-Soviet propaganda, which was nourished by onlookers and sympathizers with the Soviet Regime. In fact, the purposes and activities carried out by the associations were led to make the Soviet Union popular in all the aspects in which the USSR could be praised. On the other hand,

they were not studying in depth other negative matters, because the anti-Soviet militants were already taking charge of this assignment. In this sense, it was necessary to put to the service of the ideas, the numbers, information on the Soviet model - texts and examples- that proved in an undeniable way the superiority of the USSR. In fact, for the majority of friends of the Soviet Union its destruction only has benefited the irrefutable North American domain and the development of the capitalism, although the USSR was a model that had faults.

Care must be taken about those outside, hostile opinions that have shaped our perceptions over the role and contributions of the friendship associations. These associations were under constant suspicion of being a spy network, an image that was projected in the mass media during the Cold War, but not supported necessarily by the documentary evidence. Nonetheless, the associations were proscribed at times in NATO countries, such as the United Kingdom, but they were not dissolved and sometimes contributed in a positive manner to East-West relations.

The associations were also a conduit for debating of revisionist Euro-communist ideas, and supported those left-wing groups that defended what positive elements could be gleaned from the Soviet experience and their belief in the ultimately progressive character of the Communist model. For many of these people, perestroika was interpreted as a move in the right direction, in that it left behind the negative aspects of the past and would help produce “socialism with a human face” – though this was not a universal reaction to Gorbachev’s reforms-, as some abandoned the associations as they felt this approach would undermine the Soviet cause.

In Spain, the friendship societies with the USSR aided to spread an ideal in the republican period – the fight against fascism in defence of the Republican government – and made known the support given by the Hitler and Mussolini to the military uprising

of July 1936. In addition to this, friendship societies spread Soviet aid to the Spanish Republic through propaganda methods. It is necessary to point out the support for the Soviet Union on the part of the British and American friendship societies; they called attention to the Spanish Civil War refugee children in the USSR through articles and photographs devoted to the Soviet care. Spanish children were utilized to show the kindnesses of the USSR, and as a way of organizing British and American aid towards the Spanish Republic, whose situation was followed with great interest in the mass media and amongst foreign observers. Moreover, many intellectuals and workers focused on the news about the fight against the expansion of the fascist troops in Spain and decided to enlist in the International Brigades as volunteers. They also played a cultural role and popularized terms such as “koljoz”, “stajanovista” amongst the members of the friendship associations and Republican soldiers. As such, they were a way of increasing Soviet influence in other countries.

The plight of the Spanish people generated genuine sympathy amongst their Russian counterparts, beyond the propaganda of the antifascist cause in the USSR. In the Spanish case, the Soviet government was favourable to the evacuation of a contingent of more than five thousand people (between children and educators) and their adaptation in the USSR marked a different sign in the relations between both countries more intense than in previous stages and still visible at present.

Regarding the Spanish Civil War refugee children and their relation with the friendship societies, we can state that both of them maintained special links. The Spanish section of Friends of the Soviet Union participated in the evacuation to the USSR of children and educators during the Spanish Civil War; likewise, the Friends of Soviet Union acted as an intermediary between children and their relatives in Spain. The Spanish emigrants were also objects of favourable propaganda carried out by the

friendship associations about the Soviet Union. Members of the friendship societies, and politicians of the Republican government, published newspaper articles and gave radio speeches in which they gave accounts of the warm reception that the Soviet government had provided to children and their teachers, and consequently they contributed to the myth of the Soviet aid towards the Second Republic. Nonetheless, these accounts obscured complaints made by the Spanish refugees, and Soviet reports on indiscipline and matters related to cultural shock.

Nevertheless, since then the Spanish Civil War refugee children and exiles began to exhibit the typical dilemmas of exiles. On the one hand, they lived with the yearning of returning to Spain and, on the other hand, as time goes by, they adapted in the USSR; they were aware of the difficulties to return. Despite of this, these expatriated Spaniards created, with the approval of the Soviet authorities, cultural centres such as Chkalov after the war, and the Spanish Centre. This latter organization, detached from the PCE, continues in its work of fostering cultural exchanges between successive generations of Spaniards and Russians.

During the Spanish Civil War the myths of “Spain selling out to Russia” and the “gold of Moscow” began to be disseminated, in which persons identified with the Franco dictatorship propagated these myths as a way of bolstering the new regime’s legitimacy both at home and abroad. Despite the erroneousness of these myths, the Left remained divided on the subject of Soviet influence in the Republican Zone. Soviet aid was expensive, contrary to the myth of “Soviet altruism”, and the Republican government used up its gold reserves in order to pay the arms and food delivered by the USSR and other countries.

In the end, it was better not to speak about Soviet Russia. Before 1939, in the areas controlled by Franco’s troops, and during the dictatorship, communism and its

supporters were pursued and persecuted. The conservative mass media during the Civil War and the dictatorship portrayed the experiences of the Spanish Civil War refugee children who were evacuated to the USSR in a negative light, in order to spread a pejorative image of the Soviet Union and the Spanish Republic. Thus, “they were the innocent victims of the Republic, whose government would have expatriated them without the family consent”. The Falange and its Foreign Service participated in the recovery of these children and youngsters, whether or not this was demanded by their relatives. In fact, authorities and diplomats showed a marked lack of scruples in order to repatriate these young refugees and gain favourable propaganda for the dictatorship.

The outbreak of the Second World War had an important impact in Spain, because it motivated “an anti-communist crusade” abroad with creation of the Blue Division in 1941. The sending of the Blue Division to the Eastern Front was a way of supporting the Third Reich against Soviet Union and its ideology. The Blue Division fought side by side with the Nazis to crush the Soviet Union, but in fact only gained the disappearance and death of thousands of Spaniards, and eventually defeat by the Soviet armies.

Official repatriations were possible after the death of Stalin and especially after the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the PCUS and the beginning of the “thaw”. As far as Franco as his foreign policy was concerned, the changes going on in the Soviet Union were part of some dubious strategy. Nevertheless, the refusal of Stalin to return the refugee children to Franco’s Spain evolved into an establishment of contacts between both parties through the Red Cross in order to get the return of different Spanish citizens who were still in the Soviet Union. For several years “volunteers” of the Blue Division were allowed to return to Spain. These were followed in successive expeditions by the child refugees and then adults, some of them accompanied by their new Russian families.

In theory, the Francoist authorities should have treated the refugees very well, as they were different from other repatriated citizens in that they could be used for propagandist goals. Moreover, they would be important sources of information about the Soviet model and then be portrayed as models of “re-education”, as well as the demonstrating the supposed clemency and generosity of the Franco regime. If these repatriated Spaniards expected such treatment, they were soon disappointed. While authorities received some of the repatriated refugees warmly, they placed others under arrest. The long stays in the USSR were believed to have hindered the “recovery” of those who had been repatriated; the refugees were also symbols of “the anti-Spain”, and as such had to be dealt with severely.

During the Spanish transition to democracy the Spanish Civil War refugee children were victims of a relatively low priority status, and bureaucratic slowness between Spain and Russia to put an end to the question of the loss and recovery of Spanish nationality, as well as dealing with welfare aspects. The agreement on social security, signed in 1994, regulated their pensions, although its practical application suffered delays as result of the appalling crisis that overtook Russia. The Spanish Civil War refugee children in the USSR were a matter of particular importance, but a differentiating treatment with respect to other emigrants could have a damaging effect on both countries. For that reason, the Spanish Civil War children have fought for their own interests and gradually they have received a compensation payment for their claims. Those who have not returned to Spain, except for few occasions, have experienced serious difficulties, because in the old country of the “real” socialism all of their welfare needs were cared for by the state. The dilemma between leaving where they have lived most of their lives and initiating the avalanche of bureaucratic proceedings to obtain a house and to adapt to life in Spain was not always seen as an



attractive proposition, whatever residual nostalgia they may have felt for their homeland.

After the dictatorship, the Spanish Civil War refugee children that returned have established their own associations, as in the cases of the Nostalgia Foundation and Vasnigue. The Nostalgia Foundation carried out projects such as arranging for residences and healthcare for Spaniards and Russian combatants of the International Brigades. Vasnigue acts as a vehicle of integration upon a refugee's return to Spain, as well as providing for his or her general welfare.

During the Spanish transition to democracy, the friendship societies with the Soviet Union could start again. The Spanish Civil War refugee children, then adults, participated as members, translators, and these societies were a way of adaptation to the larger changes in Spain. The testimonies focused on their enriching experiences; indeed, they were proud of the education received in the former Soviet Union and through the Spain–USSR Association they could transmit their knowledge to other people interested in Russian culture.

The friendship associations expired with the Soviet regime, but their legacy remains through the variety of programs they offered, such as the awarding of scholarships, and the impact this has left on their beneficiaries. Thanks to those exchanges professionals were educated in the fields of Philology and Art, amongst other disciplines. The associations have also given proof of a big versatility; they have adapted themselves in the post - Soviet period and tried to encourage a positive image of Russia, arguing against the process of globalisation.

Nowadays, Hispano-Russian cultural exchanges are carried out through state institutions, such as the Cervantes Institute in Moscow and the Pushkin Foundation in Madrid, alongside various bilateral agreements in the fields of science and culture, some

of which date back as far as 1979. Yet, while the friendship associations existed, they served as a bridge amongst societies with different political systems. They showed that ideas such as multiculturalism and peaceful relations amongst states were sustainable, a message that is still relevant in today's world.

Having said that, the research has tried to understand the different perceptions of the Soviet Union and improve our knowledge of the friendship societies with the USSR and their role in carrying out the spread of the Soviet model, as well as improving cultural relations and social acceptance of Soviet Russia.

The study of the friendship societies in both Spain and Britain, with their faults and virtues, can contribute to a solid base for the approach to the Russian culture and other countries as well. Starting from their experiences, and leaving preconceptions and prejudices aside, they provide an example of how, in a peaceful and respectful way, bridges of communication with foreign countries can be established in order to learn of other cultures of the world in which we live. The members of the friendship associations believed in those aims and tried to make a more just and respectful world, even if their specific political goals were not realized.