two years after the publication of *España invertebrada*), added to which were the rise of the workers’ movements and peripheral nationalist agitation. In Russia, the October Revolution had followed in the wake of defeat in the First World War, along with the very harsh process of transformation into a communist society at the hands of the Bolsheviks.

There can be no doubt that the physical and historic distance between the Russian Federation and Spain is very great. Yet over the centuries these two peoples have had quite a lot of notable points in common. Each of the two countries has constituted a bridge between two continents and different civilisations. The two great empires, the Russian and the Spanish, were built up at about the same time. At one point, they even ended up being neighbours in the southern part of Alaska.

The Spanish nation was forged with the thrust of Castile, which united with Aragon. As Ortega describes, both kingdoms merged their different international policies which were respectively oriented to Europe and Africa and to the Mediterranean. The consummation of the campaign against the Muslims and unification under the Catholic faith were followed by the conquest and colonisation of America (which, for Ortega was “the greatest thing that Spain has done in History”, although this was not the work of the elites but of the people).

In Russia’s case, the driving force of agglutination came from Moscow once it had recovered from its dynastic crises. The reign of Muscovy set about a massive project of territorial expansion taking in the empire from the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea to the vast lands of Central Asia and the Pacific Ocean. After the fall of Constantinople, Moscow, bastion of the orthodox faith, took over from Byzantium, presenting itself as the “Third Rome”. In Spain and Russia alike, the tremendous territorial expansion required a huge effort from the people, who had to face constant threats.¹

Like Spain, Muscovy absorbed the Christian faith and, in great part, each country defined its Christian identity in the endeavour of expelling the Muslim invaders (the Tartars in the case of Russia and the Arabs in that of Spain). In both countries, the strain on the military was transformed into a religious cause, and vice versa. The political and religious authorities were intimately linked and, when the time was ripe, both lands were to become the standard bearers of their respective versions of the Christian faith.

The expulsion of the Jews ordered by the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella was followed with interest in Russia. J. H. Billington considers that there is similarity in the role played by the respective Jewish communities in the development of the Russian and Spanish cultures and, again, in the attacks on the Jews in Spain and Russia. In the latter case, anti-Semitic reaction began shortly after the Alhambra Decree, or

---

¹ In pronouncing his diagnosis, Ortega considered that, in comparison with the most advanced countries of Europe, Russia (now officially the Russian Federation) and Spain had in common a lack of elites that were capable of bringing their respective peoples out of their centuries-old backwardness.

Our distinguished philosopher came up with an extremely negative verdict on being Russian or Spanish at a difficult moment in the history of both Spain and Russia. The former was still on edge with the feeling of defeat resulting from the “disaster of ’98” and the difficulties of the Spanish army in Morocco (the Primo de Rivera coup d’état and the suspension of the 1876 Constitution happened just

---

José Ortega y Gasset, *España Invertebrada*, 1921
(Invertebrate Spain)
Edict of Expulsion, which transferred the centre of gravity of Jewish influence from the southwest to the northeast of Europe.¹

With the coronation of Ivan IV in 1547, the monarch of Russia became the “tsar” — a term that is equivalent to emperor (“Gosudar vseia Rusi”, “sovereign of all the Russians”). Historians have frequently drawn attention to the parallels between Ivan IV (1537 – 1584) and Philip II, King of Spain (1527 – 1598), and both monarchs have given rise to their own “black legends”.

Another classic similarity is that of the resistance of Russia and Spain to the Napoleonic invasions (the uprising of the people of Madrid in 1808 and the burning of Moscow by its inhabitants in 1812). The enlightened scholars who drew up the Constitution of Cadiz (1812) and the liberals who succumbed to the authoritarian repression of Ferdinand VII after the Liberal Triennial (1820-23) have been compared with the “children of 1812” or the “Decembrists” like Prince Sergei Volkonsky who, on their return to Russia in 1815, were betrayed by Tsar Alexander I, in whom they had vested their hopes for reform.¹ As in Spain, it was the Russian people who heroically struggled to expel the invader and the same thing occurred, although on a much greater scale, in the Second World War with the Nazi invasion. To paraphrase Orlando Figes, who evokes the tremendous epic of the Russian people – known in the Russian Federation as the “Great Patriotic War” – this disposition for personal sacrifice was the Soviet Union’s best weapon. The deeds of millions of soldiers and civilians, many of whom laid down their lives, compensated for the shortcomings of the military commanders and the paralysis of almost all the powers-that-be.¹

The reciprocal interest between Russia and Spain is also reflected in literature. The Duke of Muscovy appears in La vida es sueño (Life Is a Dream) by Pedro Calderón de la Barca, while Lope de Vega tells the story of the false Dmitry in El Gran Duque de Moscova y emperador perseguido (The Grand Duke of Muscovy and Persecuted Emperor). Not to be overlooked either is Cartas de Rusia (Letters from Russia) by the diplomat and writer Juan Valera.¹

Naturally, the great Russian authors like Tolstoy, Turgenev, Chekhov, Dostoyevsky and Gogol were known and appreciated in nineteenth-century Spain. In the Russian Federation, Don Quijote continues to fascinate to this very day (Cervantes is the only foreign writer who has a monument in Moscow) and even the picaresque as embodied in El Lazarillo de Tormes came to be idealised. Billington writes that Turgenev preferred the works of Calderón to those of Shakespeare.¹

Again, among Russian composers such as Glinka and Rimsky Korsakov, Spanish themes and music were a source of inspiration. Among the operas and plays that have enjoyed greatest popularity in Russia are The Force of Destiny, Carmen, and Don Carlos, all of which are set in Spain.

Not to be overlooked, in the case of architecture, is the figure of the Canarian, Agustín de Betancourt, founder of the higher engineering school known as the St Petersburg Institute of Corps of Engineers of Routes of Communication. As Tatiana Pigarova’ writes, he became friendly with Tsar Alexander I, came to be Chief Director of Routes of Communication in Russia and was awarded the Cross of Knight of the Order of Alexander Nevsky. He designed one of Moscow’s most emblematic buildings, the Manege or Riding Academy, which was constructed in 1817 for the occasion of a visit by the Tsar to attend a military parade commemorating the victory against Napoleon.

Although this has no pretensions to being an exhaustive account, one should not forget, either, the intervention of the Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). In the face of the inaction of France and Great Britain and the support given by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy to the insurgents, Stalin aided the Republic with arms shipments – which, of course, were duly paid for with gold from the Banco de España (Bank of Spain) – but did not send troops, although he did authorise the presence of numerous Russian volunteers in the International Brigades, many of whom were subsequently “purged” in the campaigns of repression and persecution of the years between 1937 and 1940. Moreover, the Soviet regime gave priority to preventing a coalition of Trotskyites and (POUM) anarchists from taking power in Catalonia. Orwell complained that “it was the Communists above all others who prevented revolution in Spain”.

Of course, the “children of war” who were sent to the Soviet Union between 1937 and 1939 should not be disregarded at this point. Of the 3,000 who arrived in the USSR, little more than 200 remain, some 160 living in the Russian Federation and the remainder in other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The others have died or they returned to Spain after 1956 (although some went back to the Soviet Union when they could not adapt to the Spain of those years). These people (who receive special support from the Spanish State in the form of a complementary welfare pension, medical insurance and who have the use of a rented venue in Moscow so that they can meet) constitute a paramount historic legacy, for they are the very incarnation of the tragedy of the Spanish and Russian peoples.

A brief historical account of Spanish-Russian relations⁷

Historians situate the first diplomatic contacts in the sixteenth century, principally due to the interest of the Prince of Muscovy, at that time Basil III, in keeping
up with the new Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, King of Spain, the same good relations that he had enjoyed with latter’s paternal grandfather Maximilian I. The two sovereigns sent reciprocal diplomatic missions. With the same objective, Ivan IV also sent a mission to Spain.

However, the establishment of full diplomatic relations with an exchange of ambassadors did not occur until 1722 during the reigns of Peter I (The Great) of Russia and Philip V. The Tsar appointed as his first ambassador to Spain Prince Sergei Golitsyn, who was assigned the tasks of informing on the commitments undertaken by the King of Spain with other powers, especially France, and investigating the possibility of signing a trade agreement. The ambassador nominated by Spain was the Duke of Liria. However, Spain broke relations with Russia in 1759 on the death of Peter II since the ascension to the throne of his distant cousin Anna Ivanovna (Anna of Russia) was not deemed to be in accordance with dynastic rights. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Prime Minister of Spain, Manuel Godoy, attempted to accomplish the signing of agreements with Russia, among them a possible alliance against increasing pressure from the French. However, relations deteriorated greatly to the point of rupture and even a declaration of war in July 1799 as the result of a dispute instigated by the Order of Malta (which had offered the title of Grand Master of the Knights Hospitaller to Paul I of Russia).

Relations were re-established when Alexander I came to the throne and were greatly strengthened because of French aggression against both countries. On 8 July 1812 they signed the Velikie Luki Treaty of Alliance, the most interesting element of which is recognition by the Russian Tsar of the “the legitimate and extraordinary Cortes Generales [legislature] of Cadiz, along with the Constitution drawn up and established by the said Cortes Generales”. Lamentably, the Tsar’s open, liberal position was short-lived since, after the Verona Congress in October 1822, Russia joined with Prussia and France in the Holy Alliance and pushed for sending an army of 95,000 men under Louis Antoine de Bourbon, Duke of Angoulême to help Ferdinand VII restore absolutism in Spain, thus putting an end to the period known as the Liberal Triennial (1820 – 1823). Alexander I would then proceed to suppress in his own country the reformists who had come together in the group known as the Decembrists. Russia was subsequently to close its embassy in Spain from 1833 to 1856 on not recognising Isabella II as the legitimate Queen of Spain.

After the Crimean War (1853 – 1855), Russia and Spain decided to establish closer relations, sending as their respective envoys Prince Mikhail Golitsyn and the Duke of Osuna. Thenceforth, until the October Revolution of 1917, relations were smooth, the monarchs of both countries remaining neutral in the conflicts that Russia faced with the Ottoman Empire and Spain with the United States. After the Bolshevik Revolution the respective ambassadors were withdrawn and no envoys were sent until the Second Spanish Republic. In 1933, one of the most outstanding artificers of the Russian Revolution, Anatoly Lunacharsky was appointed ambassador to Spain, but he died in France en route to take up his position. After the Popular Front victory in Spain in February 1936, the USSR named Marcel Rozenberg as the first Soviet ambassador to the Spanish Republic in August the same year, while the Republican Government sent Marcelino Pascua to be its ambassador in Moscow. A Soviet Consulate General was also opened in Barcelona.

The victory of Franco’s forces in April 1939 saw the beginning of a long period of almost forty years in which Spain and the Soviet Union had no diplomatic relations. Although Spain did not participate in the Second World War, it did send the División Azul (Blue Division), an 18,000-strong unit of volunteers who joined the German Wehrmacht and fought in Russia from 1941 to 1943.

Trade relations began to flourish at the end of the 1960s, leading to the 1969 opening in Madrid of the first office representing an official Soviet organism, the Morflot (Merchant Navy), after which companies specialising in Spanish-Russian trade – for example Sovhispán – began to appear. In 1972, Spain and the USSR signed a trade agreement that opened the way for trade representation in their respective capitals, these offices also being responsible for consular functions.

After the death of General Franco in November 1975, contact between the two countries intensified, eventually leading, in February 1977, to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the formalisation of an agreement between the foreign ministers, Andrei Gromyko and Marcelino Oreja. The first Soviet ambassador to Madrid was Sergei Bogomolov, while the first Spanish ambassador to Moscow was Juan Antonio Samaranch.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, Spain officially recognised the Russian Federation on 21 December 1991, after which the first ambassador to Spain was Igor Ivanov, while the last Spanish ambassador to the Soviet Union, Eugenio Bregolat remained in the post after these events.

In 2007, the thirty-fifth anniversary of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries was celebrated with a series of events, articles and retrospective exhibitions covering this period.

**Spanish-Russian relations today**

The relations between Spain and the Russian Federation have moved ahead significantly in recent years, this essentially being due to an intensification
of high-level political contacts and the absence of any bilateral disagreements. An additional factor is the natural sympathy among people in the Russian Federation for Spain, the growing number of Russian tourists and increasing activity in the domain of economic exchanges. Nevertheless, the good state of relations is not satisfactorily reflected in the trade and investment figures between the two countries.

The legal framework of political relations is constituted by the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Kingdom of Spain and the Russian Federation, which was signed in Madrid on 12 April 1994 (BOE Nº 247/1995, 16 October 1995). The Treaty is inspired in the “deep feelings of mutual friendship and respect between the peoples of Spain and Russia and in the centuries-old Spanish-Russian relations” and seeks to “open up a qualitatively new period in the latter”. The Treaty had an initial validity of ten years, renewable for successive five-year periods except in the case of written formal complaint by either of the two parties. The Treaty is still in force.

Relations have intensified still more in recent years, once again due to the frequency of high-level political contacts. President Putin visited Spain in February 2006,11 as did his successor Dmitry Medvedev in March 2009. Again, both King Juan Carlos I and the Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero have visited the Russian Federation several times in the past four years. Moreover, there have been activities of political consultation between the two Foreign Ministers who meet several times a year.

On the occasion of the aforementioned visit of President Medvedev to Spain (his first official visit abroad as Head of State) in March 2009, a Declaration of Strategic Alliance between Spain and the Russian Federation was signed, this bestowing a new dimension on bilateral Spanish-Russian relations, and stating, “Based on mutual understanding and trust, this Strategic Alliance aspires to raise the links between the two countries to a level that is both higher and qualitatively new, giving impetus to especially close and dynamic cooperation in the realms of both bilateral relations and in the international scene”.11 The document envisages that the Prime Minister of the Spanish Government and the President of the Russian Federation will meet at least once a year. The respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs and co-presidents of the Joint Economic Commission are also expected to be present. Also foreseen is the possibility of creating further Joint Commissions by sector, at ministerial level if deemed necessary, and the holding of at least two meetings per year of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs.12

In fact, from the political and institutional perspective, the Declaration places Spain on the same footing as the other European countries with which the Russian Federation has privileged relations that come under the heading of “strategic”, which is to say Germany, France and Italy whose volume of economic exchanges with the Russian Federation is far greater than Spain’s. In 2008, trade between the Russian Federation and Germany was estimated at 60,000 million euros and that for the Russian Federation and Italy at 40,000 million euros, in contrast with somewhat less than 9,000 million euros in the case of Spain.

Spain has also received special treatment as one of the few countries hitherto – along with Germany, France and the United States – that has signed with the Russian Federation an agreement concerning air transport of military equipment and personnel under the auspices of the stabilisation mission in Afghanistan. This agreement was signed on the occasion of President Medvedev’s State Visit in March 2009.

Of special relevance, too, is the re-launching of the Intergovernmental Spanish-Russian Joint Commission for Economic and Industrial Cooperation, which held its Sixth Session in Madrid on 12 November 2008. Also of particular significance was the holding in Madrid, to coincide with President Medvedev’s State Visit, of the First Assembly of Vice-Chancellors of Spanish, Russian and Iberoamerican Universities, with the participation of vice-chancellors of the leading Russian and Spanish universities along with their counterparts from numerous Latin American countries. The Spanish-Russian Civil Society Forum, which had been formally constituted in September 2007, also met in Madrid during the State Visit.

The great challenge for both countries is to fill their relations with real content, especially in the commercial-economic, cultural, educational and scientific-technical areas, making the most of the present high point in political relations and the solid institutional framework that has now been established.

**Spanish-Russian economic relations**

the economies of Spain and the Russian Federation are complementary. The volume of trade exchanges has steadily increased in recent years, although the pace of progress was interrupted in 2009 as a result of the economic crisis when the Russian economy went from an average annual growth rate of 6.5% in the period from 2004 to 2008 to a figure of -7.9% in 2009. However, it seems that the Russian economy might go back to a growth rate of somewhere between 3% and 5% in 2010, which would doubtless have an effect on Spanish sales.

Nevertheless, there is a great imbalance since the import-export coverage ratio is just over 30% (37.7% in 2008 compared with 26.5% in 2007). The Russian Federation is Spain’s main oil supplier, this product
representing between 80% and 90% of its sales in Spain. Other imported products are cast iron, steel, nickel and manufactured goods. It is ninth on the list of Spain’s suppliers, accounting for 2.7% of total imports.

Spanish exports to the Russian Federation have been increasing over recent years (+37.5% in 2006, +63.7% in 2007 and +35.5% in 2008) with the already-noted exception of 2009. The figure for 2008 was 2,836 million euros. The composition of Spanish sales is quite varied with automobiles topping the list (24.6% in 2008), followed by capital goods (24.3%, mostly industrial machinery), semi-manufactured goods (17.8%, noteworthy here being chemical products) and foodstuffs (17.4%). The fastest-growing sectors are those of capital goods and food and agriculture. In 2009, as a result of the crisis, the downturn in all areas has been dramatic, with a particular decline in automobiles – virtually paralysed – and capital goods. Yet sales in textiles and foodstuffs (principally fruit, vegetables and meat) have held their own.

In 2008, the Russian Federation represented 1.5% of total Spanish exports, thus occupying eleventh place among the countries supplied. Spain has a market quota of about 1.3% of total Russian imports.

Given the high growth rates of the Russian economy (until 2009), the increased revenue of the population and the need to renovate the productive apparatus and infrastructure, the greater part which is obsolete, the Russian Federation ought to be an attractive market for Spanish enterprises and investors. However, because of lack of knowledge about the country and its market, bureaucratic problems and a high perception of risk, Spanish business presence lags behind that of its international competitors. In the domain of energy, relations are practically exclusively limited to the purchase of crude oil on the spot market because, since Spain is not connected with the European network of gas pipelines, it is not a Gazprom client. Among Russian entrepreneurs there is an almost total lack of interest in Spain as a destination for their products. Most Russian investments in Spain are in the real estate sector.

Among non-members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) the Russian Federation has the biggest economy in the world and it is not possible to predict when it will join this body, especially after the decision, announced in June 2009, to construct a customs union with Belarus and Kazakhstan.

There are significant obstacles to trade and investment, these including high tariffs, quantitative restrictions, the requirement of a certificate of conformity with and approval of products, and restrictions on foreign investment in strategic sectors. The Russian authorities apply their own rules in health and phytosanitary matters, establishing tolerance levels (residues of antibiotics in meat, and residues of pesticides, nitrates and nitrates in fruit and vegetables) that do not meet internationally accepted standards (in the Codex Alimentarius) and those specified in EU norms. However, given its huge endowment of energy resources and with a clear recovery in oil prices, the Russian Federation continues to be a dynamic market and one with great potential for Spanish industry. It is, therefore, a market that deserves very close attention.

One valuable instrument for the furtherance of economic relations between Spain and the Russian Federation is the Joint Commission of Economic and Industrial Cooperation. This is presently headed, on the Spanish side, by the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Trade and, on the Russian side, by the Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Zhukov. The Commission has divided its activities into working groups that are presently as follows: Cooperation in the Sphere of the Kyoto Protocol; Naval Construction; Cosmic Space; Tourism; Transport Infrastructure; and Other Infrastructure (water, environment, energy). President Medvedev’s State Visit to Spain (March 2009) saw the signing of a Memorandum of Mutual Understanding in Matters of Energy Cooperation in which it is envisaged that a Working Group on Cooperation in the Sphere of Energy will be established.

Notable for their importance within the framework of the Joint Commission are matters related with infrastructure. Prominent achievements in the field of transport are the agreements signed between the Railway Company of the Russian Federation (RZhD) and the Spanish companies ADIF, RENFE, INECO, TALGO and DANOBAT with regard to high speed railways, supply of bogies, automatic gauge change systems and repair and maintenance of rolling stock. Spain’s experience with high speed railway systems could be very valuable for the Russian Federation. TALGO is negotiating a contract with RZhD for the supply of four units of its train-hotel for the Moscow-Berlin route. RZhD has recently announced its interest in purchasing the TALGO automatic gauge change system which is to be used for a fast change from the Russian gauge (1,520 mm) to the European standard (1,435 mm). The passenger trains that presently have to wait two and a half hours at the border for the bogies to be changed will be able to move from one gauge to the other without stopping and, in addition, the TALGO system is five times cheaper than the bogie system.

Since Spanish companies are leaders in the field of infrastructure both in the domain of transport (roads, railways, ports) as well as with other kinds (water supply and purification, telecommunications and urban waste management), there is great potential for collaboration between the two countries in this regard. Particularly stressed in the Russian Federation is interest in the idea that Spanish enterprises should participate in the preparations for the Sochi Winter Olympics 2014 (mainly construction and running of hotels). In the realm of energy, the areas of most inter-
est to Spain are the construction of combined cycle power plants, oil, gas and renewable energies (wind, thermo-solar, bioethanol and biomass). The Russian Federation has been open to the participation of foreign companies in exploiting new natural gas reserves in the Yamal Peninsula, in joint endeavours of liquid natural gas production, and in Gazprom’s participation in supplying energy to Spain and third countries (working with the Spanish companies Gas Natural and Repsol).

Some Spanish enterprises are already engaged in major projects in the Russian Federation. The company Técnicas Unidas is at the head of an international consortium working on the Khabarovsk Refinery Hydroprocessing Project with the aim of reconstructing and modernising an oil refinery belonging to the Russian enterprise Oil Company Alliance in the Khabarovsk region of Eastern Siberia. Iberdrola is finalising the construction of a 400 MW combined cycle plant in Sugres (near Yekaterinburg) for the electrical company OGK-5, while Iberdrola Renovables has signed a contract with the Government of the Krasnodar region to construct 100 MW wind energy plants and integrated water purification systems for six cities, including Sochi.

Spanish investments in the Russian Federation do not amount to much since the stock does not exceed 800 million euros. They are closely linked with exports, since the main objective is to facilitate access to the Russian market. The main sectors attracting Spanish investment are food and agriculture, construction materials, fashion, car industry components and the energy sector. Among the most prominent companies involved are URSA-EURASIA (Uralita group, with fibreglass insulation plants), Roca Santekhnika (sanitary equipment for bathrooms), Maxam (explosives and chemical products), Europe Foods (Gallina Blanca group, in the food sector), Bodegas Valdepablo (wines), Inditex (fashion), Grupo Antolín and Ajusa, (car industry components), Santander Consumer Bank and BBVA (banking) and Indra (air traffic control systems). In total, almost 110 Spanish companies have branches in the Russian Federation (in contrast with Germany which now has over 3,000 companies active in the country).

The flow of Russian tourists to Spain has been steadily increasing every year. The year 2007 saw a leap of 23% over the previous year, with a total of 445,000 tourists from the Russian Federation while some 540,000 arrived in 2008, an increase of 18.5%. In addition these are tourists of high spending capacity. The regions that most appeal to Russian tourists are Catalonia, Andalusia, the Canary Islands and Madrid.

Spain is very much in favour of facilitating as much as possible stays in the country by means of being more flexible about visa requisites within the framework of the Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on the Facilitation of the Issuance of Visas to the Citizens of the European Union and the Russian Federation, which has been in effect since 1 June 2006 and is presently in the process of revision. Some of Spain’s competitors as tourist destinations, for example Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Tunisia have already introduced a visa waiver for the Russian Federation. At present, the Spanish Consulate General in Moscow, in concert with the Consulate General in St Petersburg, issues more visas than any other Spanish consulate in any other country.

Cultural, educational and scientific relations

The legal framework for cultural cooperation is the Agreement on Cultural and Educational Cooperation between the Kingdom of Spain and the Russian Federation, signed in Madrid on 11 April 1994. The Agreement envisages the creation of a Joint Spanish-Russian Commission for Cultural and Educational Cooperation which approves, on a biennial basis, a programme for the said cooperation. However, it is more than four years since the Commission last met since the most recent session was in September 2005.

One of the main goals of Spain’s cultural activity in the Russian Federation is the diffusion of Spanish language and culture. Of particular relevance in this regard is the work of the Cervantes Institute of Moscow. The activities of this centre are governed by the Agreement between the Kingdom of Spain and the Russian Federation on Activities of Cultural Centres, which is dated 15 November 2001. This Agreement was complemented by a Protocol signed in September 2007, by virtue of which the financial situation of the Cervantes Institute is clarified, thereby putting an end to a complex bilateral dispute.

The Cervantes Institute of Moscow shows one of the highest figures for students in the network of the Institute’s centres, with approximately 5,000 students for the academic year 2008/2009. At present it is responsible for overseeing the examinations in Spanish as a Foreign Language within the Russian Federation and several countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States: Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Tadzhikistan, Uzbekistan, Georgia and Armenia, while also working with Hispanics of these countries.

It is extending its sphere of action by way of designating associated centres and training Spanish language teachers. It also has a splendid library and engages in cultural activities with its own programmes and in collaboration with the embassies of Latin American countries accredited in Moscow.
The Institute also promotes agreements of institutional collaboration with Russian organisms, for example the Latin American Institute, the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature. It has also begun to work jointly with the cultural services of the Spanish-language broadcasting channel of the state-owned TV news network, Russia Today.

In the sphere of education, an agreement was signed in March 2001 between the Ministries of Education of both countries by means of which the Spanish Programme for Bilingual Departments in Russia was drawn up. The programme is presently being carried out in several secondary education centres in Moscow and St Petersburg (six in total). Initiated on an experimental basis, it is now fully consolidated as demonstrated by the fact that the first class of Russian students to become holders of the Spanish secondary education certificate (Bachillerato) graduated in the academic year of 2008-2009. The Spanish Ministry has suggested drafting a new agreement to regulate the programme since that signed in 2001 was of an experimental nature. Spanish has officially become the second optional language in Russia’s secondary education curriculum.

In the terrain of higher education, discussion is presently underway between the respective Ministries of Education towards a new Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Certificates of Study, Diplomas and Degrees in order to facilitate academic mobility, university exchanges and access of professionals to different job markets.

It should also be pointed out that there already exist numerous agreements between Russian and Spanish universities, while seven Russian universities offer courses in Spanish language and culture.

Particularly notable was the holding in Madrid, on 2 March 2009 – with the presence of the King of Spain and President Medvedev at the opening – of the First Assembly of Vice-Chancellors of Spanish, Russian and Iberoamerican Universities, attended by 27 vice-chancellors of Russian universities, including the most important among them, for example of the Lomonosov Moscow State University, the St Petersburg State University and the Irkutsk State Linguistic University. The Spanish universities were represented by some 40 vice-chancellors and also attending were vice-chancellors from universities of Nicaragua, Cuba, Mexico, Argentina, Paraguay and El Salvador.

The aim of the initiative is give impetus to the links of association and collaboration between higher education centres in the Russian Federation, Spain and Latin America in the spheres of education, research and science, while also contributing to the diffusion of Russian and Spanish culture and language and the mobility of university students and teachers. A large-scale Conference of Vice-chancellors from the two cultural realms is being planned for 2011 with Moscow as its venue.

The sphere of scientific-technical cooperation comes under the Agreement on Scientific and Technical Cooperation between the Government of the Kingdom of Spain and the Government of the Russian Federation of 15 November 2001. The Joint Spanish-Russian Commission on Scientific and Technological Cooperation envisaged in the Agreement has not yet met and, accordingly, this is one of the “pending matters” of Spanish-Russian relations. There are great possibilities for collaboration in the areas of nuclear energy, renewable energies, biotechnology, space, aeronautics and nanotechnology. Agreements of collaboration have already been signed between the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), the Spanish Space Agency and the Spanish Centre for the Development of Industrial Technological (CDTI), and the Complutense University of Madrid and the Research Centre in Energy, Environment and Technology (CIEMAT) and the Russian Nuclear Energy Agency.

In the field of historical research, one should mention the protocol between the respective Foreign Affairs ministries on the Preparation of the Joint Collection of Diplomatic Documents (Corpus Diplomático), which is presently being negotiated. By virtue of this agreement, the third volume of Corpus Diplomático is to be produced, this being concerned with the history of relations between the Russian Federation and Spain in the twentieth century. The two first volumes have already been produced following a protocol signed in March 1985.

Cultural exchanges between the two countries are very intense. Relations between the leading Spanish and Russian museums are good, these including El Prado and the Hermitage, the Pushkin Museum and the Tretyakov Gallery and the Reina Sofia Museum of Madrid and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. The Kremlin State Ballet and the Bolshoi and Mariinsky companies frequently tour Spain, as does the Moscow Theatre School, which is directed by Galina Vishnevskaya, widow of the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. Also frequent are visits to the Russian Federation by such well-known Spanish artists as José Carreras, Plácido Domingo, Paco de Lucía and Nacho Duarte.

Cooperation in matters of freedom, security and justice

The working relations between Spain and the Russian Federation on homeland security matters are fluid, with Spain engaging in frequent exchanges of data and information of police interest with the different services of the Russian Federation (Ministry of
the Interior, Federal Drug Control Service, Federal Security Service and the Moscow Police Department). Spain also works with the Research Committee of the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Russian Federation in questions pertaining to criminal investigation. Again, joint Spanish-Russian operations are carried out against drug trafficking. On the occasion of President Putin’s State Visit to Spain in February 2006 an agreement on Drug Trafficking was signed by the Federal Drug Control Service of Russia and the Spanish Ministry of the Interior.

During President Medvedev’s State Visit to Spain in March 2009 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Office of the Public Prosecutor of Spain and the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Russian Federation, this allowing for collaboration between the two institutions in investigation of criminal activities.

Collaboration between the different services has made it possible to carry out successful action against organised crime, for example the “Ballena Blanca” (White Whale) operation against Russian-based money-laundering and the “Avispa” (Wasp) crackdown against organised criminal groups in Russia and Georgia. Further operations have been carried out against human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation and the collaboration also extends to the struggle against terrorism, which is a priority issue for both governments. Again, the two countries participate in the endeavour known as the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

However, it should also be borne in mind that, sometimes, when the Spanish media reports on police action against “Russian mafia groups” this actually refers to operations involving delinquents from other countries of the former Soviet Union (for example Georgia or Armenia) but not from the Russian Federation.

In the sphere of control of illegal immigration, a Bilateral Protocol for the Implementation of the Agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation on Readmission (25 May 2006), which allows for collaboration in issues pertaining to expulsion, is in an advanced stage of negotiation. In the consular domain, a Bilateral Agreement on Cooperation in International Adoption between Spain and the Russian Federation is presently being negotiated.20

Parliamentary relations

Parliamentary relations between the Russian Federation and Spain have intensified in recent years. The President of the Spanish Senate, Javier Rojo, visited the Russian Federation in 2006, while the Chairman of the Council of Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Sergei Mironov, visited Spain in October 2009. In June-July 2009 a delegation from the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Spanish Congress of Deputies, headed by its president Josep Antoni Duran i Lleida, visited Moscow. Again, the president of the Congress of Deputies, José Bono, has invited the president of the Russian State Duma, Boris Grizlov to make an official visit to Spain.

A parliamentary group on Relations with the Russian Federation has been set up in the Russian State Duma, headed by Andrei Makarov, who is presently the deputy chairman of the Committee for Budget and Tax Policy. In the Congress of Deputies, a Group of Parliamentary Friendship with the Russian Federation has also been formed, this being headed by Jordi Jané (CiU – the Catalan coalition Convergència i Unió) with Celia Villalobos (PP – the national conservative party Partido Popular) as vice-president.

Celebration of the "Spain in the Russian Federation Year" and the "Russian Federation in Spain Year"

The holding in 2011 of the “Year of Spain” in the Russian Federation and the “Year of the Russian Federation” in Spain was decided at the meeting in Yaroslavl in September 2009 between Prime Minister Zapatero and President Medvedev. The “Year” will constitute a major boost to activities in the economic, cultural, educational, scientific and mass media domains in both countries.

In the Russian Federation, the Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Zhukov has been put in charge of the “Year” while, in Spain, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation will be responsible for its organisation. Both men will preside over the respective organising committees. Mikhail Shvedkov, President Medvedev’s representative on cultural and humanitarian matters, has been designated as the general coordinator for the Russian Federation and his Spanish counterpart will be the ambassador Juan José Herrera.21 The events of the “Year of Spain” in the Russian Federation will not only be held in Moscow and St Petersburg but also in other major cities such as Kazan, Novosibirsk, Yekaterinburg, Sochi, Vladivostok and Irkustk, thus giving a wide-ranging territorial dimension to the presentation of Spain in the Russian Federation.

Among the sectors of particular interest for Spain in this “Year” are those of energy, infrastructure (including urban infrastructure), architecture, transport, tourism, decoration and fashion, music and the plastic arts. In 2011 Spain will be the guest country at the St Petersburgh International Economic Forum, which will probably be attended by the Spanish Prime
Minister. A Spanish-Russian Business Forum might well be established under the auspices of this event. In addition, the Russian Federation could be the guest country at a number of fairs and exhibitions to be held in Spain, for example the ARCO International Contemporary Art Fair. The project of establishing in Barcelona a Russian centre to be called “Casa Rusia” is well advanced. This project has the backing of the Barcelona City Council.

The Bolshoi Theatre of Moscow – whose traditional, now-refurbished headquarters are to be opened in autumn 2011 – may offer a top-of-the-line performance by a Spanish group or singer at the end of the same year. The Patronato de la Alhambra (Alhambra Trust) and the Junta de Andalucía (Autonomous Government of Andalusia) are negotiating with the Pushkin and Hermitage museums in order to obtain the ceding of several works by Matisse for an exhibition to be held in Granada between 2010 and 2011 and, in return, notable Spanish baroque works will be ceded for an exhibition in the St Petersburg Museum. The Prado Museum and the Hermitage are discussing the possibility of holding exhibitions of their respective collections in 2011 while exchanges with the Pushkin Museum in Moscow are also envisaged. The organisers of the Kandinsky Prizes, the most prestigious awards for the plastic arts in the Russian Federation, are studying the possibility of Madrid being the venue of the award-giving ceremony.

**Civil society forum**

The Spanish-Russian Civil Society Forum was constituted in September 2007 on the occasion of the visit to Sochi by the Spanish Prime Minister. This was also the occasion for the signing of the constitutive document of the Forum by its co-presidents, Álvaro Gil-Robles for Spain and Igor Ivanov (former Minister for Foreign Affairs) for Russia. Again, the Spanish-Russian Federation Council Foundation has been established with the participation of such prominent enterprises as BBVA (Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria), BSCH (Banco Santander Central Hispano), FCC (Fomento de Construcciones y Contratas), Repsol, Iberdrola, Indra, Uralita and Técnicas Reunidas. The functions of the Forum Secretariat are to be carried out, on the Spanish side, by the International Affairs and Foreign Policy Institute (INCIPE).

The Forum, presided over by Igor Ivanov (former Minister for Foreign Affairs) representing the Russian Federation and Álvaro Gil-Robles for Spain held its first meeting on 2 March 2009, this coinciding the President Medvedev’s State Visit to Spain. The meeting, the closing ceremony of which was presided over by President Medvedev and Prime Minister Zapatero, was organised around three panels: Economics (“Business Development”), Mass Media, and Culture.

To conclude, the Russian Federation and Spain are at the two extremes of Europe. Their relations throughout history have been intermittent but also very intense, with powerful emotional content at certain times. At present, the generally cultured Russian people have quite good knowledge of Spanish culture and enjoy visiting Spain, where many have acquired properties. Spanish people are not so well informed about the Russian Federation, its history and its culture. Ideas in Spain about the country are sometimes warped by stereotypes – mainly encouraged by the mass media – that are overly negative. Fortunately, however, more and more Spaniards are visiting Russia and have the opportunity to learn about its history, its culture, and its processes of change and modernisation.

From the political standpoint, relations between the two countries are now excellent. There are frequent high-level contacts and considerable agreement on the significant issues on the international agenda. Spain is clearly in favour of an increasingly substantial approximation between the Russian Federation and the European Union, not only because it considers that the Russian Federation is an integral part of Europe but also because each party needs the other and will continue being indispensable partners in every sphere, from trade and energy through to homeland and international security.

The matter still pending as far as Spain is concerned is that of bringing more content to its relations with the Russian Federation, not only in the economic domain but also in the scientific, technical and cultural spheres. Spanish companies must show more determination to enter the Russian market which, in the coming ten or twenty years, will continue to be one of the most dynamic and interesting of all. The holding of the “Year of Spain” in the Russian Federation and the “Year of the Russian Federation” in Spain in 2011 should serve as the incentive for closer approximation between the two peoples.

**Notes**

1. In the case of Moscow, there were many enemies: to the west lay the Catholic kingdom of Lithuania and Poland, along with the Teutonic knights; to the southeast were the vestiges of the Golden Horde and the Khanates of Crimea, Siberia, Astrakhan and Kazan; in the southwest was the Ottoman Empire; and, to the north, the kingdoms of Sweden and Denmark.

2. See James H. Billington, 1970, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture*, Vintage Books, pp. 70-72. Billington recalls how, in 1492, the archbishop of Novgorad wrote to the head bishop in
Moscow, expressing his admiration for King Ferdinand of Spain: “Look at the resolve with which the King of Spain cleansed ("ochisti") his land”. Billington states that the Russian fascination for the Spanish Inquisition begins here, along with the use of the word “cleansing” ("chista") to allude to ideological purges. The famous chapter in Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov on the “Grand Inquisitor” is set in Seville.

3. To paraphrase Orlando Figes, “these Russian officers who had proceeded as far as Paris in the hope that Russia would become a modern European state had dreamed of a Constitution in which all the Russian peasants would have the same rights as any other citizen. Yet they were to be disappointed by a Russia in which the peasants continued being treated as slaves. Volkonsky wrote on his return to Russia that he felt as if he was in a prehistoric past”. (Natasha’s Dance: A Cultural History of Russia, Picador, New York, 2002).


5. Tatiana Pigariova, in her magnificent book, Autobiografía de Moscú (Moscow Autobiography) harks back to Valera’s description of Saint Basil’s Cathedral in the Red Square: “Valera compared the cathedral with a plate of vegetables: carrots, artichokes, radishes, parsley, mushrooms and asparagus, which might seem rather petty when he’s speaking of a great cathedral but he reflects the relationship of Russian architecture with the natural world” (Autobiografía de Moscú, Editorial Laertes, Barcelona, 2001).


7. This opera by Verdi is based on the work Don Álvaro o la fuerza del Sino (Don Álvaro or the Force of Destiny) by Ángel de Saavedra, Duke of Rivas. It was commissioned by the Mariinsky Theatre (then the Imperial theatre) of St Petersburg and premiered, in the presence of Verdi, in 1862.


9. The information that follows has mainly been obtained from the work of the Russian diplomat Mikhail Rassiski, which is partly based on Volumes I and II of the Spanish-Russian Corpus Diplomático.

10. On the occasion of President Putin’s visit to Spain the following agreements were signed: Agreement of Cooperation in Matters Related to Tourism; Agreement of Cooperation in the Exploration and Peaceful Use of Outer Space; Memorandum of Cooperation in Matters Related to Sport; Joint Declaration of Cooperation in Food Agriculture and Fisheries; Agreement of Cooperation in the Struggle Against Drug Trafficking; Non-

mandatory Agreement between the Ministries of Justice of the Russian Federation and Spain.

11. The Strategic Alliance provides for broad cooperation in the following fields: political coordination in bilateral, multilateral and international matters of mutual interest; fostering bilateral economic and trading exchanges, business contacts and promotion of reciprocal investment; cooperation in the domain of defence by means of agreements worked on by the Defence Ministries of both countries and collaboration between their respective Armed Forces; scientific and technical cooperation in bilateral and multilateral domains; collaboration in the educational field through teaching and study of the respective languages and cultures, and through relations between universities and other educational institutions of the two countries; collaboration in the cultural sphere through governmental organisms and private institutions of both countries; cooperation in the struggle against terrorism, organised delinquency, illegal drug trafficking, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other challenges of a global nature; cooperation in the promotion of dialogue and understanding between cultures and civilisations.

12. On the occasion of this State Visit, a series of sector-based agreements were also signed: Programme of Joint Actions 2009 – 2010 under the auspices of the Agreement of Cooperation in Matters Related to Tourism; a Memorandum on Matters Relating to Energy (a bilateral Working Group on Energy has been set up under the auspices of the Joint Economic Commission); and a Protocol on Cooperation between ADIF [Administrator of Railway Infrastructures], RENFE [Spanish National Railway Company] and RzhD [Railway Company of the Russian Federation]. Also signed were several agreements between Russian and Spanish enterprises: Agreement between the Compañía Española de Seguros de Crédito a la Exportación (CESCE – Spanish Export Credit Insurance Company) and the Russian Federation’s Economic Development Bank (Vneshekonombank); the Gas Natural-Gazprom Agreement; the Iberdrola-Inter RAO UES Agreement; the Danobat-TransmashHolding Agreement; and the Informa-Interfax Agreement.

13. The common external tariff of the Customs Union came into force on 1 January 2010 and envisages the application of a unified customs code on 1 July 2010. The creation of a joint economic space is envisaged for the medium term, in 2012, although it is unlikely that this goal will be achieved in so little time.

14. In 2009 some protectionist measures were adopted to support industrial sectors in crisis, so that increased tariffs were imposed on imports of automobiles, car industry components, farm machinery and construction materials. These measures violate agreements reached
with the EU and jeopardise the declared aim of joining the WTO.

15. In 2009, thanks to the economic crisis, the inflow of Russian tourists to Spain dropped by 18.92%.

16. This took effect on 10 March 2009 (BOE Nº 86, dated 8 April 2009).

17. In the last academic year the Cervantes Institute centre in Moscow has been engaged in new working relations with institutions mainly in the domain of music (the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, the Moscow Conservatory and Radio ORFEO) as well as joining with local organisations in planning events in the fields of literature, theatre, the plastic arts and film.

18. This Conference will be structured around three themes: language education; university cooperation for the mobility of teachers and students; and research, technological development, innovation and intellectual property. It should be pointed out that the Russian Federation already enjoys good relations in the university milieu with some Latin American countries, namely Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Chile and Cuba.

19. The Agreement will give bilateral legal cover to Spain and the Russian Federation in issues pertaining to the adoption of minors until such time as the Russian Federation becomes a signatory to the Hague Adoption Convention. In recent years the Russian Federation has become one of the countries most favoured by Spanish families seeking to adopt children, so that it is second on the list of countries of origin of minors adopted in Spain (901 cases finalised in 2008), immediately after China. Again, there is the commendable initiative of Spanish families that take in children from Russian orphanages during holiday periods.

20. Among the representatives on the Spanish Organising Committee, besides the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, are the Prime Minister’s Office and the ministries of Culture, Education, Defence, Industry, Tourism and Trade, Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs (MARM), Equality, and Science and Innovation. There will also be a significant representation of the Autonomous Communities so as to give a complete territorial dimension to the “Year”, along with such enterprises and organisations as Foro Hispano-Ruso de la Sociedad Civil (Spanish-Russian Civil Society Forum) and a number of think tanks (Elcano, CIDOB, etc.). Also represented are the Instituto Español de Comercio Exterior (ICEX – Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade), Sociedad Estatal para la Acción Cultural Exterior (SEACEX – State Society for Cultural Action Abroad), Barcelona Meeting Point, Cervantes Institute, Confederación Empresarial de Madrid (CEIM – Madrid Business Confederation), Consejo Superior de Cámaras de Comercio (Council of Chambers of Commerce), Asociación de Mujeres Empresarias de Madrid (ASEME – Association of Businesswomen of Madrid) and Radio Televisión Española (RTVE – Spanish Radio and Television). The Russian Committee includes the Ministries of Finance, Culture and Mass Communication, Education and Science, Sports, Tourism and Youth, and Regional Development, along with other organisations such as the Academy of Sciences, Roskosmos and several television channels, news agencies and the Hermitage, Pushkin and Tretyakov museums, inter alia.

Bibliographical references


GARRIDO CABALLERO, María Magdalena, 2006, Las relaciones entre España y la Unión Soviética a través de las Asociaciones de Amistad en el siglo XX (Relations between Spain and the Soviet Union through Friendship Associations in the Twentieth Century), doctoral thesis, University of Murcia, September.

– “La empresa española en Brasil y Rusia: oportunidades similares, ritmos diferentes” (The Spanish Enterprise in Brazil and Russia: Similar Opportunities, Different Paces), Ediciones Círculo de Empresarios, December 2006.


SÁNCHEZ ANDRÉS, Antonio, 2006, “Las relaciones económicas entre España y Rusia” (Economic Relations between Spain and Russia), Madrid, Real Instituto Elcano, ARI Nº 4/2006, 17 January 2006. (This paper deals with economic relations in the period of Putin’s presidency).
— “Tendencias recientes del comercio de Rusia con España” (Recent Trends in Russia’s Trade with Spain), in BICE 2.920, 1-15 September 2007.

SHAPOVALOVA, Natalia, 2010, “¿Tiene España una Ostpolitik?” (Does Spain have an Ostpolitik?), Madrid, Fundación FRIDE, Policy Brief No 27, January.


TULAYEV, Pavel, 2007, Las Raíces de las Relaciones entre Rusia y España (The Origins of Relations between Russia and Spain), Moscow State Linguistic University.

YAKOVLEV, Petr (coordinator), 2009, “Rusia y España en los tiempos de turbulencia” (Russia and Spain in Times of Upheaval), Actas del VII simposio ruso-español Rusia y España en los principios del siglo XXI: las nuevas fronteras (Proceedings of the Seventh Russian-Spanish Symposium on Russia and Spain at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century), Moscow, Latin American Institute.