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1. Soviet and Comintern Policy in Spain Prior to July 1936

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I. Soviet-Spanish Diplomacy: October 1917-July 1936

Despite Lenin's calls for a worldwide socialist revolution and the avowed Russian goal of the overthrow of the capitalist West, the Soviets early on made serious diplomatic attempts to curry favor with most European states, including Spain. ¹ As early as February 1918, NKID Commissar Chicherin made an appeal to Spain for the resumption of "cordial relations." ² In April 1924, the Soviet ambassador to Germany met over breakfast with his Spanish counterpart in Berlin to discuss a potential rapprochement between the estranged states. ³ The meeting, however, yielded no softening in Spain's attitude toward the Bolsheviks, and relations worsened in May of the same year when Madrid refused to issue visas to Soviet delegates planning to attend a postal conference in the Spanish capital. ⁴ When in 1926 Spain hosted international talks to revise the Algeciras Conference, it again snubbed the Soviet Union, prompting Moscow to send notes of protest to the other invitees. ⁵ It was only Spain's need for cheap Soviet oil that forced Primo de Rivera to authorize in 1928 a limited commercial agreement with Moscow. ⁶ Otherwise, until the fall of both the dictatorship and the Bourbon monarchy, Spain was all but impenetrable to official Soviet access.

With the declaration of the Second Spanish Republic on 14 April 1931, many Spaniards believed that relations with Moscow would be rapidly restored. This was logical, as the chief impediments to normal diplomacy with the Soviets were no longer on the scene: Primo de Rivera was dead and Alfonso XIII had fled the country. Even before the monarchy fell, Spain's Republican leaders had met on August 1930 at San Sebastián to agree on the particulars of the soon-to-be established republic. Signers of the pact conceded that, in the new Spain, a self-described "workers' republic," relations with the Soviets must be established. ⁷ At the same time, it was widely noted that Spain was one of the few Western states that still had not formally recognized the Soviet regime. Great Britain, France, Italy, Denmark, and Switzerland, for example, had all restored relations in 1924. More to the point, and as other contemporary proponents observed, in 1933 the Spanish Republic maintained normal diplomatic relations with every country in the world except the USSR. ⁸

Fully aware of the political changes occurring in Madrid, and eager to pursue amicable relations with all those countries still regarding the USSR as Europe's rogue state, in June 1931 the Soviet government appealed to the Spanish Republic for a normalization of relations. To facilitate an agreement, Nikolai Krestinskii, the deputy commissar for foreign affairs (NKID), suggested that the Spaniards work through the Soviet embassies in London, Paris, or Berlin. ⁹ Responding to the Soviet initiative was the Republic's first foreign minister, Alejandro Lerroux, who agreed to a September meeting in neutral Switzerland.

It is indicative of the high priority the Soviets assigned to the pending restoration of diplomatic ties with Spain that Stalin authorized Maksim Litvinov, the Soviet delegate to the League of Nations, to personally represent his government. Meeting Lerroux in Geneva, Litvinov assured the minister that the Soviet government sought a rapid resolution of the long-running impasse between the two states. For his part, Lerroux was enthusiastic, and informed Litvinov that he was prepared not only to restore normal diplomatic ties but also to offer a wide-ranging commercial agreement, including the purchase of Soviet oil in

exchange for the sale of fruit and wine. The meeting ended with Lerroux agreeing to send an unofficial representative to Moscow who would initiate direct contact in advance of Spain's formal recognition of the Soviet government. [10](#)

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Though both sides emerged from the Geneva conference with generally positive impressions, the meeting did not result in any official action in Spain. In the Cortes (the national legislature), the far right opposed any talk of commercial and diplomatic ties with the Soviets. [11](#) The left coalition government, meanwhile, was too preoccupied pushing through its liberal reform program to expend political capital on the Soviet question. [12](#) From their Paris embassy, the Soviets continued in vain to lobby the few Spanish officials who would respond to their entreaties. [13](#) Their only success—a far cry from the ambitious commercial arrangement imagined by Lerroux and Litvinov—was the inclusion of a Soviet delegation in the Madrid telegraph conference of September 1932. [14](#) On the whole, however, where official Soviet-Spanish affairs were concerned, the first two years of the Republic constituted a series of frustrated and ultimately lost opportunities.

The failure to cement official diplomatic ties dismayed many Spanish proponents of rapprochement with Moscow. As a result, in the first years after the establishment of the Second Republic there emerged in Spain a movement in favor of official recognition whose adherents gravitated towards hastily organized chapters of the *Asociación de los Amigos de la Unión Soviética* (AUS), or "Association of Friends of the Soviet Union." The AUS was not an original Spanish conception, but was based on the already well-structured communist front organization, the Friends of the Soviet Union. With assistance from the Kremlin and Comintern, the first international Friends chapters were formed in Western Europe and the Americas in 1927, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. [15](#) According to several sources, at the inaugural conference, 947 delegates from 43 countries participated. [16](#) Returning to their respective countries, Friends chapter members organized at the local level and disseminated Soviet propaganda prepared and translated in Moscow. Though Spain was a latecomer to the Friends fraternity, it quickly became one of the organization's most successful outposts. Three months after its founding, the Spanish AUS claimed seven thousand members and fourteen district chapters. [17](#) On the eve of the civil war, chapters existed in more than thirty Spanish cities and towns. [18](#)

The full range of cultural activities pursued by the Spanish AUS will be considered below in Part Three. For the moment, however, it is sufficient to situate its founding in April 1933 in the context of the Republic's stalled development of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. From the moment of its inception, the Spanish AUS sought to educate both politicians and the public on the many alleged cultural and scientific advances taking place in the Soviet Union. To facilitate this activity, Spanish admirers of the Soviet experiment wrote frequent letters to Moscow's All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (hereafter referred to by its Russian acronym, VOKS). Through their contact with VOKS, Spanish sympathizers were able to keep the Soviets closely apprised of the mood within Spain vis-à-vis the pending recognition of the USSR. [19](#) In this way, despite the absence of formal relations, Moscow gained considerable insight into its standing in key Spanish circles, and was able to gauge the efficacy of continuing to launch trial balloons with government ministers.

By mid-summer 1933, the tide in Spain finally turned in favor of those advocating normalized relations with the Soviets. Four disparate factors coalesced to bring the issue to the forefront of the Republican government's summer agenda. First were the propagandizing activities of the burgeoning AUS. Second was the arrival in the Spanish capital of the Soviet representative Nikolai Ostrovskii, whose agenda was initially only the sale of Soviet oil to the Spanish CAMPSA cartel but soon expanded to become a lobbying

effort in favor of restoring diplomatic ties between the two states. Third was the appointment of Fernando de los Ríos—for many years an admirer of Soviet culture and the author of the first published Spanish account of life in the USSR ²⁰—as Foreign Minister. The fourth factor was the sudden attention to the issue on the part of a second Socialist minister, Indelacio Prieto. On 13 July, the interested parties—members of the AUS, Ostrovskii, de los Ríos, and Prieto—gathered together at a dinner party to discuss official Spanish recognition of the USSR. ²¹ Coincidentally, the event took place in the restaurant of the Hotel Gaylord, on Calle Alfonso XI, which would become the notorious haunt of Soviet diplomats and military advisors during the civil war. ²²

On 14 July, the day following the dinner, Ostrovskii met privately with de los Ríos to finalize an agreement on recognition. With a view towards minimizing political or popular protest, de los Ríos insisted that the Spanish letter of recognition to the Soviets be reciprocated at the same time with an identical letter from Moscow to the Republic's government. ²³ In this way, the last hurdle was cleared, and the much-anticipated establishment of diplomatic relations could finally take place. On 27 July 1933, de los Ríos telegraphed the Kremlin, offering Spain's *de jure* and *de facto* recognition of the legality of the Bolshevik government, while at the same time committing the Republic to full diplomatic and economic relations. In response, on the following day, NKID Deputy Commissar Krestinskii telegraphed Madrid with identical recognition and an agreement to renew relations. ²⁴

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Recognition having been granted, the matter was still not completely resolved. There remained the business of nominating and approving ambassadorial appointments. In Moscow's case, the issue was not a matter of debate: the ambassador to Spain would be Anatolii Lunacharskii. Lunacharskii ranked as one of the six or seven most respected and experienced leaders in Soviet Russia. He had joined the Bolshevik movement at roughly the same time as Lenin and had taken a leading role in many of the early struggles with the Tsarist regime. After the Revolution, Lenin appointed Lunacharskii Commissar for Public Instruction, a position he held until 1929, when he won the plum appointment of ambassador to France. For the polyglot Lunacharskii—he is said to have taken his morning coffee with a dozen European newspapers ²⁵—this sojourn in the West proved an ideal opportunity to continue the pursuit of his not inconsiderable interest in European literature. Lunacharskii had already produced the second edition of his ambitious *History of Western European Literature*, in which the author placed a surprising emphasis on Spanish *belles lettres*. ²⁶ His next scholarly project was *Don Quixote Liberated*, a study of early modern Spanish literature. ²⁷ This latter work, according to one scholar, acquainted more Russians with the idea of Spain than any other single book, and thus made Lunacharskii a clear favorite for Soviet ambassador to Madrid. ²⁸

In Madrid, where the news of Lunacharskii's appointment was greeted with general approval, no unanimity emerged over who would head the first Spanish delegation to Moscow. ²⁹ The main candidates were those who possessed some earlier connection to the USSR—that is, Spaniards who might stand a better chance of deciphering the language and coming to terms with the culture. ³⁰ Topping this list were Julio Alvarez del Vayo and Marcelino Pascua. A left-wing socialist and at the time the Republic's ambassador to Mexico, del Vayo was one of the most vocal Spanish admirers of the Soviet Union. He had begun traveling to the USSR a decade earlier, and by summer 1933 had authored three books on Soviet society. ³¹ It was largely due to del Vayo's efforts that in the late 1920s Soviet films were first screened in Spanish cities (see Chapter Six below). Less important, though perhaps noteworthy, del Vayo was acquainted with Lunacharskii, having met the commissar at the Tolstoy Centenary in 1928. ³² Pascua, a socialist medical doctor, certainly did not possess as high a profile as del Vayo, but he had to his credit solid Russian language skills and travel experience in the USSR. After some debate, del Vayo received the nod, was

duly approved by Prime Minister Azaña, and soon prepared to make the long trip from Mexico City to Moscow. ³³ In September, however, before the new ambassador could take up his post, Azaña's government was replaced by a new cabinet under the premiership of Lerroux. As a consequence, del Vayo resigned his appointment to the Moscow mission, and Spain found itself without an ambassador. ³⁴

While the Republic delayed in appointing another ambassador, Lunacharskii fell ill in Paris and repaired to the Côte d'Azur. Believing the exchange of ambassadors to be imminent, he continued to enthusiastically prepare for his assignment, studying Spanish grammar books in his sickbed and reading a new novel by Madariaga. ³⁵ Unfortunately, the Mediterranean air was of little help to this ailing old Bolshevik, and Lunacharskii died at Menton on 26 December 1933. ³⁶

In the wake of these reversals, the promise of regular diplomatic relations between Spain and the Soviet Union was again stymied. That no immediate solution could be found has been variously blamed on the prejudice of Lerroux's new foreign minister, the recalcitrance of President Alcala Zamora, or, more likely, the triumph of the CEDA in the November 1933 elections. ³⁷ For their part, the Soviets seemed to think that their deceased appointee had been the only man for the job. ³⁸

Despite the generally unfavorable conditions for Soviet-Spanish rapprochement during the center-right biennium (December 1933—February 1936), all hope was not lost. In summer 1934, Litvinov made a fresh effort to reach a new arrangement with the Spanish representative to the League. Between 17 and 27 July of that year, a flurry of telegrams from Geneva to the NKID indicates that the two parties were on the verge of a breakthrough. ³⁹ In late September, Litvinov and Madariaga reached a tentative arrangement that provided for an ambassadorial exchange on the condition that neither country would involve itself in the domestic politics of the other. ⁴⁰ Before the agreement could be made official, however, events elsewhere intervened. On 4 October 1934, the Left revolted in Asturias, and the ensuing CEDA-led reprisals fully eclipsed any further talk of closer ties with Moscow. ⁴¹ Indeed, even low-level dialogue between Spain and the USSR all but ceased until well after the election of the Popular Front in February 1936. The long-awaited exchange of ambassadors finally took place in late August of that year, in the second month of the civil war.

II. Comintern Activity in Spain Prior to 1936

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Moscow's foreign relations were not limited to the official channels of diplomacy, nor were they necessarily incapacitated by the USSR's inability to win diplomatic recognition. Enter the Comintern, the clandestine shadow of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (NKID) and a parallel institution that could advance Soviet interests in areas where normal relations were nonexistent, pending, or strained. Since Madrid was one of the last foreign governments to exchange ambassadors with the Soviet Union, one would expect—and indeed one finds—a substantial Comintern presence in Spain before the summer of 1936.

Since the early days of the Second Republic, both the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) and the Comintern had been active in Spain. The PCE began the period of the Republic as a very weak, almost inconsequential, political party. Though it had been founded in 1920, the PCE initially joined a crowded field of left-wing Spanish workers' parties and union organizations, competing with the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), its trade union (UGT), the anarcho-sindicalist trade union (CNT), and the closely linked anarchist federation (FAI). Though not formally outlawed after the 1923 ascendancy of the right-wing dictator Primo

de Rivera, the tiny PCE was initially unable to rise above its status as a fledgling sect with almost no visibility. The balance of the 1920s was an era of obscurity, with the PCE reduced to a membership numbering in the hundreds, its headquarters and conferences relocated to France. By 1930, the PCE's position was further weakened by the formation of independent communist splinter groups.

The PCE remained in this divided and weakened state until the overthrow of the Bourbon monarchy in April 1931, at which point the party's membership was probably less than one thousand. ⁴² The end of its forced clandestine status soon transformed the PCE's fortunes. From April to early summer 1931, the party's membership trebled to approximately 3,000, more than doubling again before autumn of the same year. In the June 1931 elections, though winning no seats in the Spanish parliament, the party was said to have received perhaps 50,000 votes. ⁴³ By early 1932, the PCE had some 10,000 members and had established several newspapers, the most important of which was *Mundo Obrero*. ⁴⁴ While these developments were all signs of a certain degree of success, the Comintern was increasingly displeased with the Spanish party.

From its founding in 1919, and throughout the years of the Primo dictatorship, the Comintern had never considered the Iberian Peninsula a region of any great importance. ⁴⁵ The fall of Primo in 1930 and the rise of Spanish republicanism led the Comintern to finally shift its gaze south of the Pyrenees. ⁴⁶ Some in the Comintern believed that Spain was ripe for revolution. But in what stage did the Spanish revolution find itself? Communist dogma insisted that if a state's economy had not yet made the transition to finance capitalism, communists were obliged to support bourgeois democratic parties; the workers' revolution would follow that of the bourgeoisie. If, on the other hand, Spain could already be considered a capitalist state, then all efforts must be taken to frustrate the establishment of a republican regime and impose a dictatorship of the proletariat. Initially, the Comintern lobbied for immediate proletarian revolution in Spain; the PCE leaders, however, tended to believe that cooperation with the democratic parties was necessary. Several delegations of Comintern officials traveled to Spain between spring 1930 and early 1931, attempting to persuade the PCE leaders to follow Moscow's orders.

Moscow's repeated demands that the PCE should sabotage Spain's emerging democratic republic at every turn—and, more importantly, that the PCE leadership should follow Comintern directives—were not carried out with the efficiency Moscow desired. ⁴⁷ In October 1932, the anticipated purge finally took place. In a frightful display of the Comintern's power, the PCE's leadership was summoned to Moscow, roundly condemned, and summarily expelled from the organization. Replacing José Bullejos and the other renegade figures at the head of the PCE was a hand-picked group of younger Spaniards, all of whom had spent many years in the Lenin school and Frunze academy. These included José Díaz (General Secretary), Jesús Hernández, Vicente Uribe, Antonio Mije, Manuel Hurtado, Dolores Ibárruri, and Enrique Líster. ⁴⁸

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To ensure loyalty among the new PCE leadership, the Comintern dispatched to Madrid the Argentine Vittorio Codovilla. From the moment of his arrival until the end of 1937, Codovilla was not only the principal interlocutor between the Comintern and the PCE leadership, but also by most accounts the "real head" of the Spanish Communist Party. ⁴⁹ Under Codovilla's watch, the PCE antagonized anarchists and socialists wherever it could, refusing to cooperate with any other party from the Spanish Left. ⁵⁰ There was measured membership growth as well. In November 1933, the PCE received at least 170,000 votes and won its first seat in the parliament. ⁵¹ Although it was an insignificant force in the Asturias uprising of October 1934, the PCE claimed just the opposite, and in the wake of subsequent (and albeit exaggerated) right-wing repressions the party gained additional

credibility and exposure. [52](#)

More significantly, over the course of 1934 the Comintern line was changing again. The rising threat of Nazi Germany led Moscow to radically alter its position vis-à-vis the democratic parties of the left. At the Seventh Comintern Congress in July-August 1935, Dimitrov advocated a united anti-Fascist front—a "Popular Front" of all democratic parties: working class, bourgeois, and communist. For many years, historians viewed the Comintern's sudden abandonment of the sectarian tactics of the early 1930s as a direct response to the needs of Soviet foreign policy. In this version of events espoused by, among others, the Spaniard Fernando Claudín, the Comintern was little more than an instrument of Soviet foreign policy. [53](#)

New research on the topic now demonstrates that the origins of the Popular Front cannot be attributed solely to the needs of Narkomindel. Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew suggest a "triple interaction" of key factors leading to the *volte-face* of 1934-35. [54](#) First, pressure for change began among the leaders of the national parties, particularly those of the German Communist Party (KPD), who had witnessed first-hand the failure of the Comintern's earlier tactics to slow the rise of fascism. Second, the momentum behind the new approach was facilitated by internal dynamics of the Comintern leadership, most significantly the ascendancy in spring 1935 of Georgii Dimitrov, who would become the principal architect of the Popular Front. Finally, the new policy neatly meshed with the shifting requirements of Soviet diplomacy, which was now focused on cementing a defensive alliance with the Western democracies.

Following the Seventh Comintern Congress, national communist parties would enter the mainstream political life of their home countries, at once appealing to the daily concerns of workers while also cementing anti-fascist alliances with more moderate socialist and republican parties. Nonetheless, their long-term goal—socialist revolution—remained unchanged. As McDermott and Agnew succinctly conclude, the new policy redefined the tactics but not the strategy of the Comintern. [55](#) In sum, Comintern parties would follow a dual track: moderate in the short run, revolutionary in the long run.

The Comintern adoption of the Popular Front policy, coupled with the polarization of Spanish politics, provided the PCE with an opening. The turning point came in spring 1935, when its appeals to other parties of the Spanish Left won some favor. The goals of the new alliance were announced by general secretary José Díaz at a 2 June 1935 mass meeting in Madrid, an event aptly characterized by Carr as the PCE's "first effective appearance on the stage of Spanish Left-wing politics." [56](#) A fresh propaganda campaign ensued, in which the PCE implemented the dual-track strategy. In January 1936, the Left Republicans and Socialists—together with the PCE—agreed on an electoral platform, the most striking aspect of which was the lack of a revolutionary social or economic agenda. On 16 February, the Spanish Popular Front won a relatively narrow victory. [57](#)

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The PCE, scarcely a year since abandoning its dogmatic intransigence, had become a genuine force on the political landscape of Spain. The party won something over 220,000 votes and placed 16 deputies in the parliament. [58](#) Though still dwarfed by the larger Socialist and Republican parties, the PCE had laid down a base of support and achieved a level of legitimacy hardly imaginable several years before.

In the wake of the February elections, the PCE took a position to the left of the Popular Front, but maintained the policy of simultaneously working within the existing system while also planning for eventual revolution. In keeping with Popular Front tactics, the PCE was to consolidate its support among workers and agitate against fascism. The Comintern multiplied its efforts to shore up support for the PCE and disseminate communist and Soviet

propaganda. Less than two weeks after the February elections, the ECCI directed operatives on the ground in Spain to accelerate their propaganda efforts, and specifically to:

Expand during the course of 1936 the publication in the Spanish language of all varieties and forms of communist and revolutionary-educational literature. Utilize to the greatest degree available the legal avenues to achieve the rapid distribution of our literature in all of Spain, and assure its constant circulation and availability in every corner of the country. [59](#)

To fund the organization and implementation of this project, the Comintern allocated 50,000 pesetas. [60](#)

But Comintern policy in Spain in the first part of 1936 was not unchanging, nor unaffected by events occurring elsewhere. On 7 March, the German Wehrmacht reoccupied the Rhineland. This was the most significant repudiation yet of the post-Versailles European order, and the best evidence thus far that the Soviet Union might soon confront a resurgent Germany. In response, the Comintern's twin-pronged approach in Spain now de-emphasized the eventual socialist revolution in favor of cooperation with the other parties of the Popular Front. Indeed, after March 1936 the PCE made no further references to imminent revolution. This shift in policy, like all others, came directly from the Comintern leadership in Moscow. In June of the same year, just five weeks before the civil war began, the ECCI specifically decreed that:

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The basic urgent task of the Communist Party of Spain and the Spanish proletariat at the present moment is to secure the complete victory of democratic and revolutionary forces over fascism and counter-revolution, and, by carrying out measures of an economic and political character along the lines of completing the democratic revolution, to isolate the fascists from those masses of the peasants and the urban petty bourgeoisie on whom they have hitherto relied, to disorganize the forces of fascism, to undermine the material basis of counter-revolution and to strengthen the position of the proletariat and its allies. [61](#)

Thus the Comintern had identified as the primary goal of the Spanish communists the weakening and elimination of the parties of the right, instead of active revolutionary agitation. This would be the line dictated from Moscow through the summer of 1936, and indeed, for the duration of the civil war.

There was still room, however, for slight emendations to the Comintern's vision for the Spanish Republic. By the last quarter of 1936, the ECCI leadership had developed a distinct theoretical approach to the eventual political orientation of the Republic. In October, the head Comintern official in Spain, Palmero Togliatti, suggested that the anti-fascist struggle in Spain was paving the way for a "new kind of democratic republic," a transition from capitalism to a form of socialism distinct from the Bolshevik model. [62](#) Whether this new state model would be essentially the same as the post-1945 "people's democracies" of Eastern Europe, as has occasionally been alleged, would require counter-factual speculation. [63](#) Less than a year after Togliatti's pronouncement, the long-term orientation of Loyalist Spain had become a moot point; the Republic's position had greatly deteriorated, and the Soviet Union was scaling back its involvement in the Spanish war. By then, even Moscow's top diplomats in Spain, Rosenberg and Antonov-Ovseenko, had long since departed. Their failed efforts to build on the Comintern's earlier gains are the subject of the next chapter.

Notes:

Note 1: The key study on Soviet-Spanish relations for the period between the October Revolution and the declaration of the Second Spanish Republic is Juan Avilés Farré, *La fe que vino de Rusia: La revolución bolchevique y los españoles (1917-1931)* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1999). [Back.](#)

Note 2: Chicherin to Spanish Embassy, 29 Jan. (11 Feb.) 1918. *DVP SSSR*, vol. I, 102. [Back.](#)

Note 3: Soviet ambassador to NKID, 11 Apr. 1924, *DVP SSSR*, vol. VII, 190. [Back.](#)

Note 4: *DVP SSSR*, vol. VII, 315. [Back.](#)

Note 5: *Izvestiia*, 11 Sept. 1926. The Algeciras Conference, which had been called to resolve the first Moroccan crisis of 1905, confirmed French control over all but the northern-most part of Morocco. The agreement was a major defeat for German diplomacy, and underscored Wilhelm II's inability to carve out a sphere of influence in North Africa. [Back.](#)

Note 6: The agreement, coordinated by the Soviet ambassador to France, took the better part of eight months to hammer out. See *DVP SSSR*, vol. X, 493; vol. XI, 32-33, 363-366, 373, and 414. [Back.](#)

Note 7: Marina Casanova, *La diplomacia española durante la guerra civil* (Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 1996), 67; Juan-Simeón Vidarte, *Las Cortes Constituyentes de 1931-1933: Testimonio del Primer Secretario del Congreso de Diputados* (Barcelona: Ediciones Grijalbo 1976), 565. [Back.](#)

Note 8: This point was made forcefully in the post-war account of Julio Alvarez del Vayo; see *Freedom's Battle* (London: Heinemann, 1940), 25. [Back.](#)

Note 9: *DVP SSSR*, vol. XIV, 402. [Back.](#)

Note 10: See *DVP SSSR*, vol. XIV, 517-518, for Litvinov's detailed account of the meeting. [Back.](#)

Note 11: On the opposition's position concerning recognition, see *Heraldo de Madrid*, 10 Dec. 1931. For the Soviet view of the same, see *DVP SSSR*, vol. XIV, 553. [Back.](#)

Note 12: An obvious conclusion, and the one suggested by Marcelino Pascua in a handwritten,, unpublished and undated article entitled "La República española y la Unión Soviética".. Archivo Histórico Nacional-Madrid (hereafter, AHN-Madrid). Diversos. M. Pascua, leg. 5, exp. 9, 1-2. [Back.](#)

Note 13: See Marcel Rosenberg's telegram to NKID, 12 Jan. 1932. *DVP SSSR*, vol. XV, 22. [Back.](#)

Note 14: *DVP SSSR*, vol. XV, 404. [Back.](#)

Note 15: Louis Nemzer, "The Soviet Friendship Societies," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 13:2 (Summer 1949): 266-267. [Back.](#)

Note 16: More than half of those in attendance were German, French, or British. See "World Congress of Friends of the USSR," *VOKS Weekly News Bulletin*, 2 Dec. 1927, 10-12, and E. H. Carr, *Foundations of a Planned Economy* (New York: MacMillan, 1976), 307-309. [Back.](#)

Note 17: "Report on the work of the Friends of the Soviet Union for the First Half of 1933." Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (Russian State

Archive of Socio-Political History; hereafter, RGASPI), f. 495, o. 99, d. 35, l. 102 (formerly Rossiiskii Tsentr Khraneniia i Izucheniia Dokumentov Noveishei Istorii, or RTsKhIDNI). [Back.](#)

Note 18: Antonio San Román Sevillano, "Los amigos de la Unión Soviética: Propaganda política en España: 1933-1938," Ph.D. diss. (Universidad de Salamanca, 1993), 136. [Back.](#)

Note 19: The revelations contained in the Spaniards' correspondence with VOKS, archived in GARF, f. 5273, op. 3, will be fully explored in Chapter Four. [Back.](#)

Note 20: Fernando de los Ríos, *Mi viaje a la Rusia soviética* (Madrid: Caro Reggio, 1921). [Back.](#)

Note 21: The evening is described in detail in Pascua's above-quoted, unpublished article on Soviet-Spanish relations, "La República española y la Unión Soviética." AHN-Madrid. Diversos. M. Pascua, leg. 5, exp. 9, 2. Pascua, it should be noted, was also present at the dinner. [Back.](#)

Note 22: The hotel, which no longer exists, was located around the corner from the Correo Central, halfway between the Retiro and the Paseo del Prado; in other words, a short walk from the Cortes and Puerta del Sol, but still somewhat secluded. For a delightful account of the hotel during the war, see Chapter 18 of Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. [Back.](#)

Note 23: Dovgalevskii to NKID, 14 July 1933. *DVP SSSR*, vol. XVI, 444. [Back.](#)

Note 24: Both telegrams are reprinted in *DVP SSSR*, vol. XVI, 464-465. They were published in *Izvestiia* and *Pravda* on 29 July 1933. [Back.](#)

Note 25: According to his wife, the ambassador's required morning reading included *Pravda*, *Izvestiia*, *Humanité*, *Le Matin*, *Thames*, *The Morning Post*, *Figaro*, *Gazietta di Roma*, *ABC*, *Wiener Zeitung*, *Journal de Génève*, *Bund*, and the Parisian German daily *Pariser Tagesblatt*. See Nataliia Aleksandrovna Lunacharskaia, *Pamiat' serdtsa: vospominaniia* (Moscow: Iskusstvo 1962), 15-16. [Back.](#)

Note 26: See V. A. Lunacharskii, *Etiudy kriticheskie: zapadno-evropeiskaia literatura* (Moscow: Zemlia i fabrika, 1930). [Back.](#)

Note 27: Vidarte, *Las Cortes Constituyentes de 1931-1933*, 565. See also V. A. Lunacharskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. V (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1963). [Back.](#)

Note 28: See Vidarte, *Las Cortes Constituyentes de 1931-1933*, 565. [Back.](#)

Note 29: On 18 Aug. 1933, for example, the moderate Madrid daily *El Sol* gave Lunacharskii a positive endorsement, citing his reputation as both a literary critic and statesman of international stature. [Back.](#)

Note 30: For the debate over the appointment, see *El Socialista*, 18 Aug. 1933. [Back.](#)

Note 31: See Julio Alvarez del Vayo, *La nueva Rusia* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpa, 1926); *La senda roja* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpa, 1928); and *Rusia, doce años después* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpa, 1929). [Back.](#)

Note 32: See Julio Alvarez del Vayo, *The Last Optimist* (New York: Viking, 1950), 310. [Back.](#)

Note 33: *Ibid.*, 241. [Back.](#)

Note 34: Marina Casanova, *La diplomacia española*, 68. [Back.](#)

Note 35: Lunacharskaia, *Pamiat' serdtsa*, 15-16. [Back.](#)

Note 36: Jorge Semprún, *La segunda muerte de Ramón Mercader* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1984), 135. According to Semprún, at the time of his death Lunacharskii was preparing the first Russian edition of *Proust's A la recherche du temps perdu*. His edited volume was published in the USSR posthumously, in 1934. [Back.](#)

Note 37: For the first view, see Salvador de Madariaga, *Spain: A Modern History* (New York: Praeger, 1958), 469; the second, Julián Zugazagoitia, *Guerra y vicisitudes de los Españoles* (Paris: Librería Española, 1941), 127; and Pierre Broué, "La non-intervention de l'U.R.S.S. en Espagne (juillet-septembre 1936)," *Cahiers Leon Trotsky* 28 (Dec. 1986), 42. [Back.](#)

Note 38: Litvinov, in his speech to the Fourth Party Conference on 29 December of the same year—that is, three days after the death of Lunacharskii—remembered the ambassador as Moscow's best chance to see eye to eye with the Spaniards. See *DVP SSSR*, vol. XVI, 790. [Back.](#)

Note 39: See *DVP SSSR*, vol. XVII, 400-410; 492-493; 503. [Back.](#)

Note 40: *DVP SSSR*, vol. XIX, 738. [Back.](#)

Note 41: Hugh Thomas cites the Asturias revolt as the primary inhibitor of normalized relations between Moscow and Madrid during the Second Republic. See Hugh G. Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 3rd ed. rev. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 392ff. This is misleading and betrays a poor understanding of the relevant diplomatic history. The Soviets had a far better chance of securing an ambassadorial exchange during the tenure of the more left-wing Azaña government between 1931 and 1933, and, as we have seen, would have done so had fate not intervened. While the Asturias revolt conclusively ended any hope of an exchange during the subsequent rightist CEDA government that lasted from 1934-36, it is far from certain that the CEDA would have approved normalized relations even without the October uprising. [Back.](#)

Note 42: This is the conclusion of numerous scholars, most of whom rely on a Soviet press source, *Mirovoe khoziastvo i mirovaia politika* 11 (1934): 8. Cited in E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 289. [Back.](#)

Note 43: This total excludes Catalonia. See Carr, *Twilight*, 299. [Back.](#)

Note 44: On the Spanish communist press in the early 1930s, see Rafael Cruz, *El Partido Comunista de España en la II República* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), 67-70. [Back.](#)

Note 45: The key work on the Comintern and Spain is Antonio Elorza and Marta Bizcarrondo's recent *Queridos Camaradas: La internacional Comunista y España, 1919-1939* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1999). [Back.](#)

Note 46: The observation that the Comintern did not closely follow events in Spain until the fall of Primo and the monarchy is central to much current scholarship on the topic. For a recent overview, using declassified Soviet documents, see Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), 106-107; 139-142. [Back.](#)

Note 47: The independent nature of the PCE's leadership at this stage is described in José Bullejos, *La Comintern en España: recuerdos de mi vida* (Mexico, D.F.: Impresiones Modernas, 1972), 98-100. [Back.](#)

Note 48: The replacement of the old leadership by the younger generation of Moscow-bred Spanish communists is described in Tim Rees, "The highpoint of Comintern influence?" in *International Communism and the Communist*

International, 1919-1943, eds. Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 145-47. The author relies on recently declassified materials from fond 495 of RGASPI, though the new documents offer few if any revisions to the standard historiography on the question. For a similar and older account by one of the actual participants, see José Bullejos, *La Comintern en España*, 202-207. See also E. H. Carr, *Twilight*, 304-307. [Back.](#)

Note 49: Tim Rees, "Highpoint," 146. It should be noted at this juncture that on the question of the Comintern's first assignment of regular personnel to Spain, Gerald Howson, in his otherwise excellent study, *Arms for Spain* (New York: Murray, 1998), is mistaken. He incorrectly claims that the Comintern's first regular agent on the peninsula, in place since the early 1930s, was the Bulgarian Boris Stefanov (a.k.a. Stoin Minev). In fact, Stefanov was dispatched to Spain only after the war began. See *Arms for Spain*, 51-52. [Back.](#)

Note 50: On Codovilla's appointment and activities in Spain, see Elorza and Bizcarrondo, *Queridos Camaradas*, 110-88. [Back.](#)

Note 51: The PCE vote total in the election varies according to the source. Rafael Cruz estimates that the party received between 170,000-200,000 votes. E. H. Carr, quite improbably, claims 400,000. I have taken the most conservative figure, though it might well have been higher. See Rafael Cruz, *Partida Comunista*, 170; and E. H. Carr, *Twilight*, 309. More important than the final vote count, the PCE saw at least a fourfold increase over its 1931 electoral results. [Back.](#)

Note 52: See Cruz, *Partida Comunista*, 205-16; and McDermott and Agnew, *Comintern*, 139. [Back.](#)

Note 53: Fernando Claudín, *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform* (New York: Harmondsworth, 1975), vol. II: 171-82. [Back.](#)

Note 54: McDermott and Agnew, *Comintern*, 120-57. [Back.](#)

Note 55: *Ibid.*, 132. [Back.](#)

Note 56: E. H. Carr, *Twilight*, 317. [Back.](#)

Note 57: The political background for the February elections is best covered in Stanley G. Payne, *Spain's First Democracy: The Second Republic, 1931-1936* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993). [Back.](#)

Note 58: Cruz, *Partida Comunista*, 256. Again, E. H. Carr seems wildly off the mark, claiming 400,000 votes for the PCE; see *The Comintern and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 3. Cruz refuses to estimate the PCE count, though it is certain that José Díaz won 220,195 votes. [Back.](#)

Note 59: "Resolution on the Development of Publication Activities in Spain." The decision was the eighth item on the agenda of the ECCI session of 28 Feb. 1936, Protocol Nr. 30. RGASPI, f. 495, op. 18, del. 1078, ll. 317-324. [Back.](#)

Note 60: For a discussion of the campaign's activities, see Chapter Four. [Back.](#)

Note 61: "Decision on the Spanish Question," 13 June 1936. RGASPI, f. 495, op. 18, del. 1092, l. 51. [Back.](#)

Note 62: Quoted in McDermott and Agnew, *Comintern*, 140. [Back.](#)

Note 63: The suggestion that Spain, like Mongolia before it, was a testing ground for the "popular democracies" of post-war Eastern Europe was a charge frequently leveled by some

left-wing opponents of Soviet policy in Spain. The issue is taken up in detail by Julián Gorkin in an essay in *The Strategy of Deception*, ed. Jeane J. Kirkpatrick (New York: Farrar Strauss, 1963), 196. See also Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 295. [Back](#).

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