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## 4. The Campaigns of Solidarity in the USSR

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### I. The Present Historiography

The Soviet Union's campaign of solidarity with the Spanish Republic, as a subject of historical inquiry, has to date been taken up only by Soviet and post-1991 Russian historians. For two decades after the end of the Spanish Civil War, no Soviet source was permitted to acknowledge that Moscow had lent military assistance to the Spanish Republic. Only with the publication of the memoirs of Red Army participants and Soviet journalists in the 1960s and 1970s, and the slow trickle of published official data documenting the scale of Moscow's military aid, did the USSR begin to reveal its influence on the Republic's military fortunes. By contrast, the Soviet people's moral and humanitarian aid to the Republic was a topic endlessly exploited by the Soviet regime, both during the war and for many years after. No Soviet historian of the events in Spain could desist from touting Moscow's alleged leadership role in providing relief aid to the Loyalists, or from underlining the "popular" and "spontaneous" nature of the successive campaigns of solidarity with the Republic. <sup>1</sup>

The subject of solidarity and relief aid, taken up again and again by Soviet hands, has received scant attention in Western secondary literature. Apart from acknowledgement of the most essential aspects of this campaign, Western historians have largely neglected the course and scope of Soviet domestic attention to the Spanish war. <sup>2</sup> Among Spanish commentators, the neglect is even starker, with nary a mention of what was likely the largest foreign humanitarian mobilization ever directed towards the Iberian Peninsula.

A full accounting of the humanitarian campaign requires, in the first place, the ready availability of Soviet press accounts from 1936-39 and, second, access to the unpublished and until very recently classified CPUSSR documents that might expose the strategic underpinnings of the state-sponsored crusade in favor of the Republic. But the Anglo- and Francophone interpretations of the war have steered clear of this topic, not because of the unavailability of essential documents, but due to its apparent irrelevance. The critical questions regarding the Soviet Union and the civil war have always centered on Moscow's larger geo-strategic goals, the extent and nature of Soviet military intervention, and the specific military lessons that the Soviets took from the Spanish conflict into World War II.

Similarly, anti-communist former Republicans, also lacking the requisite primary historical documents, have avoided the Soviets' humanitarian agenda. Luis Araquistain, perhaps the most disillusioned and openly anti-Soviet commentator on the Spanish Left, catalogues Stalin's crimes against the Republic but never credits the USSR with simultaneously undertaking a sizable relief operation. <sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, Franquista interpreters, tireless proponents of a theory of Communist infiltration of the Second Republic, were always loath to acknowledge Soviet humanitarian aid. <sup>4</sup>

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Thus the student of the civil war encounters a marked polarity on the topic of Soviet domestic involvement. On the one hand are Soviet writers hailing popular solidarity as evidence of Moscow's position of moral superiority; on the other are Western writers who either devalue the entire movement or avoid it altogether. This historiographic gap has not only contributed to the paucity of rigorous assessments of the Soviet role in Spain, but has also left the Soviet domestic scene conspicuously absent from otherwise trenchant

investigations of the topic.

## II. The Comintern's Organization of an International Solidarity Movement

With the exception of the USSR, Italy, Germany, Portugal, and Mexico, the governments of Europe and the Americas chose not to intervene on either side of the Spanish Civil War. Worldwide popular opinion was another matter. From the very first days of the conflict, popular demonstrations in support of the Spanish Republic were taking place on several continents. Within weeks, a campaign of solidarity had begun among the citizens of dozens of countries worldwide. The movement would take a variety of forms, including the collection of relief aid, mass rallies and demonstrations, dissemination of pro-Republican propaganda, and the organization of volunteers to fight with the Loyalists. <sup>5</sup> In the first two years of the civil war, according to one Russian source, foreign donations to the Republic exceeded 18 million francs. <sup>6</sup>

Close inspection of declassified records in the former Communist Party archive in Russia indicate that, following the outbreak of hostilities in Spain, the Comintern's governing body, the ECCI, took immediate steps to mobilize communist forces around the world in support of the Republic. Indeed, nearly all of the organizational and institutional forces behind the pro-Republican demonstrations worldwide were initiated and encouraged at every stage by either the Comintern or the various national Communist parties. At the ECCI session of 23 July 1936, the first meeting after the rebel uprising, Comintern chief Georgii Dimitrov spoke of the Spanish war's potential for rallying international forces to the side of the Popular Front. The struggle promised, he said, to have "enormous significance and great influence on the masses." This potential, Dimitrov concluded, "must be promoted and advanced." <sup>7</sup> At the same meeting, the Hungarian representative Ernő Gerő, a member of the Comintern's Roman Secretariat (covering France, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Romania), concurred that the ECCI's first course of action must be "wide-scale international mobilization." <sup>8</sup> Gerő's summary report of the civil war's first week concluded that "it is advisable to quickly develop this campaign" to promote the Popular Front. <sup>9</sup>

Though at the 23 July session the ECCI had affirmed its general support of the Republic, the details and dimensions of the Comintern's international efforts would be fleshed out only in the weeks and months to come. On 3 August 1936, the ECCI passed a resolution directing the Comintern front organization International Red Aid to "immediately undertake a wide campaign of solidarity for the fighters defending the Republic in Spain." In its first stage, the campaign would include "collections of medicines, foodstuffs, [and] gold," as well as the enlistment of medical volunteers and purchase of ambulances. <sup>10</sup> In the same vein, at the 22 September session the chief field agent in Spain, the Argentine-born Vittorio Codavilla, told the ECCI that:

It is necessary to hasten the international solidarity a little, not only in discourse, but something more concrete. I am speaking not only about the question of aid, but about doing everything possible to prevent the others [Nationalists] from receiving all they are getting from abroad. We believe that the battle will be long. <sup>11</sup>

Less than three weeks later, the ECCI passed a resolution that detailed several aspects of the Comintern's campaign of international solidarity. <sup>12</sup> The central item on the resolution was the organization of a Communist-backed European women's conference in Paris at the end of October, "to organize practical relief for the Spanish women, children and families." <sup>13</sup> In addition, the ECCI authorized a major propaganda operation to draw attention to the

campaign of solidarity, and to include "immediate publication in mass editions" of recent speeches by the Republic's Foreign Minister Del Vayo and NKID Commissar Litvinov. <sup>14</sup> On 28 December 1936, the campaign was given further encouragement by an even more emphatically worded ECCI resolution:

The Presidium of the ECCI welcomes and whole-heartedly supports the development of a campaign of solidarity with the Spanish people by the international proletariat and democratic forces of all states. [The ECCI] calls for employing even wider forms of solidarity in all areas, and even greater activism in this campaign of brotherly support of the Spanish people. <sup>15</sup>

Despite these and other concerted efforts by the governing body in the first six months of the war, the Comintern leadership continued merely to underline the great potential of events in Spain to advance the organization's international agenda. On 8 September 1937, an internal report to the ECCI suggested that the intervening year had not seen the campaign develop sufficiently. "We believe," the report asserted, "that it is very important for the international aid campaign to be strengthened." <sup>16</sup> A similar comment was made a short time later, on 20 September, by Dmitrii Manuilskii, head of the Roman Secretariat:

The events in Spain must constantly be exploited to raise the enthusiasm of the masses. We are far from exploiting all our possibilities." <sup>17</sup>

Two weeks later, on 3 October, the ECCI issued another resolution on the international campaign, giving detailed instructions on how the operation should proceed:

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### **The Campaign in Defense of Republican Spain**

#### a. Aim of the campaign:

The aim of the campaign is to put a stop to the aid being rendered Franco.  
Forms of the Campaign:

1. In non-fascist countries: mass meetings, meetings at factories, demonstrations, action in Parliament, municipalities and in the Labor press.
2. In fascist countries: all forms of protest no matter how insignificant they may seem at times—chalking walls, pasting up small placards, scattering leaflets at places where large numbers of people gather, i.e. market places, theatres, cinemas; small flying meetings, utilization of the illegal radio, open letters of relatives of soldiers serving in Spain, organizing the expression of sympathy with them, etc. Everywhere, both in fascist and non-fascist countries, collections should be organized at the factories....

#### b. Ways and Means of the Campaign

The ways and means of bringing about a stoppage of aid to Franco are to bring pressure to bear on the democratic governments in order that they come out in a united front against the fascist states and compel them by measures of a political, economic and, if necessary, military character to withdraw from Spain and stop all support of the fascist bandit Franco....

#### c. The Content of the Campaign

Day to day exposure of the facts of aid to Franco on the part of Germany and Italy, wherever possible giving exact names, dates, places, names of ships, etc.; a vivid and clear description of all the barbarities committed by the rebels and interventionists....

All of this must be imbued with one central idea and connected by one fundamental everyday demand, the demand of joint action of the democratic states that they take all necessary measures to check the fascist robbers and interventionists. [18](#)

The ECCI's drive to rally international forces in support of the Spanish Republic continued well into 1938. Indeed, the Comintern forcefully underlined its campaign of solidarity as late as August of that year, at a time when Franco's victory was assured and Soviet military aid had fallen off to a trickle. On 28 August 1938, the ECCI issued its last major resolution on the question, a declaration that essentially echoed that of the previous October. As before, the Comintern called for a renewed campaign

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... to draw into the work of aid for Republican Spain the widest masses of the population (parties and trade unions, peasant organizations, women, youth, intellectuals, charity organizations, etc.). The campaign must be organized in such a way that all can participate in it in any form: contributions of money or in kind (gold, valuables). [19](#)

Several months later, in November of the same year, a report prepared for the Soviet leadership by Ernst Gerö stressed once again the need to "strengthen international aid." [20](#)

Since the Comintern was the organizing body behind efforts to mount an international movement in support of the Republic, the most visible demonstrations occurred where Communist parties or cells had strong backing; in particular in France, England, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, the United States, Canada, and some South American republics. The popular response to the Comintern-directed operation was mitigated, however, by anti-communist forces in the ruling governments of these countries. The result was a campaign that succeeded only in fits and starts, never gathering full momentum or emerging as a large-scale movement. Moreover, the Comintern leadership never considered the results of the campaign adequate, as demonstrated in their repeated calls for renewed international efforts on behalf of the Republic. [21](#) In only one state, the Soviet Union, did the solidarity campaign achieve the broadly based mass mobilization that the many ECCI resolutions had encouraged. There the campaign in support of the Republic was far better organized, longer in duration, and included a far greater proportion of the citizenry than similar activities taking place anywhere else.

### III. Five Fundraising Drives, 1936-1938

While it may be convenient to refer to a general Soviet movement of solidarity with Republican Spain, what transpired between 1936 and 1938 was in fact a series of five separate campaigns, each somewhat distinct in design and duration. However distinct, all five campaigns pursued the same goal of popular sympathy and material support for the Loyalist cause, and all sprung directly from the initiatives of the ECCI or CPUSSR.

The first campaign appears to have begun in earnest on 3 August 1936, when *Pravda* reported that the workers from several Moscow factories had voted to approve a one-time donation of a fraction of their daily wage to a subscription fund for humanitarian aid to Spain. "In the Spanish example," the paper quoted one automobile assembly-line worker as saying:

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... we see how quickly fascists from different states will unite when the task is the asphyxiation of the working class. Through our relief aid ... we will show the

fascists that no country will be cut off from the workers of the rest of the world. The cause of Spain is our own cause. <sup>22</sup>

A modified version of this last comment, it should be noted, was soon taken up as a rallying cry for the first campaign of solidarity; somewhat later it would be attributed to Stalin. <sup>23</sup> Other slogans from the initial sympathy campaign included "Long live the Spanish Republic!", "Lend a hand to help the Spanish people!", "Hands off the Spanish people!", "Down with the fascist rebels and their supporters!", and "Down with the fascist rebels and their German and Italian inspirers!"

The same day that *Pravda* was reporting the beginning of the subscription drive, tens of thousands of Muscovites took to the streets with hand-lettered signs bearing these and other slogans. In Red Square, where the demonstrators numbered (again, according to the state-run media) 120,000, fiery orators purportedly whipped the crowd into a frenzy. The rally continued into the night, and included numerous speeches, singing, chanting, and the declaration of impassioned resolutions to steadfastly defend the Spanish Republic. Well-attended rallies also took place in other major Soviet cities. The official count placed some 100,000 in front of the Winter Palace in Leningrad, and an additional 100,000 in Tashkent, 60,000 in Gorki, 35,000 in Rostov-on-Don, 30,000 in Minsk, 20,000 in Sverdlovsk, and 10,000 in Tbilisi. <sup>24</sup>

Following these demonstrations, the campaign rapidly escalated. By the end of the first day of rallies, organizers were recommending that all workers make a donation to the campaign. To facilitate easy payment of the pledged amounts, Gosbank established a single depository account accessible throughout the USSR. The state-run media widely circulated the new account number, 159783. <sup>25</sup> By 5 August, just two days after the campaign had begun, bank officials reported that the donations had exceeded 12 million rubles. <sup>26</sup> According to *Pravda*, the movement soon spread from open-air rallies to events of nearly every kind: factory and collective farm meetings, concerts, poetry readings, primary and secondary school assemblies, and gatherings at union halls and cultural centers. <sup>27</sup>

The high-water mark of the first campaign came during the flurry of activity between 3 and 6 August 1936. A second campaign began on 12 September, when the major Soviet daily newspapers printed on their front pages an open letter from the women workers of the Moscow textile factory Trekhgornyi. "We call on all women of the USSR," the letter began, "with a strong appeal to organize food aid for the working women of Spain, and for the children and mothers of the struggling Spanish people. We encourage you to buy food products and send them to Spain for the children and women of the heroic Spanish people." <sup>28</sup>

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Just as the workers' resolution of the previous month had initiated the first fundraising drive, the Trekhgornyi appeal unleashed a new round of intense pro-Republic campaigning. On 13 September, the Soviet press reported that, in scores of factories throughout the USSR, women workers were responding to the call with enthusiastic donations. <sup>29</sup> In an atmosphere of socialist competition reminiscent of the Stakhanovite delirium of the previous year, factory committees in major Soviet cities now entered into spirited rivalries to out-donate one another. <sup>30</sup> The Trekhgornyi women had started the bidding with a total grant of 50 rubles. Imagine their indignity when a single woman—Maria Burdenko, a professor of surgery—produced the same amount! A collective farm worker from Sverdlovsk, meanwhile, made headlines by pledging five days' pay. The women of the Karpov Physico-Chemical Institute raised 303 rubles and then scraped together another 50 kopecks. <sup>31</sup> In a display of awesome industriousness, O. Knipper-Chekhova—the widow

of the author Anton Chekhov—single-handedly raised 200 rubles. Seizing the limelight for herself, an opera star announced a benefit concert. But within a week, the women of the Red October factory at Tula had outdone them all, producing a wad of 760 rubles. <sup>32</sup> The Trekhgornyi women, proud and self-righteous days before, now appeared downright niggardly.

On 21 September, the men of the Stalin auto factory in Moscow announced that all 35,000 workers would enter into the subscription campaign. <sup>33</sup> Their resolution set into motion the expected matching pledges from millions of working men across the Soviet Union. On 23 September, the major dailies were reporting that factories throughout the Soviet capital, and indeed in all the republics, were mimicking the workers of the Stalin assembly plant. <sup>34</sup> Before the end of September, the new fund drive was dominating all aspects of Soviet society. For three weeks, the donation competition continued unabated, with the thunderstruck state press eagerly reporting each new amount. <sup>35</sup>

The campaign reached virtually everyone. The Communist Youth and Pioneers each held their own rallies at schools and youth centers; children wrote letters to newspapers promising to break open piggy banks for the Republican cause <sup>36</sup>; artists' halls hosted evening programs to raise funds; theatres and music halls held benefit concerts and shows; union halls and collective farm meeting rooms throughout the USSR echoed with new slogans of solidarity and repeated resolutions to raise more funds. "We are with you, sons and daughters of the Spanish people," proclaimed *Pravda* on 22 September. <sup>37</sup> Less than two weeks into the second campaign, Soviet citizens had donated an additional 7 million rubles. <sup>38</sup> By 1 October, the total amount collected during the second drive exceeded 14 million rubles. <sup>39</sup>

Throughout October and the first part of November, the campaign of solidarity continued with few signs of letting up. A newsreel shot in Spain and screened in cities across the Soviet Union showed the arrival of aid in a Loyalist port and a large crowd of grateful Spaniards thanking the Russian crew. <sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, meetings and  demonstrations were held daily in cities across the USSR, while the unabating subscription drive kept the total collected sum soaring ever higher. On 11 October *Izvestiia* was reporting that the fund collection had reached 26 million rubles. <sup>41</sup> Less than three weeks later, on 27 October, this figure had nearly doubled, to 47 million. <sup>42</sup>

While the Soviet subscription drives represented a tangible form of sacrifice and generosity, an equally ubiquitous display of solidarity came in the form of letters and telegrams sent by Soviet workers to the Spanish Republic. A telling example is a telegram of 15 September 1936 from a society of Azerbaijani writers and their wives to Dolores Ibárruri, the PCE's chief propagandist during the war:

Our entire fatherland, from the North Pole to the rivers of the Baltic and Black Seas, from the peaks of the Caucasus to the Sierra of Pamir, burns with implacable hatred towards the fascist tyrants who have raised their bloody hands against the legal Spanish government, against the democracy and freedom of the Spanish people. Our entire great fatherland follows with profound emotion each advance of your victory against the fascist beasts. <sup>43</sup>

The most visible and publicized aspects of the second major campaign of support for the Spanish Republic came to a close in early November 1936. This should not be taken to mean that humanitarian support and demonstrations of solidarity ended; many of those

who had earlier pledged a portion of their earnings remained subscribed in 1937 and 1938, and others, though fewer in number, until the end of the war. After the autumn of 1936, there continued in many Soviet cities, towns, and rural collectives frequent gestures of support for the Republic: a resolution here, a brief subscription drive there. In April 1937, for example, the 1200 employees of the Molotov Institute of Energy in Moscow together signed a declaration of solidarity with the Spanish Republicans; <sup>44</sup> the following month, the members of the Academy of Architecture of the USSR did the same. <sup>45</sup> In July 1937, it was the turn of the workers at the Soviet State Literature Museum. <sup>46</sup>



Apart from these ongoing residual benefits of the first two campaigns, the Soviets would inaugurate three additional fundraising drives, the first of which was associated with the sinking and confiscation of Soviet shipping by the Spanish Nationalist navy. The first ship lost by the Soviets was the Komsomol, which was sunk in the Mediterranean on 14 December 1936, while, according to the Soviet government, ferrying humanitarian supplies.

<sup>47</sup> In 1937, two more Soviet ships carrying food and provisions, the *Timiriázev* and *Blagoev*, were destroyed by the Nationalists.

<sup>48</sup> A fourth, the *Smidovich*, had its cargo of relief supplies seized in January 1937. <sup>49</sup> In the USSR, the loss of each ship was rapidly converted into a new call for demonstrations of solidarity with the Republic and for the collection of relief aid to replace the lost cargoes. <sup>50</sup>



Finally, the fourth and fifth campaigns of Soviet sympathy were organized around the July 1937 and 1938 anniversaries of the rebel uprising of 1936. On these occasions, special demonstrations were announced in the central press, and the familiar mass rallies took place in the larger cities. For the July 1938 commemoration, some 35,000 Leningraders and 20,000 Muscovites participated. Significant gatherings also took place in Kharkov, Kiev, Iaroslav, and Dnipropetrovsk. In this last city, workers at an aluminum factory sent an open letter of solidarity to the Spanish people, offering their moral support at the two-year stage of the war. Identical displays were made by the residents of a collective farm near Stalingrad and the workers in a Kiev factory.

At the Moscow rally to commemorate the second anniversary of the civil war, the crowd was greeted by a Spaniard, the writer Isidor Acevedo, who had been active in pro-Soviet propagandizing since the late 1920s. <sup>56</sup> Acevedo was not the only representative of the Spanish Republic engaged to promote the campaign of solidarity within the USSR. During the course of the civil war, 124 Spanish Republicans were brought to the USSR at the invitation of major state and party organizations. <sup>57</sup> These visits, which typically involved between fifteen and thirty delegates apiece, occurred in November 1936, April-May 1937, November 1937, April-May 1938, and November 1938. Lasting two or three weeks, the visits were adequately spaced so as to justify new excitement each time.  During their sojourns in the Soviet Union, the Spanish delegates were used as widely as possible to advance and stimulate the solidarity movement. The Soviet press covered their visits in extensive detail, and wherever they traveled the Spaniards were invariably met by scores of well-wishers and sympathizers of the Republic. <sup>58</sup> The Soviet newsreel agency Soiuzkinokhronika often highlighted the Spanish visitors in short features screened both domestically and overseas. A reel shot during on 1 May 1937, for example, gives the Iberian delegates a place of obvious privilege. <sup>59</sup>

To summarize, then, the Soviet campaign of solidarity with the Spanish Republic was a multi-stage, multi-year project that sought to involve a large part of the Soviet citizenry. Its success was due in no small part to the employment of every imaginable form of

propaganda and public stimulation, including saturation press coverage, mass rallies, the frequent devising of new slogans, cultural gatherings of every variety, and visitations by foreign representatives.

In assessing the extent of the campaigns of solidarity, it is reasonable to question the reliability of the Soviet press in documenting the attendance at mass rallies, the enthusiasm of the populace, or the general atmosphere of the humanitarian effort. Though the state-run newspapers were mouthpieces for the Stalinist regime, the oft-repeated quip that there was never any *pravda* (truth) in *Pravda* should not allow one to entirely dismiss the Soviet media as simply a misinformation and propaganda service. While the Stalinist press was notorious for withholding key information, whitewashing local disasters with false reports, or disguising the true nature of official policies, at some level a Soviet newspaper had to reflect a reality that its reader could recognize, even if that reality was itself the creation of the one-party state. <sup>60</sup> In the case of the solidarity campaigns, the reporting in *Pravda*, *Izvestiia*, *Trud*, and other state-run newspapers omitted the most important aspect of the entire movement: that it was conceived and directed by the CPUSSR—a critical point discussed at length below.

Nonetheless, there is no compelling justification to doubt the basic accuracy of the Soviet media's day-to-day coverage of the campaign; indeed, many of the events can be verified by independent contemporary observers. Numerous members of the diplomatic corps resident in Moscow are on record making repeated references to the growing solidarity drive and to specific aspects of the campaign, including the mass rallies, benefit concerts, and other displays of sympathy with the Republic. <sup>61</sup> Louis Fischer, the American journalist who during the war made frequent trips to both the USSR and the Republican zone, noted that "Spain was stirring Russia as no Soviet issue in recent years had stirred it." <sup>62</sup> Furthermore, he added:

Moscow lived in Spain. Everybody talked Spain. My boys asked me to come to their schools and give little speeches on Spain. At least eight Soviet friends asked me how they could go and fight in Spain. The director of a museum came to see me and inquired whether I had any posters or documents relating to the Spanish War. The apartment was filled with people all the time, and no one let me ask questions about Russia. "Spain is more important," they said. "If we win in Spain we will be happy here." The newspapers were filled with endless articles and reports on the Spanish situation. <sup>63</sup>

Nearly identical comments were voiced by Aleksei Adzhubei, son-in-law of Khrushchev, and a schoolboy in 1937:

The only thing that existed for us that year was Spain, the fight with the Fascists.

Spanish caps—blue with red edging on the visor—came into fashion, and also big berets, which we tilted at a rakish angle.... <sup>64</sup>

If the overall tone and extent of the solidarity campaigns is now clearer, we must still investigate the motivating forces behind the movement and its apparent impact on the Republic. The campaign clearly succeeded in providing sizable and direct benefits for the Spanish Republic, although the total amounts raised by the Soviet populace vary according to the source. A recent Russian scholar has estimated that, from the inception of the campaign in August 1936 to the end of the civil war, the Soviet people raised 274 million rubles (c. 11,416,000 pounds sterling) for the Spanish Republic. This included some 115

million rubles (4,791,000 pounds) in 1936, 102 million (4,250,000 pounds) in 1937, 45 million (1,875,000 pounds) in 1938 and 9 million (375,000 pounds) in 1939. <sup>65</sup> These funds were used to purchase massive quantities of food, clothing, medicine, and children's toys, which were shipped to Spain in Soviet vessels. During the first three months of the campaign alone—August-October 1936—five separate shipments ferried humanitarian aid from Soviet ports to the Spanish Republic. <sup>66</sup>

The precise contents of the humanitarian shipments, as well as the accounts of the arrival and unloading of all vessels involved, were widely reported in the Soviet and Spanish press. <sup>67</sup> According to the calculations of one post-Soviet Russian researcher, in late 1936 humanitarian aid sent to Spain included 210,000 pounds of flour, 252,000 pounds of wheat, 257,000 pounds of sugar, 60,000 pounds of butter, 18,000 pounds of margarine, 16,000 pounds of dried fish, 685,000 cans of preserved food, 1000 crates of fresh eggs, 125,000 cans of powdered milk, coffee, cocoa, 18,500 pounds of smoke-cured food, and 10,000 suits of children's clothes. <sup>68</sup>

Numerous contemporary sources bear witness to the positive impact of this Soviet aid in Spain. The Loyalist press was often particularly enthusiastic in expressing gratitude for Soviet assistance. The readers of *Mundo Obrero*, which had its own Moscow correspondent, were able to follow the successive campaigns of solidarity as easily as the Soviets themselves. <sup>69</sup> Thus on 4 August 1936, the paper first reported the initial declarations of solidarity; the following day, an entire page was devoted to the mass rallies in Red Square, Palace Square, and other Soviet city centers. <sup>70</sup> After 5 August, it was a rare issue that did not have at least one item on the campaigns of support.

Press coverage extended beyond the PCE organ *Mundo Obrero*. The left-Republican Madrid daily *Heraldo de Madrid* was nearly as exuberant in reporting the many stages of the fund drives in the USSR. After the workers of the Trekhgornyi factory made their 12 September appeal to all women of the USSR, the paper proclaimed that in Soviet Russia "there remains not a single woman, worker, professor, actress or mother who is not doing all she can to aid the Spanish people." <sup>71</sup>

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Like the press, officials of the Republic were often effusive in their recognition of the Soviet donations. At the height of the second solidarity campaign, the Spanish ambassador in Moscow Marcelino Pascua cabled his superiors with an update on the unfolding events:

To the Ministry of State, Madrid.  
Continuation of great general interest in the events in Spain among workers, city-dwellers, collective farmers, intellectuals, academics and artists.... In frequent and enormous gatherings they show sincere enthusiasm and support for the Spanish people. They follow attentively the details of the combat situation on the different fronts. ... The fifth shipment of food and clothing has just left for Spain.  
Greetings, Ambassador of Spain. <sup>72</sup>

Receiving this news, the prime minister sent a quick reply, with instructions:

I have just received the news that you have communicated to me on the subject of a movement of sympathy by the people of the USSR towards our heroic fighters. I ask you to publicly express the gratitude of the Government and of the Spanish people, who today are more resolute than ever to achieve victory. Largo Caballero, President of the Council of Ministers of Spain. <sup>73</sup>

Two weeks later, Largo Caballero sent Kalinin an identical message, as did the president of the Spanish Republic, Manuel Azaña. <sup>74</sup>

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Expressions of thanks were not limited to government officials. Many individual Spaniards were sufficiently moved by the Soviet donations to write personal letters to the Kremlin. <sup>75</sup> In November 1936, for example, a militiaman from Vizcaya sent Soviet President Kalinin a hand-written note:

We wish ... to thank you for the provisions which, as a mark of your brotherly sentiments, we received from you, and which shall support us in our struggle against this retrograde fascism. ¡Salud pueblo ruso! Viva la revolución social! <sup>76</sup>

If this survey of the Soviet solidarity campaigns and their reception in Spain were to end here, our conclusions would no doubt be positive and unambiguous: the Soviet people responded wholeheartedly to the humanitarian needs of the Spanish Republic, and this assistance strengthened the ties between the two states. In fact, this is the basic narrative in all Soviet historiography on the topic. But this thesis avoids a key problem, the same one that confronts any student of undemocratic societies: To what extent, if any, does popular behavior in a dictatorship reflect the mood and will of the people, or is public behavior an extension of the ruler's own power and desires? Did this multi-faceted movement of sympathy and charity reflect the political needs of the government or the conscience of the Soviet people? Was it part of a larger program of political control and manipulation, or was it an isolated example of the Soviet people seizing the initiative? In brief, was the campaign of solidarity *popular* in any meaningful sense?

As already indicated, the secondary Soviet-era literature on this topic gives unwavering credit to the people themselves for initiating and sustaining the successive campaigns of assistance. <sup>77</sup> To be sure, these sources draw principally on statements of Soviet observers who, during the war itself, stressed the popular nature of the demonstrations. Mikhail Kol'tsov, for example, who was present at the first large-scale rally in Moscow, claims that:

The demonstration had not been planned in advance; only this morning was it decided that the meeting should take place. There was just a few hours time to prepare posters, signs and the enormous caricatures of the Spanish fascists. <sup>78</sup>

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A similar reading may be found in Ivan Maiskii's memoir, who credits the "broad masses of the Soviet people" for taking their stand "firmly and decidedly on the side of Spanish democracy." <sup>79</sup>

Soviet officials took particular care to advance the notion that the solidarity campaign was being driven by the will of the citizenry. Indeed, from the first days of the movement in early August 1936, the USSR made a concerted effort to establish that the drive had no connection with official policy. To this end, a letter from Deputy Foreign Commissar Nikolai Krestinskii to the Soviet chargé d'affaires in Rome stressed that Moscow's representatives must contrast the popular Soviet campaigns in favor of the Republic with Italy and Germany's state-sponsored support of the rebels:

In conversations with colleagues you must, of course, firmly emphasize the difference between the voluntary collection of funds—initiated in a completely spontaneous fashion by the working masses of the Soviet Union and other states—and directed to the legal government of Spain, and the organization of military assistance, which the governments of Italy and Germany are sending to the rebels for use against the legal Spanish government. <sup>80</sup>

Similarly, in a letter from Stalin to the general secretary of the PCE, the Soviet leader stressed the solidarity movement's independence from official policy:

In rendering aid to the revolutionary masses of Spain, the workers of the Soviet Union are only doing their duty. They realize that the liberation of Spain from the oppression of fascist reactionaries is not the private affair of Spaniards, but the common concern of all forward-looking and progressive humanity. [81](#)

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The view that Soviet citizens rose up on their own to protest events unfolding several thousand miles away is not limited to Kol'tsov and Maiskii, nor to official policymakers in the Soviet regime, all of whom were central figures in Moscow's Iberian enterprise. In a recent interview, Adelina Abramson, a Soviet interpreter who worked with the Republic's General Staff during the civil war, [82](#) emphatically denied that the campaign of solidarity resulted from official decrees:

Whatever else may be said of the Soviet regime's intentions in Spain, its intervention in Republican politics or manipulative control of the Popular Army, the Soviet people's genuine solidarity with and support of Spain's innocent victims, its women and children, must be seen as a distinct and separate issue, perhaps even unrelated. It is incorrect to attribute our sympathy for the Republic to the orders of our leaders. Our support was genuine. Our heartfelt sense of solidarity with the Spanish Republic was one of the few bright rays of light during the entire period. [83](#)

These assurances have an incontestable weight of earnestness, but they are conclusively refuted by recently declassified documents from the former Communist Party archive in Moscow.

#### **IV. The Role of the CPUSSR in Directing the Solidarity Campaigns**

Neither during the Spanish Civil War, nor for the balance of the Soviet era—nor even after official Soviet publications reversed earlier denials of military assistance to the Republic—did Moscow reveal that the solidarity campaigns and humanitarian collections were not only initiated and encouraged at the highest levels, but were in fact decreed and directed. Indeed, that the Kremlin so thoroughly concealed its own pivotal role in the campaigns of solidarity is evidence of the high value Stalin and the Soviet leadership placed on presenting the movement as "popular" and "spontaneous." The key declassified source linking the CPUSSR to the solidarity campaigns is a twelve-point Politburo protocol from 20 September 1936, entitled "Conference on the question of developing a campaign of assistance to the Spanish people." Until now, this document has neither been published nor translated, and its far-reaching implications for the question under consideration merit its full presentation:

##### **Conference on the question of developing a campaign of assistance to the Spanish people.**

1. Hold meetings centering on events in Spain in Moscow on 21 September at the Stalin and Kaganovich automobile factories. The announcements concerning these meetings should be prepared by 4 PM; Comrade Tal will see to their submission today to the central newspapers.
2. Hold this sort of meeting in Leningrad, Kiev, Kharkov, Minsk, Tiflis, Gorkii, Saratov, Kuibyshev, Stalingrad, Sverdlovsk, Cheliabinsk, Novosibirsk, Baku,

Kharabovsk, Vladivostok, Odessa, Dnepropetrovsk, Stalina, Rostov/Don, Ivanov and Boronezd.

3. Introduce a [humanitarian] deduction of 1/4 of daily pay.
4. The Party's Central Committee (Comrade Shvernik) will organize an appeal to the central committees of the unions by placing an appeal in the union press, and in the case of some committees (railroads, cotton production) in the central press.
5. For the Komsomol (Comrade Kosarev):
  - a. Organize gatherings of youth [workers] at the aircraft factory No. 39, and the 'Serp and Molot' factory.
  - b. Publish appeals in *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*
  - c. Issue orders determining the location of organized meetings of youth, which will illuminate the Spanish events.
6. Comrades Angarov and Nikolaev are ordered to provide for the organization (in Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev) of benefit concerts for Spanish women and children. Each concert will commence with solemn and brief speeches on the Spanish events.
7. Comrade Tal is ordered to provide in the coming days for wider coverage in the central and regional press of the campaign of solidarity and assistance of workers of the USSR with the workers of Spain. The newspapers *Pravda*, *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, *Trud*, as well as regional and local papers newspapers, must devote more space to this material in the coming days.
8. At meetings, the question of the Spanish events should be covered in greater depth. Comrades Tal and Knorin are ordered to provide that material for speakers and propagandists concerning the Spanish events is to be published three times daily.
9. Comrades Tal and Knorin are ordered to develop by 22 September slogans (for the press, speakers and clubs) related to the Spanish events.
10. Arrange for the publication on 21 September in newspapers (through TASS) the amount of funds that has been collected to aid Spanish women and children. Hereafter, systematically publish the new receipts of these funds. This project will be charged to Comrade Shvernik.
11. Comrade Tal is ordered to provide that on 22 September the leading story in *Pravda*, *Izvestiia*, *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, and *Trud* will illuminate the aid to the Spanish people and their struggle against the rebels.
12. Comrade Angarov is ordered to provide for more saturated radio transmissions of material illuminating the Spanish events and information regarding the response to these events in the interior of the country [USSR]. [84](#)



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At the same September meeting, the Politburo issued a five-point decree for the implementation of an identical campaign at the provincial and regional level. Appearing in longhand across the top of the original document are the thickly underlined words "Top Secret":

The Central Committee considers insufficient the work of the regional and provincial committees in developing a campaign of assistance for the struggle of the Spanish people. The Central Committee emphasizes that this major political campaign cannot be organized solely through the placement of notices and resolutions in the press. The Central Committee orders that:

1. At all places of employment, factory-wide meetings should be held for

- workers, engineers, and technicians. Employees should be quickly selected to lead discussions and produce directives concerning pay deductions for food and assistance to the women and children of Spain.
2. City-wide meetings should be held for workers, engineers, teachers, doctors, scientists, artists, domestic workers, and others.
  3. At the meetings, a brief report will be given to call attention to the events in Spain. A resolution will be made that calls for solidarity with the heroic Spanish people who are fighting under the leadership of their national government to free Spain from the fascist rebels who are supported by German and Italian fascists. The meetings will be led by union organizations and will be essentially identical to those developed at collective farms.
  4. Introduce a pay [humanitarian] deduction of 1/4 of the daily salary.
  5. Provisional newspapers must devote much wider coverage to illuminating the meetings, the resolutions on the collection of funds, as well as a separate paper section for letters from Soviet workers [on the Spanish question]. [85](#)

These two documents reveal that the Soviet regime was the driving force behind every major aspect of the solidarity movement, including the format and location of sympathy demonstrations, the suggested humanitarian pay deduction of one-fourth of a day's pay (one time only), the continuous development of new slogans, the organization of benefit concerts, and, most strikingly, the relentless exploitation of the state-run media to ceaselessly encourage and support each officially decreed component of the campaign.

The relatively late date of these particular decrees, appearing some six weeks after the humanitarian movement began in the USSR, should not imply that the Communist Party rushed in to capitalize on a successful popular movement. In truth, a great many documents in the former Communist Party archive remain classified; the minutes from all meetings during the civil war years, for example, are still unavailable. Future declassifications will undoubtedly flesh out the CPUSSR's role in the humanitarian movement from an earlier date. Even with the present limitations of the archival record, however, numerous unpublished documents and other primary materials attest to the Party's involvement in the campaign from its inception.

Let us return for a moment to the opening rally in Red Square on 3 August 1936. Contemporary accounts of the event, including that of Kol'tsov, consistently refer to a distinguished orator who made an impassioned appeal for the Soviet people to take up collections for the Spanish Republic. [86](#) The following day, this speaker was identified as Nikolai Shvernik, at the time Secretary of the All-Union Committee of the Trade Unions of the USSR, a member of the Politburo, and, as the above-cited decree indicates, a key figure in organizing the Party's campaign of solidarity (see points 4 and 10 of the protocol reproduced above). [87](#) It should also be noted that the Soviet campaign of solidarity commenced on the same day that the ECCI issued its first resolution calling for International Red Aid to begin its own campaign on a global scale. [88](#) This was certainly no coincidence.

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Many other hitherto classified documents illustrate the mechanics of the Party's role in the campaign from the earliest stages. On 11 September 1936, the Politburo approved a decree that sought to provide humanitarian relief for children in Republican Spain. [89](#) The following day marked the beginning of the second major fund drive, this time focusing on aid to women and children. As was observed above, the Soviet press credited the women workers of the Trekhgornyi textile factory in Moscow for initiating the new round of resolutions and collections. In exactly the same manner, the escalation of the campaign on 21 September was widely reported to be the result of the initiative of the 35,000

employees of the Stalin automobile plant in Moscow. Clearly, however, the campaign's fresh impulse was provided not by these factory workers, but by Point 1 of the Politburo decree of 20 September. The same decree ensured not only that the staged event would be splashed across the front pages of the national newspapers on 22 September, but that identical demonstrations would immediately follow in an additional twenty-one Soviet cities.

Given the Kremlin's meticulous stage-managing of the campaigns, it is not surprising that the Politburo also ordered the NKVD to closely monitor public reception of the movement. Early on, in the fall of 1936, the concealment of official decrees was effective, and the Republic's cause was easily sold. In November of that year, NKVD agents reported genuine excitement and emotion among the populace. But some exceptions were registered. Overheard comments included the following: "Your children don't see chocolate and butter, and we are sending them to Spanish workers"; and, "How can we sell grain. We ourselves are starving. Let the government stop sending grain to Spain, then there will be a lot of extra grain." <sup>90</sup>

The sometimes lukewarm popular enthusiasm for the solidarity campaigns is on display in one of the few surviving Soviet newsreels devoted to the demonstrations. <sup>91</sup> The six-

minute film, "Na Pomosch' Detiam i Zhenshchinam Geroicheskoi Ispanii" ("In Support of the Children and Women of Heroic Spain"), covers a solidarity meeting that took place in Moscow on 26 September 1936. Though this event occurred less than two months after the inauguration of the first campaign, the participants, whether speakers or observers, appear to be doing little more than going through motions. The newsreel opens with a joyless procession of workers marching towards a stadium. Close-ups of the attendees' faces reveal neither enthusiasm nor solemnity. The



speeches, with one exception, sound well rehearsed but canned and uninspired.

Crowd reaction is a mixture of indifference, boredom, and irritation. Even the officials seated behind the rostrum cannot mask their apathy. In sum, as a showcase for the solidarity movement, the film is counterproductive. That the authorities could find no better coverage to advertise the movement may indicate waning public support at even this relatively early date.

Elsewhere, however, surviving newsreel footage demonstrates some genuine enthusiasm for the relief campaign. Take, for example, the unreleased film fragment entitled "Españoles en Rusia." The undated clip was shot at an unidentified solidarity meeting at which several Republican soldiers delivered speeches in broken Russian. The Politburo, it should be noted, was responsible for

enlisting delegations of Loyalist workers and militiamen to travel to the USSR and participate in these gatherings. Indeed, the Soviet leadership believed the inclusion of Spanish representatives at solidarity rallies so essential that the Party itself funded the transportation and touring costs of all delegates. <sup>92</sup> "Españoles en Rusia" provides a

revealing window on one such meeting. Whether on account of the farcical nature of the multiple false starts required for one Loyalist to read his speech, the novelty of having a foreigner in their midst, or real interest in the Spanish war, the crowd is engaged and focused on the event, but in a lighthearted, almost whimsical way. <sup>93</sup> It should be



underscored that nothing here appears stage-managed or coerced.

Curiously, the Soviet authorities evidently never released this film; perhaps the palpable informality of the meeting belied the earnestness with which the Kremlin wished these occasions to be conducted.

If the public's attitude towards the campaigns tended to vary, the state-run press, on

Kremlin orders, relentlessly encouraged active participation. On this topic, David Allen's work is highly instructive, for he examines the percentage of space in *Izvestiia* devoted to the Spanish Civil War from 1936-39. Through the first five months of the war, an average of 14.91 percent of the available column space in the newspaper was given over to coverage of events in Spain. As the war progressed, the percentage slowly dropped off, though never precipitously; in the last four months of the war, it still commanded nearly 5 percent of all available space. More noteworthy, however, is the correlation between the implementation of the Politburo decrees on saturation press coverage and the sharp rise in the percentage of newspaper space devoted to the Spanish conflict. In the month following the 20 September 1936 decree, column space devoted to the war increased by 150 percent, from 10.05 percent in September to 25.36 percent in October. <sup>94</sup>

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Perhaps more remarkable than the Politburo's behind-the-scenes orchestration of the campaign of solidarity and manipulation of the press was the Party's practice of setting quotas for the humanitarian fund drive which were then required to be met through "voluntary" contributions. To illustrate this point, let us examine the Politburo decree of 5 October 1936:

1. Instruct the NKVT [People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade] to send Spain within fifteen days, as aid for children, 27,000 complete sets of children's clothes—boots, jackets, shirts, trousers and skirts—to be funded through collections among workers of the USSR
2. Instruct the NKVT (Comrade Beitzer) within ten days to provide to the Odessa NKVT bureau the specified 27,000 complete sets of children's clothes.
3. Order Narkomfin [People's Commissariat for Finance] (Comrade Grinko) to pay for the expenses, to be covered by the Soviet organizations, without taxes on the ordered clothes, as well as waiving fees on the freight, shipping and insurance expenses, up to 5 million rubles. <sup>95</sup>

Thus the Politburo ordered its ministries to rapidly finance, produce, and ship large quantities of clothing to Spain, the cost of which would later be reimbursed through worker collections. Certainly, the narrow timeframe for the execution of these orders explains in part the frenzied nature of the solidarity campaigns. <sup>96</sup> Even more significant, these quotas effectively transformed the humanitarian campaigns into something very similar to the Five-Year Plans, in which the Communist Party instituted industrialization and food production goals that the citizenry were then compelled to try to meet. And as in the Five-Year Plans, the solidarity campaigns in support of the Spanish Republic were subject to unrelenting stimulation through every variety of Soviet media. In sum, the solidarity campaigns were among the most successful side-shows of the Soviet Union's many-faceted connection with the Spanish Civil War. As we will now see, however, Soviet support was not successfully administered at the very end of the conflict, when the Republican fighters desperately required foreign assistance

## V. Soviet Humanitarian Assistance at the End of the War

Since the Soviets placed enormous emphasis on their humanitarian assistance to the Spanish Republic, both in the ongoing campaigns to raise funds for relief aid and the reception and care of the Spanish refugee children, it is reasonable to examine Moscow's conduct at the end of the war, when a refugee crisis of enormous proportions unfolded in southern France. As Franco's army moved swiftly through Catalonia, tens of thousands of Republican fighters and civilians fled across the border into French territory. The refugees clustered together in hastily constructed camps, often with no shelter from the elements

and lacking adequate food, medical attention, and sanitary facilities. <sup>97</sup> The Soviet policy towards the refugees has always been obscured by the same lack of primary official materials that characterizes all aspects of Moscow's Spanish adventure. Some of this fog has now lifted, but a full accounting of Soviet actions awaits further archival declassification in the Russian Federation.

At the end of the war, the Soviet regime came in for harsh criticism—especially from the right-wing French press—for its failure to actively support the refugees, not a few of whom were Comintern agents sent to fight at the behest of the Kremlin. The responsibility of caring for the estimated 400,000 dislocated persons fell mainly on the host country, France, although French authorities received substantial support from the International Red Cross. French appeals to other states to accept small numbers of refugees or contribute to their support met with a mixed response. The Soviet and British governments initially refused to help, though, according to Arnold Toynbee, Moscow eventually contributed 28,000 pounds sterling, and London 50,000. <sup>98</sup> For their part, the French had budgeted in February 1939 some 30 million francs to deal with the refugees.

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Apart from the post-war donation of the miserly sum of 28,000 pounds, the Soviets had earlier provided a more respectable sum to help alleviate the burgeoning refugee problem. Few historians have acknowledged this Soviet gift, while others have wrongly claimed that the amount was trivial. <sup>99</sup> Recently uncovered archival materials from the Archivo Histórico Nacional in Madrid now allow for a complete accounting of the affair. A 1 March 1939 letter from Marcelino Pascua (the Republic's ambassador to France) to his Soviet counterpart thanks the government of the USSR for a very significant donation:

My dear ambassador:

I would like to express to you with these lines my gratitude for the gift of five million francs, destined for the Spanish refugees in France, which your government has just presented to me, the representative of the Spanish Republic. I have already alerted President Negrín of this very propitious and generous gesture by the government of the USSR, which is evidence of the Soviets' genuine sympathy for the Spanish people in this difficult time....

<sup>100</sup>



The authenticity of this document cannot reasonably be called into question, and it may therefore be concluded that Moscow did indeed contribute five million francs of relief aid directly to the Republic's Paris embassy. Yet this gift was sent a month before the end of the war, when the Republic was still in existence. With Franco's conclusive victory on 1 April, the Soviets became far less magnanimous; hence the Kremlin's reluctance to make additional contributions to the refugee cause later in the spring. It appears that the Soviet government felt a certain obligation to the Spanish Republic up to the end of the war, but once the cause was finally lost, the Soviet leadership found no further justification for continued expenditures. It cannot be doubted that the Soviets' rocky relations with France throughout the war—not least in early 1939, when the Paris government may have prevented Soviet arms from reaching the desperate Republic <sup>101</sup>—made them more willing to abandon France to confront a refugee crisis for which the Kremlin held the French partially responsible.

This new evidence may appear to absolve the Soviet regime from the accusation of having abandoned the Republic during its final death throes. Yet the issue of humanitarian assistance is not completely resolved. There remains the problem of the resettlement of those refugees whose close association with the communists had made them unwanted throughout much of Europe. In early February 1939, the Soviet government had come out in bitter opposition to France's initial unwillingness to grant asylum to the scores of

political refugees appealing for assistance. "At the point of a sword," *Pravda* piously declared, "they turn away children, women, the old and the infirm. Never has such a disgraceful spectacle been witnessed." <sup>102</sup> An examination of Moscow's actions, however, reveals that the Kremlin was hardly in a position to point fingers.

At the end of the war, many exiles had appealed to the USSR to take them in, naïvely believing that the Soviets would match the words of their long-running propaganda campaign of solidarity with swift action. Thousands of those languishing in French camps were *brigadistas* who had answered the call to arms from Communist party cells around the world. Many were Communist exiles from Western Europe who had first received asylum in the USSR between 1933 and 1936, and were later dispatched by the Comintern to fight in the Spanish Civil War. Some of the injured Communist brigadistas had attempted as early as summer 1937 to be evacuated to the USSR, usually with no success. <sup>103</sup> Later, in October 1938, when the International Brigades were officially withdrawn, Comintern Secretary Dimitrov had tried valiantly to win asylum for hundreds of the same exiles. In a letter dated 3 December 1938, Dimitrov explained to a Party representative the Soviet connection to many of the officers working for the Republican army:

With regard to events in Spain, we sent 589 fraternal members of the CP, who had emigrated at an earlier time due to political motives. The majority of these worked in the capacity of commanders and political commissars in the IB. Part of these comrades perished in battle while a minority, with heavy injuries and sicknesses, will return to the USSR. At the present time there are 466 commanders. Of these, 203 have family in the USSR, while 115 have Soviet citizenship.

Together with the evacuation of the volunteers from Spain, 290 men cannot return to their own country because they would await death there or many years of imprisonment. Aside from that they have injuries, or are now invalids and due to their physical condition require constant care.

The secretary of the IKKI requests that some 300 of these men be admitted to the USSR. <sup>104</sup>

A Politburo meeting in February 1939 had resulted in the recommendation that local Communist parties in Western countries deal with the displaced International Brigade volunteers. Though this order emanated from the very center of Soviet power, the Politburo would permit only a limited number of exiles into the USSR itself. In late February, the Comintern produced a list of 242 Communist commanders and their dependents who were to be given documents of transit for the Soviet Union. <sup>105</sup> But many times that number were effectively abandoned by Moscow. The contradictory nature of this policy was the object of scorn and criticism not only in the West, but even within the highest circles of the Comintern leadership. In a letter of 26 August 1939 to Stalin from Georgii Dimitrov and Dimitrii Manuilskii, the Comintern officials pleaded with the Soviet dictator to reconsider the case of the exiles:

Dear Comrade Stalin:

At the present moment in the concentration camps in France there are 6011 former IB volunteers, out of whom 4697 are emigrants from states where communists have been driven underground. The nationalities of these 4697 people are split among the following:

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German	736
Austrian	483
Sudeten German	107
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1325</b>
Polish	950
Italian	872
Czech	483
Yugoslav	372
Hungarian	163
Romanian	160
Bulgarian	141
Croatian	81
Latvian	47
Brazilian	34
Lithuanian	27
Greek	25
Estonian	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>4697</b>

The majority of this group of people consists of workers, communists, and active members of communist parties. The Polish group of 950 people is comprised of emigrant workers who entered France to join the IB.

Earlier, the question was placed before the Politburo—which has worked on it since February—whether through communist parties, workers organizations, and aid committees for Spain, these former volunteers might secure accommodation in capitalist countries. As a result of extensive efforts, from February to May of this year 2374 people were successfully transferred to countries with legal workers movements, including the USA, England, Belgium, and Canada. In all probability, approximately 800 other IB members will be liberated legally into France.

Nevertheless, there remains a group of approximately 3500 people whom no bourgeois government wishes to receive. Winter is now approaching. The prisoners do not even have barracks and live under open skies. The French bourgeoisie is deliberately supporting the physical destruction of these comrades. Comrade Marty, who just returned from France, reports that the extremes of imprisonment in the concentration camps are eating away the volunteers, but with very few exceptions, they are not grumbling, and are maintaining themselves steadfastly, like Bolsheviks; they reject anyone who succumbs to the enemy's attempts to demoralize them.

Having exhausted all possibilities for achieving the liberation of these volunteers, we appeal to you, Comrade Stalin, with this favor. Won't you allow into the USSR 3000-3500 former fighters of the IB, [provided they are] subjected to a thorough examination? In the event the Politburo decides affirmatively to this

question, we will produce questionnaires and all materials and a special messenger will be dispatched to occupy himself with these people.

Comradely greetings,

G. Dimitrov  
D. Manuilskii [106](#)

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This document is striking in a number of ways. Clearly, it confirms the accusations of three generations of anti-Soviet writers who have accused Stalin of abandoning the men he had earlier sent to fight with the Spanish Republicans. Second, the letter hints at what may have been a significant level of dissent between the Comintern leadership and the Soviet dictator. With their very emotional case to admit the former International Brigade fighters to the USSR, Dimitrov and Manuilskii emerge as surprisingly concerned, and Stalin all the more cold and heartless. Let us recall that this was not a rhetorical speech to the Comintern Congress, but a personal letter to the Soviet leader marked *sovershenno sekretno* ("top secret")—a letter which openly credits Western states with doing more to help loyal communists than the Soviet Union. An area where the Kremlin acquitted itself far more admirably was the reception and upbringing in the USSR of some three thousand Spanish refugee children. Their story will be the focus of the next chapter.

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### Notes:

**Note 1:** The two key Soviet-era works are: Academy of Sciences of the USSR, *International Solidarity with the Spanish Republic, 1936-1939* (Moscow: Progreso, 1974); and Afanasii Arsen'evich Komshukov, "Natsional'no-revoliutsionnaia voina ispanskogo naroda 1936-1939 gg. i sovetskaia obshchestvennost," Ph.D. diss. (Kharkov, 1979). The topic is treated similarly elsewhere; for example, V. A. Talashova, "Sovetskii komsomol - aktivnei uchastnik dvizheniia solidarnosti s respublikanskoii Ispaniei v period natsional'no revolutsionnoi voiny, 1936-1939," Ph.D. diss. (Vologda, 1972); Y. A. Lvunin, "Kampaniia solidarnosti trudiashchikhsia SSSR s natsional'no-revolutsionnoi voinei ispanskogo naroda," *Vesti* 5 (1975): 5-13; the same author's *Internatsionalizm v deistvii* (Moscow: Mysl', 1985), 141-151; V. A. Tolmachaev, "Sovetskii Soiuz i Ispaniia: Opyt i uroki internatsional'noi pomoshchi (1936-1939)," Ph.D. diss. (Leningrad, 1991), 63-72; and the more recent M. V. Novikov, *SSSR, Komintern i grazhdanskaia voina v Ispanii 1936-1939*, 2 vols. (Iaroslav: Iaroslavskii gos. pedagogicheskii universitet, 1995), vol. I, 152-163. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** Consider the long-winded Bolloten, whose thesis concerns the undermining of the Republican war effort by the Soviet Union, but who finds no space in over one thousand pages to mention the Soviet relief campaign: Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain, 1936-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). By contrast, Gerald Howson's recent study, *Arms for Spain: The Untold Story of the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Murray, 1998), briefly acknowledges the campaign of solidarity, but badly misrepresents the movement: "Yet it is noticeable, in the films and newspaper reports of the meetings, that on the banners the word "Spain" is nowhere visible, that the portraits are not of Spanish leaders but of Marx, Lenin and Stalin, mostly Stalin, and that Spain is nowhere mentioned in the prepared speeches, which are devoted entirely to praising the far-sighted sagacity and benevolence of the Great Leader" (124). Howson's suspicion that the campaigns were motivated by the Stalinist regime's need for domestic consensus is correct, but he underestimates the nuanced nature of the humanitarian movement. As this chapter will demonstrate, Spain was front and center throughout, effectively masking the leadership's true intentions. An entirely different approach is the very dated, mostly speculative David E. Allen, "The Soviet Union and the

Spanish Civil War," Ph.D. diss. (Stanford Univ., 1952), 419-449. Allen is hamstrung by his lack of authoritative sources, but his mastery of the Soviet press allows him to trace the sequence of Moscow's official public pronouncements and speculate on their source and motivation. Some new research is presented in Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 171, though the movement as a whole is given short shrift. The best Western account of the campaign is Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security in Europe, 1933-1939* (London: St. Martin's, 1984), 110-115, though again, a lack of archival sources prevents the author from fully connecting the campaigns to the Politburo. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** See Luis Araquistain, "La intervención de Rusia en la guerra civil española," *Cuadernos 24* (1958) and *El comunismo y la guerra de España* (San José, Costa Rica: [s.n.] 1939). [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** Even Jesús Salas Larrazábal's *Intervención extranjera en la guerra de España* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1974), which appeared on the very eve of Franco's death, fails to treat this topic. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** The worldwide campaign is described principally in Soviet-authored monographs and articles, including the already-mentioned *International Solidarity, and Kommunisticheskii Intertatsional 3* (1939): 124-126. The organization of the International Brigades, a development closely related to the Comintern-backed international campaign of solidarity, will be covered in Chapter Fourteen. [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** M. T. Meshcheriakov, *Vsia zhizn' - bor'ba: o Khose Diase* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1976), 130-31. [Back.](#)

**Note 7:** ECCI Protocol No. 60, 23 Jul. 1936. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History, hereafter, RGASPI) (formerly Rossiiskii Tsentral'nyi Khraneniia i Izucheniia Dokumentov Noveishei Istorii, or RTskhIDNI), f. 495, op. 18, del. 1101, l. 15. [Back.](#)

**Note 8:** RGASPI, f. 495, op. 18, del. 1101, l. 32. On Gerö's role in Spain, see Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe, eds., *International Communism and the Communist International, 1919-1943* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 50; 148-151. [Back.](#)

**Note 9:** Rees and Thorpe, *International Communism*, 33. [Back.](#)

**Note 10:** ECCI Protocol No. 64, 3 Aug. 1936. RGASPI, f. 495, op. 18, del. 1105, l. 1. [Back.](#)

**Note 11:** Codavilla report to ECCI, 22 Sept. 1936. RGASPI, f. 495, op. 2, del. 233, ll. 56-99. [Back.](#)

**Note 12:** ECCI Protocol No. 80, 10 Oct. 1936. RGASPI, f. 495, op. 18, del. 1117, ll. 1-20. [Back.](#)

**Note 13:** ECCI Protocol No. 80, 10 Oct. 1936. RGASPI, f. 495, op. 18, del. 1117, l. 8. [Back.](#)

**Note 14:** Ibid. [Back.](#)

**Note 15:** ECCI Protocol No. 15, 28 Dec. 1936, "Decision of the Presidium of the ECCI on the work of the Communist Party of Spain," 7-21. RGASPI, f. 495, op. 2, del. 241, ll. 114. Even as the ECCI sought to widen the international scope of Comintern involvement in the Spanish war, the executive body did nothing to conceal its role in the developing campaign. In early 1937, for example, the ECCI published this quotation in the widely

circulated *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional* 1 (1937): 64. [Back.](#)

**Note 16:** RGASPI, f. 495, op. 18, del. 1224, l. 141. The same report, compiled by Dimitrov and forward to Stalin, can be found in duplicate in the Military Archive: RGVA, f. 33987, op. 3, del. 10333, ll. 123-133. [Back.](#)

**Note 17:** Manuilskii report to ECCI session of 20 Sept. 1937. RGASPI, f. 495, op. 2, del. 257, ll. 41-61. The cited lines are from l. 59, and merit reproduction in the original French: "Les événements d'Espagne doivent être utilisés pour élever sans cesse l'enthousiasme des masses.... Nous sommes loin d'utiliser toutes les possibilités." [Back.](#)

**Note 18:** Protocol No. 199, 3 Oct. 1937. RGASPI, f. 495, op. 18, del. 1225, l. 88-92. [Back.](#)

**Note 19:** ECCI Protocol No. 315, 28 Aug. 1938, and directive, "Practical Tasks in Rendering Systematic Aid to Republican Spain," 7-21. RGASPI, f. 495, op. 18, del. 1252, ll. 7-21. [Back.](#)

**Note 20:** Report to Voroshilov by Ernst Gerö, 19 Nov. 1938. RGVA, f. 33987, op. 3, del. 1081, ll. 43-44. [Back.](#)

**Note 21:** The successes of the campaign in individual countries is detailed in Academy of Sciences of the USSR, *International Solidarity with the Spanish Republic, 1936-1939*. [Back.](#)

**Note 22:** *Pravda*, 3 Aug. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 23:** Stalin's famous quotation was the following: "The cause of Spain is not solely the cause of the Spaniards, but the cause of all progressive and advanced humanity." [Back.](#)

**Note 24:** *Pravda*, 4 and 5 Aug. 1936; *Izvestiia*, 4 and 5 Aug. 1936; *Trud*, 4 and 5 Aug. 1936. The official Soviet history of the Spanish Civil War, *Guerra y Revolución*, puts the Red Square numbers at an improbable 200,000. See Dolores Ibárruri, et al., *Guerra y revolución en España 1936-1939*, 4 vols. (Moscow: Progreso, 1966-1971), vol. II, 105. [Back.](#)

**Note 25:** Ibárruri, *Guerra y revolución*, vol. II, 105. [Back.](#)

**Note 26:** *Pravda*, 6 Aug. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 27:** See V. A. Kumanev, "Tvorcheskaia intelligentsiia SSSR - respublikanskoi Ispanii (1936-1939)," *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* 4 (1987): 135-152. [Back.](#)

**Note 28:** *Pravda*, *Trud*, and *Izvestiia*, 12 Sept. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 29:** *Pravda* and *Trud*, 13 Sept. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 30:** In 1935, a coal miner in the Donets Basin, Aleksei Stakhanov, was said to have over-fulfilled his quota by 1400 per cent. His elevation to hero status prompted many other workers to strive towards "Stakhanovite" production levels. See Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 501-502. [Back.](#)

**Note 31:** *Izvestiia*, 16 Sept. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 32:** *Izvestiia*, 17 and 18 Sept. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 33:** *Pravda*, *Trud*, and *Izvestiia*, 22 Sept. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 34:** *Pravda* and *Trud*, 23 Sept. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 35:** Y. A Lvunin, *Internatsionalizm v deistvii*, 138; cited in Novikov, *SSSR, Komintern i grazhdanskaia*, vol. I, , 154. [Back.](#)

**Note 36:** Wrote one child in Daghestan: "My mummy and daddy told me that little children are starving in Spain. I have decided to give the money I collected in my money-box—16 rubles and 20 kopecks—to help the children of the Spanish people. I was saving this money to buy myself a present, but I have decided to put that off for a bit." Cited in *International Solidarity with the Spanish Republic*, 301. [Back.](#)

**Note 37:** *Pravda*, 22 Sept. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 38:** *Krasnaia zvezda*, 22 Sept. 1936; *Izvestiia*, 23 Sept. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 39:** *Izvestiia*, 2 Oct. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 40:** See episode eight of *Sobytiia v Ispanii*, a copy of which is deposited in the Filmoteca Española. [Back.](#)

**Note 41:** *Izvestiia*, 11 Oct. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 42:** *Izvestiia*, 27 Oct. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 43:** Azerbaijani literary society to Ibárruri, 15 Sept. 1936. GARF, f. 5283, op. 7, del. 840, l. 208. [Back.](#)

**Note 44:** Letter of 9 Apr. 1937 from Molotov Institute of Energy to AERCU, a Republican Soviet-Spanish friendship society. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv rossiski federatsi (hereafter, GARF), f. 5283, op. 7, del. 840, ll. 147-148. [Back.](#)

**Note 45:** Letter of 19 May 1937 from the Academy of Architecture of the USSR to the Executive Committee of National Syndicates of Architecture and Engineers in the Spanish Republic. GARF, f. 5283, op. 7, del. 845, l. 125. [Back.](#)

**Note 46:** Letter from Soviet State Literature Museum to AERCU. GARF, f. 5283, op. 7, del. 845, ll. 70-71. [Back.](#)

**Note 47:** *Dokumenty Vneshnei Politiki SSSR* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1977), vol. XX: 226; (hereafter, *DVP SSSR*). The sinking of the Komsomol, and the debate surrounding its probable contents, is discussed in depth in Part IV below. [Back.](#)

**Note 48:** *DVP SSSR*, vol. XX, 487-488. [Back.](#)

**Note 49:** *DVP SSSR*, vol. XX, 226. [Back.](#)

**Note 50:** *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 24 Dec. 1936. See also V. A. Tolmachaev, "Sovetskii Soiuz i Ispaniia: Opyt i uroki internatsional'noi pomoshchi (1936-1939)," Ph.D. diss. (Leningrad, 1991), 69-70. [Back.](#)

**Note 51:** *Pravda*, 20 July 1937. [Back.](#)

**Note 52:** *Pravda*, 19 and 20 July 1938. [Back.](#)

**Note 53:** RGASPI, f. 495, op. 120, del. 260, ll. 65-69. [Back.](#)

**Note 54:** RGASPI, f. 495, op. 120, del. 260, ll. 81-87. [Back.](#)

**Note 55:** RGASPI, f. 495, op. 120, del. 260, ll. 70-74. [Back.](#)

**Note 56:** *Pravda*, 20 July 1937. [Back.](#)

**Note 57:** The figure is derived from Afanasii Arsen'evich Komshukov, "Natsional'no-revoliutsionnaia," 111-114 and 196. Writing during the height of the Brezhnev regime, Komshukov was able to access key documents in the Kalinin archive (fond 78) of what was then the Communist Party Archive (today RGASPI). My cursory 1997 inspection in of the material Komshukov cites confirms his findings. [Back.](#)

**Note 58:** *Pravda*, 14,18, 22, and 23 Nov. 1936; 12, 17, and 18 May 1937, 29 Apr. 1938. [Back.](#)

**Note 59:** The newsreel is identified as *1 Mai*. The Filмотека Española preserves a copy. [Back.](#)

**Note 60:** Even some observers favorably disposed to the Stalinist regime often let slip into their accounts admissions that the Soviet press exaggerated or fabricated stories to advance the Kremlin's cause. Louis Fischer, for example, was struck by the paucity of direct evidence for heroism among Loyalist soldiers at the front, something celebrated ad nauseam in the Russian dailies. See Fischer, *Men and Politics* (London: Cape, 1941), 369. [Back.](#)

**Note 61:** The German chargé d'affaires in the Soviet Union, von Tippelskirch, kept Berlin closely informed of the campaign. See, for example, his letter to the German Foreign Ministry of 28 Sept. 1936, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, III, Series C (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 97-8. The British representative made similar comments to his government. See *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, XVII, Series 2 (London: Stationery Office, 1946-1985), 83-84. The U.S. ambassador, too, contacted the State Department on 4 August to inform his government of the sudden popular mobilization. See Henderson to Hull, 4 Aug. 1936, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1936 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954), vol. II: 461. Better evidence still is found in Pascua's AHN-Madrid archive. From the moment of his arrival in October 1936, his cables to the Republic's Foreign Ministry often note the "frequent and enormous gatherings" of Soviet citizens or the "great general interest" in the events in Spain. Pascua to Ministry of State, 22 Oct. 1936. AHN-Madrid. Diversos. M. Pascua, Leg. 2, Exp. 9-4. [Back.](#)

**Note 62:** Fischer, *Men and Politics*, 403. [Back.](#)

**Note 63:** Ibid. [Back.](#)

**Note 64:** Aleksei Adzhubei, *Te desiat' let* (Moscow, 1989), 194-195; cited in Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 69. [Back.](#)

**Note 65:** Komshukov, "Natsional'no-revoliutsionnaia," 179. [Back.](#)

**Note 66:** According to the research of Tolmachaev ("Sovetskii Soiuz i Ispaniia," 68-69), the transit schedule was as follows: 18 September, *Neva*; 27 September, *Kuban*; 4 October, *Zyrianin*; 11 October, *Neva* (second voyage); 21 October, *Turksib*. The humanitarian sailings are also discussed by the Soviet naval attaché to the Republic, Nikolai Kuznetsov, in *Na dalekom meridiane* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), 125. [Back.](#)

**Note 67:** The precise contents of the humanitarian shipments, as well as the accounts of the arrival and unloading of all vessels involved, was widely reported in the Soviet and Spanish press, but for reasons of space the present study will not provide an overview. The topic is well covered in David Allen, "Soviet Union and the Spanish Civil War," 419-430; and *International Solidarity*, 298-331. [Back.](#)

**Note 68:** Tolmachaev, "Sovetskii Soiuz i Ispaniia," 68-69. [Back.](#)

**Note 69:** *Mundo Obrero's* Moscow correspondent was Irene Falcón. [Back.](#)

**Note 70:** *Mundo Obrero*, 4 and 5 Aug. 1936. On occasion, the Communist paper's enthusiasm for the very idea of solidarity led to hyperbole and unintended irony. On 16 Oct. 1936, a headline announced that "La solidaridad de la URSS con nuestro pueblo en armas no puede pagarse con oro." One month earlier, of course, the Republic's gold stocks had begun their long trip to Moscow, where they would gradually be depleted to pay for Soviet military assistance. [Back.](#)

**Note 71:** "No quedará una mujer, una obrera una profesora, una actriz ni una madre de la URSS que no haga cuanto pueda en ayuda del pueblo español." *Heraldo de Madrid*, 16 Sept. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 72:** Pascua to Ministry of State, 22 Oct. 1936. AHN-Madrid. Diversos. M. Pascua, Leg. 2, Exp. 9-4. [Back.](#)

**Note 73:** Caballero to Pascua, 25 Oct. 1936. AHN-Madrid. Diversos. M. Pascua, Leg. 2, Exp. 9-4. [Back.](#)

**Note 74:** Caballero to Kalinin, 9 Nov. 1936. RGASPI, f. 78, op. 1, d. 606, l. 69. Azaña to Kalinin, 9 Nov. 1936. RGASPI, f. 78, op. 1, d. 606, l. 55. [Back.](#)

**Note 75:** The Kalinin archive, *fond* 78 at RGASPI, has many dozens of these letters, some addressed to Kalinin, others to Stalin, and others to the Soviet people. All mention the humanitarian aid. RGASPI, f. 78, op. 1, d. 606, d. 689, d. 700, d. 701, d. 702. [Back.](#)

**Note 76:** Vizcaya militia group to Kalinin, 3 Nov. 1936. RGASPI, f. 78, op. 1, d. 606, l. 46. [Back.](#)

**Note 77:** See *International Solidarity*, 298-301; Dolores Ibárruri et. al., *Guerra y revolución*, vol. II, 105. [Back.](#)

**Note 78:** Kol'tsov, *Diario de la guerra española* (Madrid: Akal Editor, 1978), 7. [Back.](#)

**Note 79:** Ivan M. Maisky, *Spanish Notebooks* (London: Hutchinson, 1966), 64-65. Maiskii is doubly misinformed: He cites 5 August, instead of 3 August, as the date of the first mass rally in Moscow. A similar account may be found in Roman Karmen's memoir, *No Pasaran!* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1972), 225-26. [Back.](#)

**Note 80:** N. Krestinskii to B. Shtein, 7 Aug. 1936. *DVP SSSR*, vol. XIX, 396. [Back.](#)

**Note 81:** Stalin to José Diaz, 15 Oct. 1936. *DVP SSSR*, vol. XIX, 486. The letter was published the following day in *Izvestiia*. The second half of Stalin's message was rapidly converted into a slogan for the continuing campaign. [Back.](#)

**Note 82:** See Adelina and Paulina Abramson, *Mosaico Roto* (Madrid: Compañía Literaria, 1995). [Back.](#)

**Note 83:** Author's interview with Adelina Abramson, Moscow, 20 July 1997. [Back.](#)

**Note 84:** RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, del. 274, ll. 1-2. This document, like the following one quoted in the text, remained in open Politburo files until 31 Dec. 1937, when it was removed and stamped "To the Secret Archive." [Back.](#)

**Note 85:** RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, del. 274, l. 4-5. [Back.](#)

**Note 86:** Kol'tsov, *Diario de la guerra española*, 7. [Back.](#)

**Note 87:** *Izvestiia* and *Trud*, 4 Aug. 1936. [Back.](#)

**Note 88:** ECCI Protocol No. 64, 3 Aug. 1936. RGASPI, f. 495, op. 18, del. 1105, l. 1. [Back.](#)

**Note 89:** RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, del. 981, l. 119. [Back.](#)

**Note 90:** Cited in Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 171. [Back.](#)

**Note 91:** See "Na Pomosch' Detiam i Zhenshchinam Geroicheskoi Ispanii" ("En Ayuda de los Niños y Mujeres de la Heroica España"), preserved in the Madrid and Moscow film archives, and discussed in Alfonso del Amo and María Luisa Ibañez, *Catálogo General del cine de la guerra civil* (Madrid: Editorial de la Filmoteca Española, 1997), 642. [Back.](#)

**Note 92:** Politburo decree of 22 Nov. 1936. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, del. 982, l. 293. [Back.](#)

**Note 93:** The film is also mentioned in the *Catálogo General del cine de la guerra civil*, 429-430. [Back.](#)

**Note 94:** Allen, "Soviet Union and the Spanish Civil War," 437-438. [Back.](#)

**Note 95:** RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, del. 981,, ll. 372. [Back.](#)

**Note 96:** In the same vein, a Politburo decision on 14 Oct. 1936 gave the Commissariat for Foreign Trade just six days to produce and send 1500 tons of flour, 500 tons of butter, 500 tons of sugar, 250,000 tins of various preserved foods, 100 tons of smoked cod, and an additional 5,000 sets of children's clothes. As always, the decree required that the cost of the entire shipment be covered through voluntary donations. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, del. 982, l. 20. Two days later, on 16 October, the Politburo amended its earlier request to include 5,000 pairs of boots, 200,000 boxes of cigarettes, 50,000 matchbooks, 25 tons of candy and 25 tons of biscuits—all of which must be added to the 20 October shipment and paid for by the people. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, del. 981, l. 39. [Back.](#)

**Note 97:** See Hugh G. Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 3rd ed. rev. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 877-79. [Back.](#)

**Note 98:** Arnold Toynbee and V. M. Boulter, *Survey of International Affairs*, 1938 (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), vol. II: 397-98. [Back.](#)

**Note 99:** Anthony Beevor, *The Spanish Civil War* (London: Peter Bedrick, 1982), 269. It should be pointed out that Beevor's book, though engaging and highly readable, is nonetheless not an academic study. The author cites no sources. [Back.](#)

**Note 100:** Pascua to Souritz, 1 Mar. 1939, AHN-Madrid. Diversos. M. Pascua, leg. 2, exp. 14, 5-6. [Back.](#)

**Note 101:** Ivan Maiskii, "Natsional'no-revoliutsionnaia voina ispanskogo naroda i Sovetskii Soiuz," *Pod znamenem Ispanskoi respubliki* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), 57. The dispute over France's alleged refusal in early 1939 to allow Soviet arms into the Republic will be discussed below. [Back.](#)

**Note 102:** *Pravda*, 2 Feb. 1939. [Back.](#)

**Note 103:** A report from a Comintern agent in Valencia to Dimitrov claimed that "[t]here still remain a large number of wounded or physically sick volunteers who are demanding that they be sent to the USSR." RGVA, f. 33987, op. 3, d. 1015, ll. 92-113. Cited in Mary Habeck and Ronald Radosh, *Spain Betrayed: The Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War*

(New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 233. [Back.](#)

**Note 104:** RGASPI, f. 495, op. 76, d. 22, l. 3. Opus 76 is the archive of the Dimitrov Secretariat. [Back.](#)

**Note 105:** RGASPI, f. 495, op. 76, d. 22, ll. 22-34. [Back.](#)

**Note 106:** RGASPI, f. 495, op. 76, d. 22, ll. 36-39. Those documents thus far declassified indicate no response to this letter from Stalin. In any case, after August 1939 there is no record of the Soviets taking any measures to evacuate Comintern personnel stranded in southern France. [Back.](#)

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