THE SOVIET UNION AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

by

David L. Brumbaugh

Thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in History

APPROVED:

------------------
Michael von Herzen, Chairman

------------------
Max Kele

------------------
Thomas Adriance

July, 1977

Blacksburg, Virginia
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .............................................. 1.

I DIPLOMACY, JULY-AUGUST, 1936 ......................... 6.

II THE NON-INTERVENTION COMMITTEE,
   SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER, 1936 ......................... 22.

III SOVIET MILITARY INTERVENTION
   IN SPAIN ............................................. 34.

IV THE COMINTERN ......................................... 45.

V SOVIET POLITICAL INTERVENTION
   IN SPAIN ............................................. 53.

CONCLUSION: THE SOVIET UNION AND
   THE PURGE OF THE CATALAN LEFT ................... 70.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................. 80.
INTRODUCTION

The starting point for Soviet foreign policy under Stalin, to a greater degree than for either his predecessor, Lenin, or his opponent Trotsky, was the conviction that the protection of the Soviet Union was paramount. Neither Lenin nor Trotsky were averse to the occasional subjugation of the national interests of the Soviet Union to those of world revolution. For Stalin, however, such a sacrifice was unthinkable. 1 Stalin first enunciated an emphasis on Soviet national interest during his bitter struggle with Trotsky in the nineteen twenties. Stalin opposed his program "Socialism in One Country" to Trotsky's more internationalist stance. Stalin condemned "revolutionary adventurism" in favor of a more cautious attitude towards world revolution. When conditions for a revolutionary action in a foreign country were extremely favorable, revolution would be pursued. In general, however, the resources of the Soviet Union and also of World Communism would be directed towards the defense of the homeland. 2

Stalin's conduct of foreign policy from 1934 to 1939 reflected his emphasis on the defense of the Soviet Union. The rise of aggressive Fascist powers in Germany and

---


2 Ibid., p. 128.
Italy, along with the actions of Japan in the Far East presented tangible threats against which the U.S.S.R. had to be protected. Indeed, by 1935 Communist doctrine predicted the coming of a great war between the Fascist powers and the anti-Fascist forces at the center of which stood the Soviet Union. Germany constituted a particularly serious threat in the eyes of the U.S.S.R. To prevent the isolation of the Soviet Union in the face of the Fascist states, Stalin sought during the 1930's to prevent the further spread of Fascism and to develop closer ties to the Western democracies of Great Britain and France. During the 1930's the U.S.S.R. therefore signed a mutual defense treaty with France and entered the League of Nations. The U.S.S.R. also adopted for the Comintern the use of the Popular Front policy which had been devised by the parties of the Left in France. By this plan, Communist parties were to coalesce with other parties of the Left. The object of the Popular Front policy was to use the unity of the Left to prevent the victory of Fascism in any further nations.

Such was the context of Soviet foreign policy when the Spanish Civil War erupted in July, 1936. On the eve of the Civil War, Spain's form of government was a republic, which

---

had been proclaimed in 1931 after the peaceful deposal of the Spanish monarchy. Until the Spring of 1936, however, the conservative social elements which had been the principal pillars of the monarchy still retained enormous powers. Made up of the Church, the military and the large landholders, the conservative establishment was successful in blocking any meaningful reforms generated by the moderate republicans or the parties of the Left. However, in February, 1936, a Popular Front coalition of Left Republicans and Socialists was swept into power. While they received no cabinet posts, both the Spanish Anarchists and the Spanish Communist Party supported the Popular Front.

Alarmed at the prospects of government by such a leftist and moderate coalition, the majority of the Spanish officer corps revolted against the Republic. The revolt began in Spanish Morocco and spread to the major peninsular cities. While workers defeated the revolt in Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia, the rebel officers gained control of Spanish Africa and Seville. What began as a generals' pronunciamento developed into a civil war. The old supporters of the monarchy generally favored the rebels. In addition, the Falange Espanola, an organization with great similarity to Fascism and National Socialism, supported the rebellion. Left Republicans and virtually all the parties of the Left supported the Republic. Since the rebels were
backed by the upper class, and the Republic was defended by the majority of the working classes, the conflict was to some extent a class war. In addition, when the rebels began to receive assistance from Germany and Italy, the war assumed an importance for all of Europe.

It is the purpose of this thesis to analyze the policies behind Soviet intervention in the Spanish Civil War and to examine the manner in which the general Soviet foreign policy goals of stopping the spread of Fascism and seeking closer relations with France and Great Britain were applied to the Spanish situation. The scope of the thesis, with one exception, will be limited to the first six months of the war, for by the end of 1936, the general character of Soviet involvement in Spain had been defined. The implications of the Catalonian crisis of May, 1937, however, were great. The discussion of Soviet political actions in Spain will therefore be extended to cover the Spring of 1937.

The Spanish Civil War, of course, had tremendous importance as a preliminary bout to the full scale fight that was World War II. It is therefore hoped that this thesis will provide some insight to the Soviet Union's foreign policy considerations in the critical years of the late nineteen thirties. Second, Soviet involvement in Spain is also important as the only major venture
The nature of Soviet involvement in Spain is therefore important as it afforded countless Europeans a rare glimpse into the nature of Soviet policy and methods. Finally, the Spanish Civil War is illustrative of Stalin's strengths and weaknesses as a maker of foreign policy.
CHAPTER I
DIPLOMACY, JULY-AUGUST, 1936

An examination of Soviet foreign policy on the eve of the Spanish Civil War reveals two principal goals. The Soviet Union desired to stop the spread of Fascism through the Comintern's support of Popular Fronts and at the same time wished to establish closer ties with the Western democracies. It is also apparent that these two aspects of Soviet policy were applied to Spain from the very outset of the war. In keeping with the U.S.S.R.'s anti-Fascist Popular Front policy, the Soviet press and organs of the Communist International immediately voiced strong support of the Spanish Popular Front government. At the same time, fund raising drives were conducted within the Soviet Union on behalf of the Loyalist cause. These campaigns, however, were unofficial and were not endorsed by the government of the Soviet Union, in all likelihood out of deference to the second facet of Soviet policy -- the maintenance of good relations with France and Great Britain. No doubt the U.S.S.R. recognized that the nation with the most direct interests in Spain was France, and Stalin apparently wanted to make not foolhardy moves in the Iberian peninsula that would damage his relations with the Blum government. The Soviet Union thus deferred to France by remaining officially silent while French policy towards Spain was being formu-
lated. Nonetheless, there was every indication that the two goals of the Soviet Union could be pursued in harmony, since French policy promised to develop in a manner favorable to Republican Spain.

The evidence indicates that from the first days of the war, the Soviet Union saw the Spanish conflict as an attempt by Fascism to spread its influence to the Iberian peninsula. Since the Popular Front policy had been adopted to combat just this type of Fascist or proto-Fascist threat, and since the endangered Spanish government had been in the hands of a Popular Front since the elections of February, 1936, Spain was an important test of the Popular Front policy. With these considerations evidently in mind, the Soviet press and organs of the Communist International expressed strong support of the Loyalist government. The International Press Correspondance, a paper published weekly by the Comintern, stated as early as July 25 that "Fascism has commenced the fight against the People's Front: it will be a decisive fight." On July 30, Izvestiia stated:

Further welding of all democratic anti-Fascist forces in the People's Front, resolute struggle for the disarmament of the counterrevolution, the performance of the ripe and solution demanding tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution,

---

these are the fundamental guarantees of the victory of Spanish democracy over Fascism.5

The People's Front, however, was designed to unite anti-Fascists against pressure from an internal Fascist movement. The involvement in Spain of one or more foreign Fascist states would jeopardize Izvestia's "fundamental guarantees of victory." Evidence of this sort of involvement was presented in a categorical fashion when on July 30 three Italian bombers en route to assist Franco in transporting his troops from Africa to the peninsula made forced landings in French Morocco due to mechanical problems. The logbooks of the aircraft indicated Italian complicity from the beginning of the revolt, as the planes had been dispatched to Africa on July 15, two days before the rising began.6 Soviet agents in the ports of both Germany and Italy also relayed information to Moscow that foreign supplies were being dispatched to the rebels.7


Statements by the Soviet press reflected the evidence of German and Italian intervention in Spain. On August 8, Karl Radek wrote:

Exploiting the fear of revolution by the ruling classes of the world, the Germans and Italian Fascists are preparing to intervene against the Spanish revolution in order to place into their hands the important trump cards for the preparation of a world war and a new territorial distribution of the world.\(^8\)

It can thus be seen that the Communist press recognized two ways in which the Spanish situation threatened the anti-Fascist goal of Soviet policy. Not only was the Republic threatened by a suspiciously Fascist-oriented insurrection, but Germany and Italy, two foreign Fascist powers, were involved as well.

During the first week of August, in keeping with the anti-Fascist goal of Russian foreign policy, the Soviet press began to publish entire pages of speeches concerning Spain and pledges of solidarity with the Spanish people by Soviet factory workers, collective farmers and scholars. Mass demonstrations were held throughout the country. Pravda reported a meeting of 120,000 in Moscow's Red Square and another of 100,000 people in Leningrad.\(^9\)

\(^8\)Inprecorr, August 8, 1936.

demonstrations were organized by the Soviet trade unions, which, in addition to expressing solidarity with the Spanish workers and the Republic, solicited donations for the Spanish cause. N. Shvernik, Secretary of the All-Union Council of Trade Unions, stated, "The All-Union Central and the Moscow Regional Councils of Trade Unions call upon the workers and people of the Soviet Union to give material aid to the Spanish fighters, who, with guns in their hands, are defending the Spanish republic."\(^{10}\) By August 7, Secretary Shvernik announced that 12,145,000 rubles had been collected for the Defence of the Spanish People fund.\(^{11}\)

A parallel drive was launched in Western Europe by the Communist International. The Comintern sought as much as possible to maintain a low profile behind the various relief organizations that it set up. The British Communist J. R. Campbell, for example, in an article entitled "The Movement in Great Britain in Support of the Fight of the Spanish People" pointed out that well-known non-Communist personalities had formed a relief committee for Spain.\(^{12}\)

\(^{10}\)Quoted in David Cattell, Soviet Diplomacy in the Spanish Civil War (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1957), p. 5. Hereafter cited as Cattell, Soviet Diplomacy.

\(^{11}\)The Times of London, August 8, 1936. While overtly unofficial, such fund raising drives would have been impossible, of course, without the actual sponsorship of the Soviet government.

\(^{12}\)Inprecorr, August 1, 1936.
Numerous committees, with innocuous, non-Communist sounding names were organized by the Comintern. The German Communist Willi Muzenberg organized the "Committee for the War Relief of Republican Spain" which operated principally in Britain.\(^{13}\) Another such organization, the Comité International d'Aide au Peuple Espagnol, functioned in France.\(^{14}\)

While the fund raising drives in the Soviet Union and Europe were evidently in response to the anti-Fascist concerns of Soviet policy, it can be surmised that the unofficial nature of the drives resulted from the desire of the Soviet Union for closer relations with France. The drives in the U.S.S.R. were organized under the auspices of the trade unions, not the government. The Soviet government wished, clearly, to keep the pretense of neutrality towards Spain. Indeed, the U.S.S.R. vehemently denied Italian charges of Soviet military involvement in the conflict.

The Italian press has readily taken up the stupid yarn fabricated by the Spanish rebel, General Franco. With his hands smeared with the blood of the Spanish toilers, this adventurer stated in writing that a Soviet ship had joined the Spanish Republican fleet which is operating against the rebels. What sort of ship specifically was it that was sent from the far away U.S.S.R. to take part in the firing upon the fortifications on the

---


coast of Morocco seized by the blackguards of General Franco? Was it a liner, a destroyer or perhaps a submarine? Nothing of the kind. It appears that the U.S.S.R. could find nothing better for the naval operations off the coast of Spanish Morocco than an oil tanker.  

When the official neutrality of the Soviet government is coupled with the apparent efforts by the Comintern to dissociate their European drives from the image of international Communism, it becomes apparent that the U.S.S.R., despite its anti-Fascism, was treading softly in Spain.

It is apparent that Stalin realized that the nation with the most direct interest in Spain was France, and any initiative from a non-Fascist government would logically come first from France. Not only were Spain and France geographically linked, but they also had politically similarities, for a Popular Front akin to that in Spain controlled the French government. The Spanish Republic itself hoped for French support on just this ground, for on July 20, at the very outset of the rebellion, the Spanish Prime Minister Giral had wired his French counterpart Leon Blum with an appeal for assistance. Evidence of Soviet recognition of the primacy of French interests was furnished by Pravda. "It is absolutely essential to submit to serious study the possible consequences of the Spanish events for

\[15\text{Quoted in Cattell, Soviet Diplomacy, p. 7.}\]
the future, for the independence and for the security of France."\(^\text{16}\) It is apparent during the initial weeks of the Spanish war that the Soviet Union deferred to France while the Blum government formulated its Spanish policy. In fact, when the similarities of the French and Spanish governments along with strategic factors are considered, (and it is also called to mind that Blum's own first instinct was to answer Spain's call for help\(^\text{17}\)) it would not be risking too much to state that Stalin expected France to provide assistance to Republican Spain. There was every promise, therefore, that both the anti-Fascist aspect of Soviet foreign policy and Russian concern for ties with the democracies could be conducted in harmony.

French policy, however, developed in a way that was less favorable to Republican Spain than the Soviet Union either hoped or expected. Giral's telegram to Blum on the night of July 20 met with a response that was favorable. Blum and certain members of his cabinet were inclined to deliver at least some measure of assistance to the Spanish Republic. On July 22, however, Blum traveled to London and met with British officials who evidently expressed concern over the possible spread of the Spanish conflict. The

\(^\text{16}\)Quoted in Ibid., p. 6.

British pressured Blum to remain detached from the Spanish vortex.\textsuperscript{18} Blum was acutely sensitive to such pressure, for much of the burden of the French defense system rested on the British alliance. Added to British views on the matter was the uproar created by the powerful French right-wing, when its press leaked information concerning Blum's initial plans of assistance for Spain.\textsuperscript{19} What resolve Blum had had faded under British and domestic pressure, and on July 25, the French cabinet decided not to intervene in the Spanish conflict.\textsuperscript{20} France, however, was not willing to relinquish the initiative regarding Spain altogether. It also was reluctant to allow Italy and Germany to intervene in Spain without making at least nominal moves to halt them.

On August 4, the French government approached Germany with the suggestion that the Reich join France in renouncing intervention in Spain. The German government agreed to the idea in principle. Similar notes followed to Italy, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia and Poland. On August 5, the French charge in Moscow called on Foreign Commissar Maxim Litvinov and

\textldots informed him that the French Government considers it highly desirable that the Soviet Union accent the principle of non-intervention in internal Spanish affairs, and participate in an agreement

\begin{footnotes}
\item[18]\textit{Jackson, The Spanish Republic}, p. 251.
\item[19]\textit{Ibid.}, p. 251.
\item[20]\textit{Cattell, Soviet Diplomacy}, p. 12.
\end{footnotes}
with France, Great Britain, Germany, and Italy on this principle.\textsuperscript{21}

The evidence indicates that the French Non-Intervention idea brought about discord between the two goals of Soviet foreign policy. During the month of August, Soviet behavior during the course of the negotiations on Non-Intervention is marked by a reluctance to subscribe to the French policy, a hesitancy born of the conflict between the two policy goals of the U.S.S.R. The Soviet Union expressed doubts about the probable efficacy of Non-Intervention which appear to have centered upon a distrust of German and Italian intentions, and it delayed until August 24 its formal adherence to the accord. Nonetheless, there was every indication during this period of time that if foreign aid were not supplied to the Spanish rebels, anti-Fascism would triumph in Spain without foreign assistance to the Loyalists.\textsuperscript{22}

The Soviet Union was therefore able to maintain a fragile harmony between its ties with France and its anti-Fascism, despite the unexpected turn of French policy. Thus, on


Thus, on August 24, 1936, the U.S.S.R. finally succumbed to French pressure and formally subscribed to Non-Intervention.

Evidence of the discord that the French Non-Intervention proposal caused between the two facets of Soviet policy can be found in the Soviet response to the initial French approach on August 5. Apparently eager to please its ally, the Soviet Union agreed to Non-Intervention on the same date, but at the same time it added two reservations. First, it stipulated that Portugal become a party to the agreement, and second -- and this is the key to the Soviet dilemma -- it held that aid being furnished to the Spanish rebels first come to a halt. The Soviet Union, in other words, would agree to Non-Intervention only when Germany and Italy had complied sincerely. Thus, while the desire for close relations with France led to the agreement to Non-Intervention in principal, its anti-Fascist concerns gave rise to the Soviet reservations.

Italy and Germany, for their part, did little that would allay the Soviet reservations. In their responses to the French proposal, they also refused to agree in anything but the principle of the French idea. At the same time the nature of their reservations, which were conveyed to Moscow, could not but have added to the pressure felt

23Ibid., p. 139.
24Ibid., pp. 160-61.
by the Soviets to agree to Non-Intervention. The Soviet Union, on August 9, delivered a reply to the French charge, which, like its response to the initial French proposal, contained a reservation. The U.S.S.R. suggested that the preamble to the declaration be dropped, because if such a general statement were included the Soviet government would feel compelled to insist on an observation that the Republic was the only legitimate government of Spain. The Soviet Union realized that such a change would make adherence by Germany and Italy impossible.25 The U.S.S.R. was apparently still waiting for a German or Italian move and was stalling. In reply, on August 12, France pointed out that the Soviet Union could add such general observations to its statement of formal adherence to Non-Intervention without insisting that other powers do likewise. The French reply then assumed a note of impatience, adding pressure on the U.S.S.R. to agree to Non-Intervention for the sake of Franco-Soviet relations. Any reservations by the Soviet government were bound to "furnish a pretext to governments like the Italian, which would wish to modify the basis of our propositions in order to raise new difficulties."26

But Germany and Italy, by August 12, had yet to reply

25Ibid., p. 163.
26Ibid., p. 193.
to the draft text submitted on August 6. The Soviet Union, caught in a dilemma between its anti-Fascist concern over the intentions of Germany and Italy on the one hand, and its regard for France on the other, continued to hesitate.27

Finally, on August 17, Germany broke the logjam by agreeing to the French text upon the condition that the Spanish Republic release a German aircraft that it had captured. When coupled with the French diplomatic pressure, this was enough to convince the Soviet Union to drop its reservations and adhere to Non-Intervention. On August 23 the U.S.S.R. and France exchanged notes in which each country promised to ban the sale or shipment of war materials to Spain.28 On August 30, Tass announced the formal agreement of the Soviet Union to Non-Intervention.

In connection with the coming into force of the notes exchanged between the U.S.S.R. and France on non-interference in Spanish affairs, the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade has issued an order prohibiting from August 28, 1936, the export, re-export and transit to Spain, Spanish possessions and Spanish Morocco of all kinds of arms, munitions and war materials, aircraft assembled and in parts as well as warships.29

Evidently the U.S.S.R. was initially in earnest about the prohibition of aid to Spain. It even went a step

27Ibid., p. 229.
29
further than the agreement and ceased the fund-raising drives it had conducted since the beginning of August. As long as Germany and Italy did not completely disregard the Non-Intervention Agreement, the U.S.S.R. could pursue both of its principle aims in Spain. Should German and Italian assistance to the rebels continue, however, the two goals would cease to be quite so harmonious. The defeat of Fascism in Spain would in that case require at least some degree of renunciation by the U.S.S.R. of France's concept of Non-Intervention. Not only would such a move be a policy divergent from that of Russia's ally, but Soviet intervention on behalf of the Loyalist regime would undoubtably offend the anti-Communist sensibilities of many decision makers in both France and Great Britain. Thus, as long as Non-Intervention worked, it was clearly the U.S.S.R.'s best option.

Germany and Italy, however, used the Non-Intervention Committee as a camouflage device to conceal substantial military assistance to the rebels both during the period of diplomatic negotiating and after each country formally agreed to the plan. During the month of August a total of fifty German aircraft were placed at the disposal of the rebel generals. Two German freighters docked at Lisbon and unloaded war supplies, the transport of which to Spain
was arranged by Portugese Prime Minister Salazar.\footnote{Jackson, The Spanish Republic, pp. 310-311.} For Italy's part, by early September Italian deposition of military forces on the island of Majorca assumed such proportions that the largest of the Balearics was under a virtual state of occupation.\footnote{Dante Puzzo, Spain and the Great Powers (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1962), p. 126.}

The Republican military position deteriorated correspondingly. By the end of August the results of foreign assistance to the rebels were becoming apparent.\footnote{J. Alvarez del Vayo, Freedom's Battle trans. E. Brooke (New York: Hill & Wang, 1971), p. 30.} The Army of Africa was making astonishingly rapid progress towards the cities of Toledo and Madrid. The Spanish-Portugese border and western Spain fell entirely to the rebels. Severe setbacks were also received by the Republicans in the Basque provinces of the north.

Writers have disagreed over the date of the Soviet decision to intervene. General Walter Krivitsky, who as chief of Soviet military intelligence for Western Europe was in a position to know, has recorded that in the last days of August Stalin called a meeting of the Politburo and announced his decision to assist the Spanish Republic.
by supplying it arms. Others, however, have pointed to inflammatory statements made by the Soviet representatives in the Non-Intervention Committee in October and have assumed that these signalled the Soviet decision to intervene. Krivitsky's evidence is corroborated by the observations of a German spy placed in the Bosporus, who reported that the first Soviet shipments of arms passed through the straits in September. When this information is combined with the fact of Krivitsky's position in Soviet intelligence, it can be concluded that the decision to intervene was indeed made in the last days of August.

Thus, almost as soon as it agreed to Non-Intervention, the Soviet Union seemingly jeopardized its relations with France and Great Britain by deciding to sell arms to Republican Spain. But an examination of Soviet activity in the Non-Intervention Committee indicates that it continued to work for good ties with the democracies.

---

34 Krivitsky, In Stalin's Secret Service, pp. 82-83.
CHAPTER II
THE NON-INTERVENTION COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER, 1936

The fragile harmony between the Soviet Union's anti-Fascism and its regard for France had been maintained for a brief period of time within the framework of de facto Non-Intervention. The delicate balance was shattered, however, by Loyalist military reverses. For the sake of the anti-Fascist goal of its foreign policy, the Soviet Union began to supply assistance to the beleaguered Spanish Republic, thus seemingly jeopardizing its ties with France. The Soviet assistance to Spain, however, was limited and furtive, so as to minimize the threat to Franco-Soviet relations. The character of the actual Soviet intervention will be discussed in Chapter III. But the fact that the U.S.S.R., despite its intervention in Spain, still maintained its goal of drawing closer to France is also substantiated by Soviet actions in the Non-Intervention Committee, which was formed in September, 1936. An effective Non-Intervention Agreement could prevent the victory of Fascism in Spain and at the same time preserve Soviet relations with France and Great Britain. With this apparently in mind, the Soviet Union strove to transform the Non-Intervention Committee from a powerless body backed by a mere moral commitment on the part of each signatory power into an effec-
tive instrument for supervising Non-Intervention in Spain.

The task of forging a useful tool for preventing intervention in Spain out of the Non-Intervention Agreement and Committee was an arduous one. The fact that the U.S.S.R. doggedly pursued that end underlines its desire to transform the body. The Non-Intervention Agreement was not a formal treaty, and while each nation involved did establish its own laws prohibiting arms trade with Spain, the Agreement itself had none of the force of international law behind it. Indeed, it was little more than a moral commitment by the signatory powers and was not legally binding.37 In late August, France sought to give the Agreement more substantial form by suggesting the establishment of a Committee for the Application of the Agreement Regarding Non-Intervention in Spain. The Committee was to meet in London and to consist of the diplomatic representatives to Britain of each nation. During the period of its formation, the Committee appeared to be destined to be as toothless as the Non-Intervention Agreement. Before Germany would agree to participate, Britain had to promise that the Committee was

... not contemplated as an independent body which would make decisions; it was a question only of organizing loosely diplomatic repre-

37Puzzo, Spain and the Great Powers, p. 118.
sentatives of the interested powers accredited to London. The Committee was to exercise no control powers and make no majority decisions.\(^{38}\)

The French were also willing to compromise the Committee's effectiveness in order to secure German adherence. France promised the German government that, "We do not insist on the adoption of an express formula of control (of Intervention)."\(^{39}\) The Soviet Union, on the other hand, attached no conditions to its initial membership in the Committee, which began meeting on September 9.

By early October, it is apparent that the U.S.S.R. had become aware that neither Great Britain nor France would initiate any action on their own which would establish the Committee as an effective body. Virtually the entire month of September was consumed by organizational and procedural matters.\(^{40}\) Furthermore, the method devised for supervising the Agreement left much to be desired in terms of speed and effectiveness.

Putative violations of the Agreement were to be brought before the body by Committee members. The charges were then to be referred to the accused government's capital for


\(^{39}\)Quoted in Ibid., p. 57.

\(^{40}\)Ibid., p.
the purpose of obtaining a written reply. Upon the receipt of the written reply the Committee would decide whether or not a violation had occurred. This procedure was time-consuming and promised to be of dubious effectiveness in preventing violations of the Non-Intervention Agreement. In his memoirs Ivan Maisky, the Soviet representative on the Committee wrote:

The Committee's practice in the first four or five weeks of its existence showed that its bourgeois members (particularly the Great Powers) were thinking not so much of carrying out the Agreement on Non-Intervention as of sabotaging it.

Indeed, the Soviet suspicions about the effectiveness of the Committee's initial procedure were eventually borne out. The U.S.S.R. brought the first charges against Portugal on October 8, and on the same date Britain, on the behalf of the Spanish Republic, brought charges against Italy and Germany. Replies to these were not received until late October, and when the Committee finally passed upon their veracity, not one of the breaches were considered proven.

Germany and Italy, for their part, brought their own charges against the Soviet Union, which met the same fate. It can

---

41Ibid., p. 57.


43van der Esch, Prelude to War, p. 76.
be noted here that at least the Committee was ineffective in an even-handed manner.

The Soviet Union lost patience with the Committee long before November. By early October, the seriously deteriorating Loyalist military situation apparently convinced the U.S.S.R. to attempt to prod the Committee into action. Moscow had also become convinced that neither Great Britain nor France would initiate any action on their own to establish the Committee as an effective body. The Soviet Union thus set in motion a series of actions which were designed to pressure both Great Britain and France into supporting a system for maintaining tight control over the shipment of war materiel into Spain. The Soviet Union, like Germany, undoubtedly realized that the Committee would collapse without its membership, and thus pressured France and Great Britain by making implicit threats to withdraw from the Committee. But while Germany had made its initial membership contingent upon the promise of a committee with limited powers, the Soviet Union made its continued membership in the Committee dependent on the establishment of a control scheme which would increase the effectiveness of the Committee.

The first Soviet action aimed at bolstering the effectiveness of the Committee came on October 6, when the temporary Soviet representative to the body handed the British
representative and the Committee chairman, Lord Plymouth, a note which charged Portugal with breaches of the Non-Intervention Agreement. The note suggested, further, the establishment of a commission to supervise the Hispano-Portugese frontier. On the following day, in a move that was obviously linked to the control proposal, Moscow published a communique which stated that "if violations of the Non-Intervention Agreement are not immediately discontinued they, the Soviets, will consider themselves free from the obligations resulting from the Agreement." The Soviet move seems to have been designed to convince the Committee to take action on the Soviet proposal for control and was indeed taken as such by Corbin, the French representative. In fact, the evidence indicates that Corbin was at first in favor of supporting the Russian plan and suggested to the British Foreign Office that both Britain and France do so. The British, however, citing probable objections by Portugal, disagreed with Corbin. On October 9, Lord Plymouth, supported by Corbin, influenced the Committee to delay the consideration of the Soviet proposal until Portugal

44 The Times of London, Oct. 8, 1936.
45 France, Documents diplomatiques, p. 495.
46 Ibid., p. 495.
47 Ibid., p. 482.
had replied to the charges made against it.\textsuperscript{48} In accordance with the Committee's rules of procedure, the Portugese representative had dispatched the Russian charges to Lisbon, where a reply would be composed at a later date. Assuming that Portugal found the Russian control idea distasteful, the Portugese could be expected to delay their reply as long as possible. Seemingly, then, the first Soviet attempt at bolstering the Committee's effectiveness had met with failure. France had, as in the first days of the Civil War, chwon an inclination to take a measure which would help the Republic. Despite the growing gravity of the Loyalist position, however, French policy towards Spain again appears to have been determined in the British Foreign Office. The British, for their part, apparently saw no reason to jeopardize German membership in the Committee by considering a control scheme, precisely because a rebel victory seemed imminent.

But an effective Non-Intervention Agreement was the only device by which the U.S.S.R. could preserve harmony between its anti-Fascist policy and its regard for France. It was probably for this reason that the U.S.S.R. did no follow through on its threat but instead remained in the Non-Intervention Committee and once again attempted to

\textsuperscript{48}The Times of London, October 10, 1936.
pressure the Western nations into supporting a control plan. On October 23, Ivan Maisky, the Soviet Ambassador to Britain delivered a second note to Lord Plymouth. The note first mentioned the Soviet control proposal and noted that the Committee had failed to consider it:

The efforts of the representative of the Soviet Government to put a stop to the practice of violating the agreement have not found support in the committee. The last proposal of the Soviet representative in regard to control over the ports of Portugal, which is the main base of supply for the rebels, had also not found support, for to-day's sic meeting of the committee. 49

The reiteration of the control proposal was followed by a threat which seemed to promise that the Soviet Union would leave the Committee, unless it was made more effective.

In any case, the Soviet Government, unwilling to bear any longer the responsibilities for the clearly unjust situation created in regard to the legitimate Spanish Government and Spanish people, is compelled now to declare that in accordance with its statement on October 7, it cannot consider itself bound by the agreement for non-intervention to any greater extent than any of the remaining participants of the agreement. 50

While it assumed essentially the same form as the first, the second Soviet gambit proved to be more successful than that made earlier in the month. At the close of the same meeting during which the Russian note was delivered, Lord

49Ibid., October 24, 1936.
50Ibid., October 24, 1936.
Plymouth, supported by Corbin, proposed that a meeting should be held the very next day to discuss "whether, and, if so, in what respects, the Non-Intervention Agreement could be made more effective." Indeed, the following day the British advanced a control plan of their own, which while not as firm as the Russian, was nonetheless a step in their direction.

Germany, for its part, did not choose to recall its original stipulation for entering the Committee and Italy supported the idea of a control measure. In response to the control proposals, the German representative merely stated that it would be necessary to consult with his government before an opinion could be formed. Nonetheless, the activities of the Committee in October, while boding well for the minimum Soviet goal of establishing an efficacious Non-Intervention Agreement, revealed that the maximum Soviet goal of recruiting France into the ranks of active anti-Fascists was all but unattainable. For during October, even when inclined to support the Soviet Union, France had consistently followed the British lead.

---

51 Ibid., October 24, 1936.

52 While the Soviet proposal included a commission with supervisory powers, Lord Plymouth's plan envisioned a body which, while being based in Portugal, would only be empowered to investigate charges already made in London. Ibid., October 26, 1936.

53 Ibid., October 29, 1936.
31.

The Soviet Union, having convinced France and Great Britain that a control scheme should be adopted, worked closely with both countries to hammer an acceptable plan. The character of the device adopted indicates that in the process the U.S.S.R. had convinced the British and French that such a plan should have more teeth than the original British proposal. On November 13, the Committee approved a system of control which provided for both land and sea observers to patrol the Spanish frontiers and coasts, a plan which went considerably beyond the passive idea proposed by Lord Plymouth on October 23. Because the program was first forwarded to both sides of the Spanish conflict, the control system had yet to be implemented by the end of 1936. Nonetheless by the end of December it must have appeared to the Soviets that an important step had been taken in establishing an effective Non-Intervention Agreement.

In early December, however, the increased number of foreign troops on both sides of the Spanish conflict pointed up a further weakness of the original Non-Intervention Agreement, which had placed an embargo on the sale of implements of war to each side, but which did not prohibit the dispatch of volunteers to fight in the Spanish War. In his memoirs, Ivan Maisky claims that in response to this weakness it was the Soviet Union that initiated the first
move to extend the scope of the Agreement to cover volunteers by delivering a proposal to Lord Plymouth on December 4.\textsuperscript{54} Communiques issued by the Committee indicate however that it was Plymouth himself who made the first move in that direction on December 2 by suggesting the matter of volunteers should be discussed, while Maisky formally proposed the extension of the Agreement, but not until December 7. While the evidence of the communique must be considered as better than Maisky's recollections, the point that both sets of evidence make is that the Soviet Union cooperated closely with Anglo-French policy in seeking to add a further dimension of effectiveness to the Non-Intervention Committee. Once again none of the Fascist powers raised insurmountable objections, and on December 8, the Committee agreed in principle to the extension of the Agreement to cover volunteers. On the following day that information, like the control plan before it, was relayed to both the Spanish government and the rebels.\textsuperscript{55}

By the end of 1936, it appears that the Soviet Union had made considerable progress in the Non-Intervention Committee. In the first place, the Soviet Union had persuaded the Committee to take the first steps towards making

\textsuperscript{54}Maisky, Spanish Notebooks, p. 97.

\textsuperscript{55}van der Esch, Prelude to War, p. 78. The Times of London, December 10, 1936.
itself an effective body. By the end of December the Committee was, it appeared, on the threshold of instituting a control system and also set in motion a plan to increase the scope of the Agreement to include an embargo on foreign volunteers. Second, the Soviet Union had worked closely with the democracies to set the two schemes in motion. The U.S.S.R. was seemingly on the verge of reestablishing harmony between its anti-Fascist policy and its desire for close relations with Britain and France.
CHAPTER III

SOVIET MILITARY INTERVENTION IN SPAIN

During the first week of September, 1936, the concern of the Soviet Union over Fascism and the deteriorating Loyalist military situation necessitated the dispatch of Russian military assistance to Spain. Nonetheless, as the above examination of Soviet diplomacy has shown, the U.S.S.R. did not abandon the pursuit of closer ties with France and Great Britain. On the contrary, the Soviet Union continued to strive for an effective Non-Intervention Agreement, which would reestablish harmony between the two goals of Soviet foreign policy. Similarly, an examination of the scope and nature of the Soviet military presence in Spain indicates that Soviet assistance to the Republic did not contradict Soviet diplomacy, despite the fact that such assistance was in violation of the Non-Intervention Agreement. Instead, it seems to have been a necessary adjunct to Russian efforts at either drawing France into the war or constructing a workable form of Non-Intervention, for Soviet military involvement was furtive in nature and limited in scope. It can be concluded that out of deference to diplomatic efforts to win over the democracies to the Soviet way of thinking, the U.S.S.R. sought to maintain a low profile in Spain, and while its military aid was sufficient to forestall a rebel victory, it stopped short of the committment of regular
combat units of the Red Army. By thus buying time during which Soviet diplomacy could accomplish its mission, the Soviet military effort collaborated in Russia's attempt to reestablish harmony between the anti-Fascist goal of Soviet foreign policy and its regard for Great Britain, and especially France.

The first clue to the furtive nature of the Soviet military effort in Spain is furnished by the manner in which the shipment of military supplies was organized. General Walter Krivitsky, who in 1936 was chief of Soviet military intelligence in Western Europe, has left an account of the organization of Soviet aid, published upon his defection to the West. It must be considered essentially accurate, for Krivitsky was personally involved with the effort, and important parts of his account have been corroborated by other sources. According to Krivitsky, the arrangements for shipping arms to Spain were handled by the N.K.V.D. and its chief, Yagoda. That Stalin assigned the N.K.V.D. the task is significant as a preview of the secretive nature of Soviet assistance, for the N.K.V.D. was well experienced in the handling of covert operations. Furthermore, it might be inferred that Stalin wanted to keep the operation under

---

his close personal supervision, which entrusting the matter to the secret police would ensure.

On September 14, a meeting was held at the Lubianka headquarters of the N.K.V.D. in Moscow to arrange the particulars of military assistance to Spain. The conference decided to ship munitions through both Europe and the Soviet Union. The gathering of arms in Europe and their dispatch to the scene of action was supervised by Krivitsky. Details of Krivitsky's arrangements also attest to the Russian desire for secrecy. On September 21, Krivitsky and several of his top agents met in Paris to organize the effort and within ten days they had established a network of import-export firms throughout Europe. Each company was controlled by one of Krivitsky's agents, and was charged with locating any war supplies available in Europe. The firms made large purchases from Skoda in Czechoslovakia, from arms companies in France, Poland and Holland, and even bought some arms from businesses in Germany. The munitions were loaded aboard non-Soviet vessels and falsely consigned to countries in Latin America or Asia. Once at sea the ships headed for ports in Republican Spain. Part of the reason for so much secrecy in the European traffic is no doubt the fact that most countries had outlawed the shipment of arms to

57Ibid., pp. 82-83.
58Ibid., pp. 85-87.
Spain, in accordance with Non-Intervention. However, the care taken in procuring and shipping arms from Europe merely underlines the point that the U.S.S.R. was anxious to disguise its military efforts to aid Spain. It relied on its European resources as much as possible, no matter how difficult it was to do so.

The smuggling operations in Europe were carried out simultaneously with shipments from Russia itself. Here also the utmost secrecy was used so as not to implicate the Soviet government in a breach of the Non-Intervention Agreement. According to Krivitsky, Yagoda himself was in charge of the effort within the U.S.S.R. Yagoda commissioned a Captain Oulansky of the N.K.V.D. to create a neutral private firm to sell arms to Spain from the arsenals of the Red Army, thereby disassociating the arrangements as much as possible from the Soviet government.59 Most of the weapons were sent via Odessa on the Black Sea, where security was tightened.60 The first shipments from Russia passed through the Bosporus towards the end of September.61

The dispatch of military supplies to Spain was accom-

59 Ibid., pp. 84-85.


anied by the assignment of military personnel to the Iberian peninsula. Here too, the evidence indicates that a low profile was maintained to prevent damage to the Soviet Union's relations with the democracies. Once in Spain, the Soviet personnel assumed pseudonyms. The first head of the Soviet mission, Yan K. Berzin, for example, was known as Grishin. V. E. Goriev was another Soviet officer whose position was evidently chief Soviet advisor to the Madrid front. While most accounts ascribe to him an important role in the defense of the capital from rebel attacks, every attempt was made to veil his presence with secrecy. Instead, the Communists portrayed Emile Kleber as the hero of Madrid, who they publicized as a Canadian emigre. Similarly, the roles of Spanish Communist generals were empha-

63 Ibid., pp. 72-73.
64 Orlov relates how Goriev was honored on his return to the Soviet Union with the Order of Lenin for his services in Spain. Two days later Stalin ordered him to be shot. Alexander Orlov, The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes (New York: Random House, 1953), pp. 235-36. Goriev's mention in Voronov's memoir indicates that his memory has been rehabilitated.
65 Fischer, Men and Politics, p. 398.
66 Cattell, Communism, p. 130.
sized, such as those of Juan Modesto, El Campesino and Enrique Lister.67

The scope of Soviet military intervention was also limited. The evidence indicates that while the sorry condition of the Republican Army necessitated the dispatch of Soviet advisors, technicians and specialists, as well as some of the most modern military equipment, the U.S.S.R. stopped short of the commitment of regular combat units. The Soviet presence thus helped end the string of rebel victories but was not enough to carry the initiative to the Loyalist side. It can be concluded that the limitations on the scope of Soviet involvement were made out of deference to the U.S.S.R.'s relations with France and Great Britain.

The task, then, of Soviet personnel in Spain was not to fight the war for the Republicans, or to engage in actual combat, but to serve as advisors to Loyalist officers and to help mold the Republican Army into an effective fighting force. Part of this function lay in supplying tactical advice to the officers of the Spanish Army. General Goriev worked closely with the Spanish General Miaja in organizing the defense of Madrid.68

The Soviets also assisted in the reorganization and training of the Republican Army. Apparently holding up the

67 de la Mora, In Place of Splendour, p. 367.
68 Fischer, Men and Politics, p. 395.
Communist-led Fifth Regiment as a model of efficiency and discipline, the Soviets doubtless played a large part in convincing Prime Minister Largo Caballero to alter radically the army's decentralized nature. Political commissars were introduced to increase discipline. The reorganization also ended the organization of units to disband in favor of the new, centralized system.

Soviet advice was not confined to the regular army. At the beginning of the war, for example, the major portion of the Spanish fleet fell into Loyalist hands, but due to the fact that the ships' seizure involved liquidating most of its officer corps, it was largely ineffectual. According to one source, it was only through the efforts of the Soviet advisors that the Loyalist fleet began to function at all. The Soviets also organized several commando units, whose duties included crossing battle lines in nocturnal raids on such targets as bridges and power lines. Made up of young soldiers from the Republican Army and a smattering of foreigners, these units were led and supplied by the Soviets themselves. Alexander Orlov, the N.K.V.D. agent, was one

---


70Alvarez del Vayo, Freedom's Battle, p. 128.

of the chief organizers.  

But aside from this case of leading guerilla raids, the only Soviet soldiers who saw combat were airplane pilots and tank crews. On January 1, 1937, Pravda announced that seventeen pilots had been named Heroes of the Soviet Union, presumably for heroism that had occurred in Spain. The most famous Soviet airman was Y. G. Smushkevich, who was known in Spain as "Douglas." One of the pilots who had been decorated, Smushkevich was "a wonderful organizer, an expert on aeroplanes and a real ace." He became even more useful after his action in Spain, and herein lies the key to why the Soviets took part in actual air and tank combat. It is important to note that there were sufficient Spanish pilots already in the Republican air force. It can be presumed also that the Spaniards could have been taught to operate tanks. It can be concluded that Spain was used by the Soviet military not only as a laboratory in which to test equipment, but also as a training ground where future

---


75 Alvarez del Vayo, Freedom's Battle, p. 63.
leaders of the Red Army could gain experience in modern warfare. Often the Soviet tank units were altered to suit the purposes of training Red Army officers. "Thus a first or second lieutenant" according to a Loyalist tankist, "served as a lowly loader in many instances to test equipment and to get actual combat experience. Practically all the Russians in the tank service were officers or senior N.C.O.'s being groomed as future officers." 76 Thus, in addition to defeating the Spanish rebels, a secondary, more selfish goal of the Soviet Union in Spain was the training of Red Army personnel and the testing of new equipment. It should also be emphasized that this motive never assumed the same magnitude for the Soviets as it did for the German military, who destroyed entire towns in the name of military science.

The limited role of the Soviet military effort in Spain is clearly demonstrated by the effect of their actions during the siege of Madrid. Despite the fact that the Soviet presence was at its greatest on the Madrid front, Soviet assistance, while enough to blunt the rebel attack, was not enough to drive Franco's forces back. Apparently, in the opinion of Red Army strategists, Madrid was the key to Republican fortunes. It was the imminent fall of the city

which helped provoke Soviet intervention. And it was towards the Madrid front that most of the Soviet assistance was directed. The evidence is strong that it was only through the actions of the Soviet Union and its close partners, the Spanish Communist Party and the Communist International, that the Madrid front was altered from a smashing victory for the rebels in October, 1936, to a stalemate for the rest of the war. In the words of the Communist orator Dolores Ibarruri, who worked under the name La Pasionaria, "It must become a strong and inaccessible city, a model of fighting activity for the whole country, just as it is the vital center of the politics, economics and administration of the country." It was on the Madrid front that the first Soviet tanks and planes were rushed into battle. On October 29, forty Soviet tanks supported by heavy bombers attacked the rebel flanks. The arrival of Soviet assistance was used to boost the morale of the Madrileños. On November 8, in the midst of rebel general Franco's first onslaughts against the city proper, La Pasionaria took to the airwaves to exhort "Resist, because from Valencia and Catalonia, legions of fighters are coming to aid us. We have the effective aid of Russia!" The Communist general Mije told

77Ibarruri, Speeches and Articles, p. 31.
78Colodny, The Struggle for Madrid, p. 29.
79Quoted in Ibid., p. 67.
General Miaja, head of the Madrid Defense Junta, that the Communists were resolved to defend Madrid to the last -- house by house if necessary. Communists had also drawn up plans for mobilization of the entire civilian population. 80

While the Soviet Union did play an important role in molding the Republican Army into a more effective fighting unit, and while its leadership, tanks and planes did take an important part in action on the Madrid front, actual combat units of the Red Army were never sent to Spain. If Soviet fliers and tankists did participate in fighting, it was only to gain combat experience. Given the presence of corresponding aid from Germany and Italy, but in larger quantities, the Soviet presence was thus sufficient to cause a stalemate on the Madrid front, but not enough for the Republican forces to turn the tide of war completely.

80 Ibid., p. 47.
CHAPTER IV
THE COMINTERN

An examination of Soviet diplomacy has shown that Stalin would have been pleased with an effective Non-Intervention Committee. It would have restored, with regard to Spain, harmony between the two principal goals of Soviet foreign policy. Stalin would have been even more pleased if either of the democracies could have been persuaded not to stop at neutrality, but to intervene on behalf of Republican Spain, or at least sell the Republic arms. Such a move would have signified the democracies' enlistment in the ranks of anti-Fascists while at the same time guaranteeing a Loyalist victory. The Soviet Union, however, would have had difficulty attempting to convince France and Great Britain to intervene in Spain while at the same time trying to establish an effective policy of Non-Intervention. Rather than abandoning attempts at persuading the democracies to intervene in Spain, however, the evidence shows that the Soviet Union relied on its unofficial agent, the Communist International to pursue that goal.

It is apparent that Stalin felt the Comintern's overt separation from the government of the Soviet Union would prevent the agitation carried out by European Communism from jeopardizing the diplomatic activities of the Soviet government. A brief glance at the Comintern's press and
its abject devotion to Stalin would have been enough for Western analysts to discern the Comintern's complete subjugation to Soviet doctrine. Nonetheless, throughout the Spanish conflict Stalin evidenced signs of having a strange belief in the naivety of the Western powers. The mass demonstrations in Russia that took place in August, 1936, were supposedly sponsored by the trade unions, and not the government, and were designed so as not to reflect on the official Soviet attitude towards Spain. In Spain, as well, Stalin attempted to mask the presence of several thousand Soviet officers merely by using pseudonyms. Perhaps the Soviet dictator's misplaced trust in French and British gullibility was a failure on his part to realize that he could not fabricate reality in foreign affairs as he did within the Soviet Union. Whether this trust was misplaced or not the fact remains that Stalin used the Comintern, in its role as unofficial agent of the U.S.S.R., to pursue a policy divergent from the main thrust of Soviet diplomacy. The official separation between the Comintern and the Soviet Union allowed the U.S.S.R. to pursue simultaneously a maximum goal, through the Comintern, of gaining democratic support for Republican Spain, and a minimum goal, pursued through diplomacy, of forging an effective Non-Intervention Committee.

An examination of the political activities of the
Comintern leaders, of the Comintern press and of the organization's official doctrine during the Spanish Civil War indicates that the Communist International pursued the Soviet maximum goal vigorously. From the outbreak of the Civil War through the end of 1936, the press of international Communism was unceasing in its urgings of support for the Spanish Republic. In mid-August the Soviet Union was negotiating its agreement to Non-Intervention and had not yet decided to surreptitiously furnish arms to Spain. It had even gone as far as to cease the "spontaneous" demonstrations and donations of funds for Spain, and yet The International Press Correspondance denounced Non-Intervention. The weekly organ of the Comintern stated that "a 'neutrality' which results in imposing a blockade on the Spanish government in reality favors the rebels."\(^8\) During October, when the Soviet representatives were threatening to withdraw from the Non-Intervention Committee, statements in the Communist press became even more adament for assistance for Spain. "No more 'neutrality' which is slaughtering the Spanish the Spanish people!"\(^8\) reiterated Inprecorr on October 3. And in December, when the U.S.S.R. was cooperating closely with France and Great Britain to put a control plan on its feet, which would possibly establish

---

81 Inprecorr, August 8, 1936.  
82 Ibid., October 3, 1936.
an effective Non-Intervention Agreement, the Comintern press continued to call for the democracies to change their policy with regard to Spain. In recorr printed an appeal by the Leftist parties of Spain, including the Communists. "Help us! Demand weapons for the Spanish People!"²³

The appeals for assistance for Spain generally used two arguments. One tack was to point out the strategic danger which would accompany a Fascist victory in Spain. On August 8, a manifesto of the French Communist Party pointed out that "the victory of the rebels, who are acting under Hitler's orders, would compel France to keep watch over one more frontier, to weaken her power of resistance in the East and thus hasten the Hitler attack on France."²⁴ A second method was to emphasize the democratic nature of the Republican government. In December, Georgi Dimitroff, head of the Comintern, wrote that

... the cause of democracy and peace in Europe, the struggle against Fascism and war in all countries, are linked up in a thousand ways with the interests of the People's Front in Spain, whose courageous fighters have taken up arms to defend the republic, are ensuring the victory of the Spanish revolution.²⁵

The newspaper campaigns for aid to Spain were comple-

²³Ibid., December 19, 1936.

²⁴Ibid., August 8, 1936.

mented by political activities of the Comintern. It is apparent that both the British and the French Communists, however, had little hope alone of persuading the Conservative government of Britain or even Blum's Popular Front government into a more active policy on Spain. Instead the Communists in both countries seem to have attempted to enlist the support of labor groups and parties of the Left to apply added pressure. Early in September of 1936, Thorez, the leader of the French Communist Party, attempted to persuade the radical wing of the French Socialists to unite with the Communists in petitioning Blum to lift the blockade. The Socialists, however, realized that their refusal to support Blum on Non-Intervention would mean the collapse of the French Popular Front. Accordingly the left-wing Socialists rebuffed Thorez. Thorez, nonetheless, continued his campaign of pressure on Blum throughout 1936.

The British Communists met with equally little success. The Party was left out of the joint Labour conference on Spain which took place in late August, and Henry Pollitt, the British Communist leader was reduced to lashing out at decisions already taken by the Trade Unions Congress and the Labour Party. On August 28, the leaders of the Labour Party and the T.U.C. announced their support of Non-Inter-

87 Ibid., pp. 25-26.
vention. On September 5, Pollitt declared "The decision of the Joint Labour Conference on Spain in no way reflects the feeling of the mass of Labour opinion in this country. I repeat my assertion that in the present circumstances neutrality is treason." Pollitt's denunciation, however, had no effect, for on September 10 the rank and file of the Trade Unions Congress upheld their leaders' decision.

Thus, in press campaigns and by political action the Comintern sought to change the policy of Britain and France towards Spain from Non-Intervention towards one that would at least permit the selling of arms to the Republic. It may be speculated that although less desirable, the goal of an effective Non-Intervention Committee was more feasible than that of the Comintern, and therefore the thrust of official Soviet diplomacy pursued that end. But at the same time, because the Comintern had no official connections with the Soviet government, it was able to pursue a policy different than that of the official Soviet government.

Similarly, the U.S.S.R. used the Comintern as an adjunct to its military policy in Spain. Again, because it was not connected officially with the Soviet government, but was under Soviet control, the Comintern was able to funnel

---

88 Inprecorr, Sept. 5, 1936.
89 The Times of London, Sept. 11, 1936.
war materiel to Spain as well as troops at a lower risk to Russia's relations with the democracies than the Soviet was able to. A Comintern smuggling network in Europe supplemented arms that the Soviet Union shipped to Spain directly from its Black Sea ports, shipments which were limited by the Russian desire for discretion. At the same time, also out of a desire to minimize its presence in Spain, the Soviet Union never committed regular combat units of the Red Army. The Comintern, however, was able to do so in the form of the International Brigades. Communist recruited and heavily Communist in membership, the Brigades were held in tight control by the Comintern and were able to supply the Republic with the well-trained and disciplined shock troops which it lacked.

As has been discussed above, General Walter Krivitsky was assigned to create a European network of import-export firms which would buy arms and smuggle them to Spain. According to Krivitsky he relied heavily on the resources of the Comintern. The French Communist Party was apparently particularly active in shipping arms to Spain. According to Jesus Hernandez, the French purchased a virtual fleet of ships in which to smuggle arms.\(^90\) The French Party was also active in smuggling by land. Louis Fischer, a quarter-

---

\(^90\) J. Hernandez, *Yo fui un ministro de Stalin*, p. 56.
master in the International Brigades, has related how the French Communists smuggled a shipment of weapons across the border concealed deep within a bale of clothes.91

The Communist International also added to the Soviet military effort in Spain by recruiting, training and managing the International Brigades. The idea for the formation of the International Brigades, interestingly enough, was the outgrowth of an apparently spontaneous action by German, Italian and Polish Communists and other leftists during the first days of the war. The leftist exiles were in Barcelona to attend a "Worker's Olympiad." They joined in the suppression of the soldier's revolt in Catalonia and subsequently formed their own small units to fight with the Republican Army.92 Only then did Stalin decide to tap the reservoirs of European solidarity with Spain and broaden the size of European units fighting in Spain already. By mid-August the Comintern, having convinced a reluctant Largo Caballero of the wisdom of having foreign troops fighting for the Republic, was conducting a recruiting campaign throughout Europe, with its headquarters in Paris.93 By February, 1937, a

91Fischer, _Men and Politics_, p. 387.
93Colodny, _The Struggle for Madrid_, p. 60.
total of 15,000 men of all nationalities had been recruited for the International Brigades. It must be emphasized that the recruitment of the Brigades was largely under the control of the Communist International. At the principal recruiting center in Paris, Italian and German Communists were directors of the recruiting effort. To ensure the political reliability of the recruits, which in the context of the Spanish War meant simple anti-Fascism, agents of the Soviet intelligence forces screened each recruit.

There has been considerable debate over the composition of the Brigades. Logic would seem to indicate that since the Communist apparatus controlled recruiting, the majority of the volunteers were either Communists or others who read the Communist press and habituated Communist rallies. But the Communists themselves sought to emphasize that the International Brigades were composed of a broad spectrum of anti-Fascists. Writing in the Communist International, F. Leone, the commander of the Garibaldi Brigade, stated that "The

---

94 Johnstone, Legions of Babel, p. 88.
95 Colodny, The Struggle for Madrid, p. 60.
96 Krivitsky, Secret Service, p. 94.
97 Verle Johnstone has advanced an argument similar to this in his Legions of Babel, p. 94.
International Brigades gathered into their units anti-Fascist fighters of all trends -- Communists and Socialists, Anarchists and Catholics, workers, peasants and intellectuals."98 Yet the same article admits that the Garibaldi battalion was overwhelmingly Communist in composition.99 It is probable that this was the case for all of the International Brigades. Nonetheless, it must be pointed out that large numbers of non-Communists volunteered for service in Spain, not out of duty to Stalin, but from sheer idealism.

And yet, for the purposes of this thesis, the matter of the composition of the Brigades is made moot to a certain extent by the fact that the Brigades were undoubtably firmly controlled by Communist officers and commissars. Of the five Brigades that were eventually formed, only one was under the command of a non-Communist for the major part of the war.100 Most of the commanders were not Russian, but rather European Communists who had fought in the Red Army. Matei Zalka, for example, who was known as Lukacz in Spain, was an Hungarian who had fought in the Russian Civil War as a cavalryman. In 1936 he was given the command of the XII


99 Ibid., p. 418.

100 Johnston, Legions of Babel, p. 84.
Brigade composed of German, French and Italian troops.101

The International Brigades were, in short, heavily Communist in composition and firmly controlled by the Comintern by way of the Brigades' officer and commissar corps. As such, the Brigades formed a kind of surrogate Red Army. The Comintern was able to instill in the Brigades a high measure of discipline and ideological zeal, which made them most efficient as shock troops fighting in the vanguard of the undisciplined and often incompetent Republican Army. In fact, such was the discipline of the International Brigades that they bolstered the effectiveness of the Republican Army merely by their example. The Brigades were thus able to fill, to some degree, a void in the Republican Army of men and discipline which the Soviet Union itself was unwilling to do directly by committing ground troops of the Red Army.

The most important area of operation for the Brigades was the Madrid front. In fact, the evidence indicates that they played a critical role there. On November 8, the first Brigade went into action just in time to bolster the Republican lines which were sagging under the impact of the rebels' first direct assaults on the city.102


102Colodny, The Struggle for Madrid, p. 66.
Again, on November 15, another fresh Brigade was rushed into combat to plug the hole left in Republican lines by the rout of an Anarchist unit.\textsuperscript{103} It seems fair to say as one knowledgable writer has, that the Brigades staved off a rebel victory, forming a human barrier behind which the Republican government, pressed on by the Communists, worked on forming a well trained army.\textsuperscript{104}

And yet, like the composition of the Brigades, there has been much debate surrounding the impact of the Internationals, particularly over the question of whether the Brigades saved Madrid. Apparently seeking to downplay the role played by Communism in Spain, the Comintern argued during the Civil War that the Brigades, while an important factor, were not crucial to the defense of Madrid. Pietro Nenni has also claimed that while the Brigades were certainly important, it was the people of Madrid that saved the city.\textsuperscript{105} Others, such as Fischer, state that the Brigades did save Madrid.\textsuperscript{106} Events such as the Brigades' halting of the Anarchist rout on November 15 tend to support that notion.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[(103)] Ibid., p. 77.
\item[(104)] Ibid., p. 58.
\item[(106)] Fischer, \textit{Men and Politics}, p. 393.
\end{footnotes}
In addition, casualty reports support the fact that the Brigades acted as shock troops, fighting in the vanguard of the Spanish Army. Of the volunteers who had arrived in Spain in November and December of 1936, a full seventy percent were dead by the Spring of 1937.\(^ {107}\)

The Comintern thus performed two principal functions for the Soviet Union during the Spanish Civil War. In the first place it attempted to persuade the Western democracies to abandon their policy of Non-Intervention. Second, the Comintern supplemented the Soviet military effort in Spain, thereby allowing the Soviet presence to assume dimensions it otherwise would not have been able to. In performing these two services for the Soviet Union, the Comintern was directly supportive of the U.S.S.R.'s anti-Fascism and also worked to preserve Russia's ties with Great Britain and France.
CHAPTER V

SOVIET POLITICAL INTERVENTION IN SPAIN

It has thus been shown that the Soviet Union used diplomacy, the Communist International and military assistance to Spain to pursue during the Spanish Civil War the two principal goals of its foreign policy. An analysis of the activities of Soviet officials in Spain and of the program of the Spanish Communist Party indicates that the U.S.S.R. sought the same two goals by interfering in the internal political affairs of Spain. Using the well-disciplined Spanish Communist Party as an implement, the U.S.S.R. sought to gain as much influence as possible. The evidence indicates that it used its power not for immediate revolutionary gains, but to fashion the Spanish Republic into an efficient fighting machine and a government appealing to France and Great Britain. If successful, the result of Soviet political action would stave off a victory by Fascism until the democracies, convinced of the non-revolutionary nature of the Republican government, would at the most lend assistance to the Loyalist regime or at the least, establish an effective Non-Intervention Committee. Such an achievement would not only satisfy both the Soviet desire to halt the spread of Fascism and its need for close ties with the democracies.

To achieve its political goals in Spain, there is
59.

little doubt that the Soviet Union had at its disposal a well-disciplined Communist Party to use as an implement. By 1936 Stalin had succeeded in turning the Communist International into an organization that would respond instantly to his command, and the Spanish Communist Party was no exception. Jesus Hernandez, editor of the Communist newspaper Mundo Obrero, has identified four non-Spanish Communists who supervised the activities of the Communist Party and who attended meetings of the Spanish Politburo — Togliatti, Duclos, Codovila and Stepanov.¹⁰⁷ The Soviet Union also had other officials in Spain who played a political role, chief among them Rosenberg, the first Soviet ambassador, Gaikins, his successor, and Antonov-Ovseenko, the consul-general in Barcelona. It is apparent, however, that their roles were to work directly with non-Communist officials of the Spanish government.¹⁰⁸

The evidence indicates that the Soviet Union used the Communist Party and officials such as Rosenberg and Antonov-Ovseenko to gain as much influence as possible, both inside the government itself and over the general populace. Apol-

¹⁰⁷Hernandez, Yo fui un ministro de Stalin, p. 34.

¹⁰⁸See, for example, Alvarez del Vayo's description of Rosenberg's role in cabinet politics in Freedom's Battle, p. 220.
ogists for the Franco regime have charged that even before the Civil War, Communist influence was enormous. Foss and Gerahty, for example, have claimed that not only was the constitution of the Republic planned in Moscow, but they state that

All the trouble in Spain which brought in the Republic, which existed all through the time of the Republic and finally culminated in the present Civil War was the direct result of a calculated, relentless policy by the Soviet Government of Russia. 109

It is, however, difficult to see where the basis for this pre-war influence lay, for Foss and Gerahty themselves admit that the Communists were few in number. 110 The Communists, furthermore, did not even enter the Spanish government until September 4, a month and a half after the war began.

On the contrary, it was only after the Civil War was under way that the Communist Party, using the prestige gained by Soviet aid, began to increase their influence among the general populace in leaps and bounds. Contancia de la Mora, a non-Communist Spanish woman, has recorded the popular reaction to the first Soviet ships to arrive in Spain.

We all went down to meet the Neva. The whole town stood on the quay and such cheers I have


110 Ibid., p. 90.
never heard. It wasn't only the food which we needed so badly. It was the idea that at least one nation had not betrayed us. 111

Largo Caballero has charged that the Communists abused through propaganda the sympathy felt towards Russia because of its help. Whether it was abuse or not, the fact remains that the Communist Party was able to capitalize enormously on Russian assistance. From a membership of thirty thousand at the beginning of the war the Communist Party was able to increase its numbers to one million by June, 1937. 112

Spaniards were also attracted to the Communist Party by its example of discipline and efficiency. Apparently many non-Communists felt that the Communist program was the most likely to lead to victory and so enrolled either in the Communist Party or its military arm, the Fifth Regiment. Jose Martin Blazquez, an officer in the Loyalist army, has recorded: "The ranks of the Communist Party have been swelled by thousands of Spaniards who are no more Communist than I am, but have been impressed by its model discipline and loyalty to the Republic." 113


112 Broué & Temime, The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain, p. 229.

Despite the fact that throughout 1936 and the first months of 1937 the Communists held only two minor posts in the cabinet of Largo Caballero, they, together with Soviet officials, were able to exert influence over the policies of the Spanish government. As has been discussed above in the context of the military situation, the Soviet advisors and the Communist Party, by October 10, had prevailed upon Laro Caballero to take measures to form a centralized, disciplined army. Furthermore, the Communists worked in close collaboration with the prime minister in seeking to assert the Republican government's authority over the numerous local revolutionary bodies which had sprung up during July, and over the political parties and the trade unions.114

It can thus be seen that to implement its policies in Spain the Soviet Union had at its disposal a highly disciplined Communist Party that was powerful both among the populace and in its dealings with the Republican government. It is apparent from the evidence that the political ends the Soviet Union pursued with its power in Spain were designed not to promote revolution, or to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, but were instead, like the diplomatic activities in London, the military assistance

114Broué & Temime, The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain, pp. 229-35.
to the Republic, and the activities of the Comintern, formulated with an eye towards realizing the two chief Russian foreign policy goals -- halting the spread of Fascism and establishing close ties with Britain and especially France. The Communist program from the outbreak of the civil war through the May crisis of 1937 thus eschewed and indeed fought against the furtherance of revolutionary goals advocated by parties of the radical Left. Instead it subordinated all other goals to the war effort. At the same time it sought to create a Republican regime that the Western democracies would be likely to assist -- a government bourgeois and democratic in tone if not in actual content.

To stave off a Fascist victory, the Communist Party sought to establish a broad based regime in which all authority was subordinated to that of the central government. Such a regime would be highly efficient and be the best way to further the war effort. The supremacy of the central government meant an end to the myriad centers of local power that had been established during the first days of the Civil War. The government would then be free to coordinate all aspects of the war effort. On January 3, 1937, Dolores Ibarruri, in a radio broadcast, announced the comprehensive Communist program with the statement that

The entire power must be placed in the hands of the government, which represents all the public forces of the country and reflects the
will of the masses. People and organizations must respect and honour this government and the local authorities it sets up, and all their decisions.115

The Communist program called for the government to create a professional army, to organize the population in the rear behind the war effort, and to rationalize all industry vital to the war effort. "All trade unions, political parties and individuals loyal to the popular cause must be governed by one concern, namely, to produce more and better goods and thus hasten victory."116 All concerns were to be subjugated to the war effort and the war effort was to be coordinated by the government.

Presumably for the purpose of making the central government effective, the Communists, in their program, sought to include the interests of as broad a range of the populace as possible. To gain the allegiance of conservative sections of the population, such as the peasants and the bourgeoisie, the Communist program contained proposals that were moderate in tone. Non-essential industries, for example, were excepted from nationalization.117 This would attract small businessmen and merchants. At the same time, the Communists denounced

115Ibarruri, Speeches and Articles, p. 50.
116Ibid., p. 51.
117Cattell, Communism, p. 89.
in heated terms attempts at forced collectivization, pointing out that it caused "much discontent" in the countryside.\textsuperscript{118}

To these moderate proposals were added Communist rhetoric, stating that Spain was waging a war for a democratic republic and of which more will be said below.

At the same time, while moderating their views in order to gain the acceptance of the bourgeoisie and the peasants, the Communists courted the Anarchists and the Socialists. As a gesture to workers in general, the Communists courted the Anarchists and the Socialists. As a gesture to workers in general, the Communist platform of January, 1937, advocated a vaguely defined "worker's control" over industry. Upon closer inspection, however, probably out of concern for maintaining the authority of the government, one finds that "worker's control" was to be subject to a government-controlled "Council of Coordination."\textsuperscript{119} Apparently, in their courtship of the working class, the Communists did not forget that their chief goal was an effective government. The Communists also made every effort to enlist the Anarchists in the war effort. In December, 1936, Antonov-Ovseenko expressed "the greatest admiration for the Catalan workers, especially of the Anarcho-Syndicalists."\textsuperscript{120} It must be noted,\textsuperscript{118,\textsuperscript{119,\textsuperscript{120}}

\textsuperscript{118}Ibarruri, \textit{Speeches and Articles}, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{119}Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{120}The Manchester Guardian, December 22, 1936.
however, that Antonov-Ovseenko's admiration of the Anarchists extended only as far as the Anarchists were willing to subscribe to the Communists' and the government's views on efficiency and the war effort, and to the degree that they were "able to realise the needs of the present and postpone the realization of their admittedly high, but possibly impractical ideals." It was also at the urging of the Communist Party that Largo Caballero first asked the Anarchist trade union, the C.N.T., to enter his government.

The Communist Party and the Soviet Union, then, sought to establish a central government that would hold all authority and tried to invest it with a program which would give it a broad support made up of all sections of the Popular Front. Such a policy precluded the immediate establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat. Statements by Communist leaders indicate that Communists saw the proletarian revolution only in the distant future. The Civil War, in fact, was to defend bourgeois democracy against Fascism. On August 9, Jesus Hernandez stated the Communist position clearly in Mundo Obrero.

It is absolutely false that the present worker's movement has for its object the establishment of

121 Ibid., December 22, 1936.

122 F. Largo Caballero, Mis recuerdos (Mexico City: Ediciones Alianza, 1954), 182.
a proletarian dictatorship after the revolution has terminated. It cannot be said we have a social motive for our participation in the war. We, Communists, are the first to re-udiate this supposition. We are motivated exclusively by the desire to defend the democratic republic established on April 14, 1931, and revived last February 18.123

The Communists sought at the same time to portray the Republican regime as democratic. While much of the rhetoric was no doubt designed to win the support of liberal Spaniards, the emphasis on this point in the world press indicates that the rhetoric was targeted not only at Spaniards but at French and British audiences as well. Indeed, it can be argued that the Spanish Communists and the Soviet Union sought to convince the governments of France and Great Britain of the democratic nature of the Spanish Republic. The two Western powers would therefore be more apt either to establish an effective Non-Intervention scheme for the Republic's protection, or better yet, supply assistance to the Loyalist government. In December, 1936, Stalin himself pointed out in a telegram to Largo Caballero that

It is necessary, above all, to make certain that Azana and his group support the government, doing everything possible to overcome their doubts. This is indispensable for preventing Spain from being considered a Communist republic, which represents the principal danger to the Spanish Republic.124

123Quoted in Cattell, Communism, p. 54.
124Nenni, La guerra de España, p. 43.
The Communist press, in France and Great Britain, published articles and speeches that emphasized that the war being waged against the Spanish rebels was being fought to protect democracy. The English language edition of Inprecorr, for example, printed a speech by Jose Diaz, General Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party, which appealed for international support on just this basis.

The noble struggle of the Spanish people has brought the whole world into the movement. From London to New York, from Paris to Moscow, from the Argentine to the Northern countries, there rises one single cry: Solidarity with the brave fighters of Spain! And even in the countries oppressed by fascism there are millions of hearts which are beating in unison with ours and are following our fight with anxious attention. All have realized the importance of the fight which is being waged in Spain. Our fight is a historical fight between democracy and fascism, for the independence or the slavery of a people, for peace or war.125

There can be no doubt, then, that during 1936 the Soviet Union interfered in the internal politics in Spain, using, in addition to its own officials, the Communist Party of Spain as an implement. Far from advocating the continuation of revolutionary gains begun in the early weeks of the war, and far from calling for the immediate establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Communist Party worked for the centralizing of authority in the hands of the Republican government. At the same time it advocated a series of moderate measures in regard to indus-

125Inprecorr, August 15, 1936,
try, and agriculture. The Communist Party also sought, for the benefit of France and Great Britain, to portray the Republican government as a non-revolutionary, non-Communist, democratic and bourgeois government. Thus, the Soviet Union's political policy in Spain can be directly linked to the U.S.S.R.'s two general foreign policy goals: the pursuit of close ties with the democracies and the defeat of Fascism.
CONCLUSION:
THE SOVIET UNION AND THE PURGE OF THE CATALAN LEFT

The main burden of this thesis has been to examine the motives behind Soviet intervention in Spain and its parallel actions in the London Non-Intervention Committee. It has been found that the U.S.S.R. had two principal foreign policy goals in the late 1930's, goals which were applied to Spain from the outset of the Civil War. These were to stop the spread of Fascism and to develop close relations with Great Britain and France, relations made all the more imperative by the advances of that Fascism. Faced with the disappointment of France's policy of Non-Intervention, and at the same time by a worsening Republican military situation, the U.S.S.R. sought to pursue both goals with regard to Spain by conducting a holding action in Spain and simultaneously attempting to establish an effective Non-Intervention Committee. An effective Committee would, hopefully, promote good ties with the democracies and at the same time prevent the establishment of a Fascist ally in Spain.

Until the Spring of 1937, all Soviet actions with regard to Spain were subordinated to these two coequal goals. The question may be asked, what did Stalin hope to achieve by seeking to stop the spread of Fascism and establishing good relations with the two democracies? In the introduc-
tion to this paper, the defense of the Soviet Union was advanced as a probable goal. But in the Spring of 1937 Soviet policy changed. Both Soviet policy goals were subordinated to an entirely different end, which preempted to a certain degree, both Soviet anti-Fascism and its ties to the democracies. At that time the agents of the U.S.S.R. in Spain undertook a purge of the revolutionary Left. While it could be argued that it was conducted to establish the authority of the Spanish government and thus was in keeping with both Soviet foreign policy goals, the fact remains that the purge's greatest fury was directed at the relatively small and insignificant P.O.U.M., or Worker's Party of Marxist Unity. In thus giving the purge of alleged Trotskyists top priority in Spain, Stalin showed that neither the defeat of Fascism nor the pursuit of good relations with the democracies was any longer the principal goal in the formulation of his foreign policy. In the Spring of 1937 the Soviet purges arrived at full strength, thousands of miles from Moscow. Now, national interests had to give way before personal concerns. In the Spring of 1937, the defense of Stalin was the top priority in the formulation of Soviet foreign policy.

Soviet foreign policy towards Spain was elaborate in conception, and had to be such to pursue simultaneously close relations with France and Great Britain and the defeat of
Fascism. For in 1936, the democracies were not as convinced as the Soviet Union of the immense danger that lay in Fascism. Still, by the end of 1936, the Soviet policy showed signs of being successful. The rebels, largely through Soviet efforts, had been halted at the gates of Madrid. And at the same time, Soviet representatives were making progress in the Non-Intervention Committee. The Catalanian purge of 1937 must be seen against this background as a burst of counterproductivity after ten months of skilled execution of a complex foreign policy. Still, the irrationality assumed top priority.

As we shall see, a portion of the Communist purge in Spain was directed against certain segments of the Anarchist movement centered in Catalonia. In fact, a relatively sound argument can be built to support the proposition that the terror against the Anarchists was aimed at bringing them firmly under the control of the central government, and was thus supportive of the war effort. The purge was, in fact, aimed at those Anarchists who resisted efforts by the government at centralizing authority.126

The Communists' bitterest attacks, however, were reserved for the P.O.U.M. While the P.O.U.M. was relatively insignificant numerically, numbering only several thousand members, it made the grave mistake of having been founded by

---

126Cattell, Communism, p. 133.
dissident Communists.\textsuperscript{127} Even more seriously, despite the fact that it had fundamental differences with Trotsky,\textsuperscript{128} the P.O.U.M. had gone as far as to suggest that the Catalanian government offer a place of asylum to Trotsky himself.\textsuperscript{129} The P.O.U.M. was therefore considered by the Soviet Union to be Trotskyist, a group against whose name Stalin was carrying out the purges of the Soviet Union.

The first indication of the terror that was to strike Spain came in November, 1936, when the Soviet ambassador Rosenberg vetoed the presence of the P.O.U.M. in the important Madrid Defense Junta. The P.O.U.M. organ \textit{La Batalla} in return denounced Stalin as being concerned only with the interests of the Soviet Union at the expense of the Spanish proletariat. In what must be regarded as a significant escalation in rhetoric, Antonov-Ovseenko declared that P.O.U.M. was working in collaboration with international Fascism.\textsuperscript{130} Having branded the P.O.U.M. as the enemy, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{127}Pierre Broue, \textit{Trotksy y la guerra civil española} (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Albarez S.A., 1966), p. 29.
\item \textsuperscript{128}Ibid., p. 30.
\item \textsuperscript{130}Broue & Temime, \textit{The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain}, p. 235.
\end{itemize}
74.

Communists could hardly stand for its continued presence in the Popular Front. On December 16, they secured the expulsion of the P.O.U.M. from the Catalan government.131

The Stalinist campaign against P.O.U.M., however, was not limited to denunciations by Soviet diplomats. September, 1936, marked the arrival in Spain of Alexander Orlov of the N.K.V.D.. After his defection to the United States in 1938, Orlov published a book of memoirs in which he described his post in Spain as that of counter-intelligence and guerilla warfare specialist.132 There is, however, ample evidence to indicate that he was the N.K.V.D.'s chief agent in Spain.133 His activities in Spain gave Orlov good reason to be coy about his role in the Spanish war. In February, 1937, working in conjunction with the Communist-dominated Loyalist secret police force, Orlov began the use of terror against the P.O.U.M. and radical elements of the Anarchist movement.134 Orlov's Tchekistas, as they were known in Spain,

131Cattell, Communism, p. 127.
134Cattell, Communism, pp. 116, 133.
operated independently of the regular Loyalist government and conducted their own investigation, maintained their own prisons and performed their own executions.\textsuperscript{135}

By February, 1937, the Communists declared open war on the P.O.U.M. Orlov and his colleagues began a wave of assassinations and kidnappings against the P.O.U.M. Members of the unfortunate party were secretly arrested, tried and executed by the Tchekistes.\textsuperscript{136} In addition, the Spanish branch of the N.K.V.D. turned against anti-Communists within the Anarchist trade union, the C.N.T. The Anarchist leader Abad de Santillan, has charged that between February and May of 1937, more than eighty members of the C.N.T. were killed.\textsuperscript{137}

While the purges were conducted in secrecy, and were thus hidden from many of the Communists' fellow Popular Front members, the Communist attitude towards P.O.U.M. was made public in various speeches and in the Communist press. La Pasionaria, for example, accused the P.O.U.M. of acting in league with Germany and Fascism by sowing dissension in the ranks of the Popular Front.\textsuperscript{138} It was, however, the Communist rhetoric which was counterproductive. The Communist blasts

\textsuperscript{135}Ibid., p. 116.
\textsuperscript{136}Ibid., p. 137.
\textsuperscript{137}Abad de Santillan, \textit{Porque perdimos la guerra?}, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{138}Ibarruri, \textit{Speeches and Articles}, pp. 60-62.
at P.O.U.M. hampered unity in the Popular Front, a unity towards which all previous Communist attacks had been directed. Even before the crisis of May, 1937, the Socialists and Anarchist both criticized the violence of the Communist attitude towards P.O.U.M. 139

In early May, P.O.U.M. and the more radical sections of Spanish Anarchism fought back. The government's police attempted to seize an Anarchist controlled telephone exchange in Barcelona and the city exploded into violence. P.O.U.M. and two Anarchist organizations, the Friends of Durutti and the Libertarian Youth, took to the barricades. Within several days a truce was arranged through the good offices of more moderate Anarchists, but the consequences of Barcelona's May days were large.

The Communist Party laid the blame for the May uprising squarely on the shoulders of P.O.U.M.. The truth seems to have been a case of government aggressiveness confronting the obstinacy of the Catalan Left. Others have gone so far as to accuse the Communists of deliberately provoking the fighting. 140 The Communists, however, were adamant in their attacks on the P.O.U.M.. On May 9, Jose Diaz, the leader of the Spanish Communists, called for the dissolution of

139Cattell, Communism, p. 136.
140Largo Caballero, Mis recuerdos, p. 218.
the P.O.U.M. and the closing of its press,\textsuperscript{141} and the Communists subsequently forced the issue in Largo Caballero's cabinet.\textsuperscript{142} The Communist demands caused a wide split in the Popular Front, which Communist policy had labored long and hard to mold into a single anti-Fascist force, whose sole goal had been victory over the rebels. When a new government was formed, Largo Caballero and his Socialist trade union, the U.G.T., did not take part. The Communists' recriminations against the P.O.U.M. were thus a direct reversal of their earlier policy of union with the Socialists. The Anarchists joined Largo Caballero in boycotting the new government. The Communist attitude towards the P.O.U.M. thus also took precedence over earlier policy towards the Anarchists. It had been the Communist Party that had originally urged Largo Caballero to include the C.N.T. in his government.

In short, the supression of P.O.U.M. undermined steps towards unity which the Communists had taken in the pursuit of victory. An analysis of the causes of the final Loyalist defeat in early 1939 would demand a thesis of a length equal to this one. Such a study is beyond the scope of this thesis, which is meant to examine only the outlines of Soviet

\textsuperscript{141}Jose Diaz, \textit{Que somos y que queremos los comunistas} (Valencia: Ediciones del Partido Comunista de España, 1937), p. 15.

\textsuperscript{142}Largo Caballero, \textit{Mis recuerdos}, p. 218.
policy in Spain. Nonetheless, it can be noted here that some writers have laid the blame for defeat on the shoulders of the Communist Party because of its activities in the Spring of 1937. In 1939, the Socialist Luis Araquistain stated that the fall of the Largo Caballero coalition decided the eventual outcome of the war. Araquistain's judgement must be considered suspect, since he had been one of Largo Caballero's closest associates. Too many other factors must be considered for this assertion to be true. Nonetheless, it is probably correct to hold, as one expert has, that the purges conducted by the N.K.V.D. in Spain undermined the morale of Loyalist Spain to such an extent that they were a contributing factor in the Republican defeat.

In addition to hampering the support of victory, the suppression of the P.O.U.M. could not help but damage the image of the Soviet Union in the eyes of the western democracies. Clearly, in carrying out the suppression of the P.O.U.M., the executors of Soviet policy were pursuing a goal which preempted the two which had been so diligently throughout 1936. The top priority became the defense of Stalin against any real or imagined threat to his power.

The original Soviet policy towards Spain had been to

144 Cattell, Communism, p. 208.
conduct a holding action while diplomacy and the Comintern either brought a halt to German and Italian assistance to the rebels or persuaded France and Great Britain to drop their policies of Non-Intervention. Stalin showed great foresight in discerning the threat to the U.S.S.R. posed by Germany and Italy, and his desire to foil their aggression in Spain must be considered wise. During 1936, Soviet policy towards Spain was complex in conception and skilled in execution. But in the Spring of 1937 the entire policy was jeopardized by the personal concerns that underlay the purges. Stalin risked the national interests of the U.S.S.R. because of a groundless fear for his own security. The Soviet actions in Spain were thus a presaging of the disastrous Red Army purge, when Stalin's fears were again to threaten the best interests of the Soviet Union.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. CONTEMPORARY SOURCES AND DOCUMENTS


II. NEWSPAPERS

The New York Daily Worker.

International Press Correspondance.

The Manchester Guardian.

The Times of London.


III. MEMOIRS


IV. SECONDARY SOURCES


The vita has been removed from the scanned document
SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

by

David L. Brumbaugh

(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the policies behind Soviet intervention in the Spanish Civil War. The U.S.S.R. had two principal foreign policy goals in the late 1930's, goals which were applied to Spain from the outset of the Civil War. These were to stop the spread of Fascism and to develop close relations with Britain and France. Both goals had as their foundation a concern for the security of the Soviet Union. Faced with the disappointment of France's policy of Non-Intervention, and at the same time by a worsening Republican military situation, the U.S.S.R. sought to pursue both goals with regard to Spain by conducting a holding action in the Iberian peninsula and simultaneously attempting to establish an effective Non-Intervention Committee. An effective Committee would, hopefully, promote good ties with the democracies and at the same time prevent the victory of Fascism in Spain.

Until the Spring of 1937, Soviet policy in regard to Spain was conducted skillfully. In the first part of 1937, however, Stalin ordered a purge of the Catalan Left, which undermined his previous policy in Spain. Stalin's concern
for his own personal power thus jeopardized a policy which had as its foundation the defense of the Soviet Union.