



August 23, 2014 Saturday 12:01 AM GMT

Nonfiction in short: The **Last Stalinist**

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SECTION: NON-FICTION

LENGTH: 631 words

The **Last Stalinist**: The Life of Santiago Carrillo by Paul Preston

Like many politicians, the personal character and political career of Santiago Carrillo, leader of the Spanish Communist party from 1934 to 1960, was driven by contradictions that gratify equally the idolatry of his admirers and the odium of his detractors. Preston, a distinguished historian of 20th-century Spain, presents him as the most consistent left-wing enemy of Franco and, from 1976 until his death in 2012, as a popular supporter of Spanish democracy. In this study of Carrillo's political career (he seems to have had little or no personal life), the man's prolific, self-serving, revisionist memoirs are contrasted with the very different accounts of his contemporaries. Though he behaved bravely during the attempted coup of 1981, Carrillo is given short shrift in this merciless biography as an exemplar of moral virtue. His priority, Preston says, was always his own eminence. On that altar of ambition, all truth, decency, friends and allies were sacrificed. The **Last Stalinist**: The Life of Santiago Carrillo by Paul Preston, William Collins, 432pp, £30; ebook £19.99. To buy this book for £24, visit thetimes.co.uk/bookshop or call 0845 2712134