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GERMAN INTERVENTION IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

1936-1939

By

Sande John Wilson

B. A. University of Montana, 1966

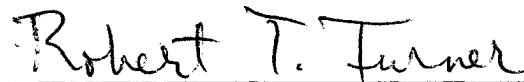
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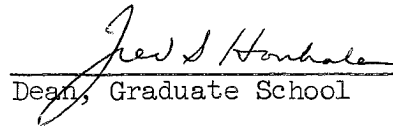
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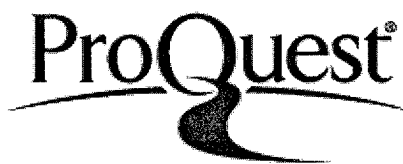


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Introduction

During the early 1930's, western Europe lay under the shadows of economic dislocation and the rise of German nationalism. These two issues brought new problems of security to Europe. The resultant insecurity manifested itself in an increase of armaments and attempts to compromise democratic faiths and ideas by appealing for stronger central governments. Economic disruption had the effect of forcing governments to enter into the economic life of their peoples by increasing the powers of the state. The rise of German nationalism with its avowed aim of destroying the Versailles settlement added to this general feeling of insecurity. The faith in democratic ideas and practices was weakened by the inability of the western democracies to deal with these problems.

Political factions of both the extreme right and left gained strength from the economic and political weaknesses of the democracies. In France these weaknesses contributed to the growth of such extreme right wing organizations as the Croix de Feu and the Action Française. The leftist forces combined against this common danger by creating the Popular Front, a coalition of Socialists, Radical Socialists and Communists headed by the Socialist Leon Blum.¹ The Popular Front won the election of April 1936, and its leader, Blum, became premier. But the financial difficulties and the internal divisions of the French people continued to worsen and, as a consequence, weakened French foreign policy.

¹Leon Blum. (1872-1950). First Socialist premier of France. Premier, June 1936 to June 1937.

In March 1936, Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland greatly intensified the French feeling of insecurity. To deal with this new German threat the French attempted to strengthen their security system by wooing Mussolini into an anti-German front and by negotiating an alliance with the Soviet Union. Both attempts ultimately ended in failure. In the final analysis French security depended upon the policy of Great Britain.

The British prime minister, Stanley Baldwin,² maintained the traditional British foreign policy of avoiding European entanglements. He was against any type of collective security such as the League of Nations and binding military agreements. Because of its grave financial, military and political problems, Britain was inclined to pursue a cautious policy of indecision, ineptitude and watchful waiting. The British government preferred to maintain the post-war status-quo established by the Versailles settlement and the Locarno agreements. Any British efforts to pursue a conciliatory attitude towards Italy in support of the French policy would only be in reaction to a continuance of German military adventurism.

Although Germany was in danger of becoming isolated in the thirties, Italian aggression in Ethiopia and the implementation of sanctions against Italy by the League soon changed the situation to Germany's favor. The possibility of Italy associating itself with France and Britain was out of the question because of the application of the economic sanctions. By its own actions in Ethiopia and later in Spain, Italy estranged itself from Britain and France and moved steadily towards Germany.

²Stanley Baldwin. (1867-1950). British statesman. Prime minister, 1923-1924; 1924-1929; 1935-1937.

The aim of German foreign policy since 1933 had been the destruction of the Versailles settlement. In addition, Hitler was constantly preaching to Europe the danger of Communism. Hitler's anti-Communist policy was a convenient smoke-screen behind which Hitler could operate with a more realistic and pragmatic attitude concerning Germany's interests, while at the same time allaying many of the apprehensions of conservative circles in France and Britain over German aggressiveness. The turning point in German foreign policy came in 1936 when once having put aside the Versailles question, Germany turned her attention upon the goals Hitler had decided upon as early as 1923 while writing Mein Kampf.

Forced to emerge from its diplomatic isolation by the menace of Nazi Germany, Russia proceeded to follow a tactical policy of cooperation with the western democracies. This policy revealed itself in 1934 and 1935 when Russia joined the League of Nations and concluded mutual assistance pacts with France and Czechoslovakia. In 1934, the Comintern instructed all foreign Communist parties to cooperate with political groups opposed to Fascism. This was particularly evident in the formation of the French Popular Front.

While the major European powers concerned themselves with economic problems and international affairs, Spain in the thirties suffered from political, economic and social hardships resulting from attempts by Spanish liberals to implement democracy in Spain. King Alfonso XIII³ was forced to flee Spain in April 1931 because of anti-monarchical election returns. The Spanish Liberals established a republic in place of the

³King Alfonso XIII. (1866-1941). Bourbon king of Spain, 1902-1931.

monarchy.⁴ New elections for the Spanish parliament or Cortes resulted in a left-republican victory.

The leftist majority in the Cortes immediately set out to enact a radical legislative program which resulted in alienating the strongest, wealthiest and most influential elements of the Spanish society. This was done with much rapidity but little foresight. In the space of two years, the Cortes estranged itself from the large landowners by instigating a thorough land reform, from the Church by placing education in secular hands and from the army by attempting to reform the obsolete officer corp. The reforms were needed and demanded by the working classes, but the celerity and method of carrying them out alarmed the vested interests against which they were directed.

In 1933, the reaction to these reforms produced a swing to the right. A conservative coalition was formed under the leadership of Gil Robles⁵ and Alejandro Lerroux.⁶ As might be expected, the conservative government set out to annul or repress the reforms of the leftist parties. The land, educational and army reforms were either repealed or allowed to fall by the wayside for lack of administrative funds.

⁴In 1930, Alfonso XIII appointed General Berenguer as prime minister to replace General Primo de Rivera who had been forced to resign. This change of ministers did not help to solve the acute economic problems of Spain. The depression became worse and strikes increased in violence. Martial law was proclaimed. Popular pressure forced Alfonso to announce the restoration of the constitution that had been suspended since 1923, and to set a date for elections to the Cortes. The April 12, 1931 elections resulted in a republican victory. Alfonso fled the country without abdicating.

⁵Gil Robles. (1898-). Leader of the Spanish Catholic Party, CEDA.

⁶Alejandro Lerroux. (1864-1949) Leader of the Spanish Radical Party. Foreign Minister of the Republic, 1931.

Political parties of both the right and the left began to prepare for the February 1936 elections. The leftist parties, including the Communists, allied with the moderate republicans to form a coalition commonly referred to as the Popular Front.⁷ The rightist parties, although not as well organized as those of the left, still maintained a common front against the leftist reforms. The conservative parties had two things in common, fear of the working classes and the protection of their vested interests. But within this common front there were many divergent groups with different goals and aims. The Traditionalists and the Monarchists favored a return of the monarchy, preferably from the Bourbon line. The Catholic action groups were willing to cooperate with parliamentary government but demanded that the interests of the church be protected. The Falangist party, led by José Primo de Rivera,⁸ was a Fascist group along the lines of Italian Fascism. The Carlists advocated strong nationalism and a corporate socialism.

On the eve of the February elections, another Spanish organization was watching the developments with apprehension. This was the curious and unique institution of the Spanish army. In recent times the army had been the final arbiter of Spanish political disputes. The situation prevailing in Spain in 1936 was no exception. The army was more of an instrument of internal policy than a defender of national security. The army reforms enacted by the leftist government had been particularly irritating to this

⁷The Anarchists, who controlled the third largest trade union in Spain, refused to join.

⁸José Primo de Rivera. (1903-1936). Founder and leader of the Spanish Falange or Fascist party. Executed by the Republicans.

glorified officers' club whose ratio of one officer to every six men was three times greater than the French army ratio.⁹ Every year, thirty percent of the entire national budget was devoted to this inefficient organization.¹⁰ By 1936, the army leaders, General Francisco Franco¹¹ included, had decided to intervene in the political affairs of Spain if the election returned the leftist parties to power.

The February elections resulted in a victory for the Popular Front. Immediately the Spanish working classes demanded that the reforms legislated during the period from 1931 to 1933 be put into operation. Strikes and riots broke out when the government could not implement the reforms as quickly as the working classes expected. This violence was reciprocated by the Fascist and right-wing groups whose aim was to disgrace and weaken the Madrid government by creating a state of anarchy. Through the Fascist and Catholic newspapers, world opinion became convinced that Spain was, in fact, suffering from uncontrollable social disorder.

The defeat of the rightist parties in the municipal elections convinced the leaders of the Army, the Church and the landed interests that democratic measures were insufficient to combat the growing progressive elements. On July, the assassination of Calvo Sotelo,¹² a rightist political leader, set off another series of social disorders that culminated in the July 18 rebellion of the Spanish Foreign Legion stationed

⁹P.A.M. van der Esch. Prelude to War, (New York, 1961), 3-4. Hereafter cited as Esch.

¹⁰Ibid., 4.

¹¹Francisco Franco y Bahamonde. (1892-). Chief of Staff of the Army, 1934. Military Commander of the Canary Islands, 1936. Leader of the Rebel or Nationalist forces, 1936-1939. Spanish Chief of State, 1939 to present.

¹²Calvo Sotelo. (1893-1936). Leader of the Monarchist party. Murdered by Leftists on July 13.

in Spanish Morocco. General Franco flew from the Canary Island, where he had been assigned by the Republican government because of his political beliefs, to Morocco to take charge of the rebellion. At approximately the same time, military garrisons throughout Spain rose in rebellion against the government authorities. The uprising succeeded in the major Spanish cities of Cadiz, Jerez, Algeiras and Seville, but failed in Madrid and Barcelona.¹³ The failure of the coup d'état in Madrid and Barcelona was because of the energetic resistance of the working classes.

By July 22, the coup d'état had turned into a civil war. The Rebels were in control of the army, the major part of the airforce and a small portion of the navy. The Madrid government commanded the loyalty of the navy, the police force and the working classes.

With the government controlling the navy, it was dangerous if not impossible to ferry the Rebel forces from Morocco to Spain in order to support the rebellious garrisons. Without the support of the Spanish legionnaires, the uprising in Spain could not succeed. It looked as if the army had failed in its attempts to control the political destiny of Spain.

Since Hitler's rise to power, German propaganda activities had become increasingly evident in Spain. This was especially true among the large German colony in Madrid and Barcelona. Spanish rightist newspapers became convenient mediums for the dissemination of the Nazi propaganda material. The German embassy and legations in Spain also distributed money and propaganda material to the Spanish Fascists. It was rumored

¹³Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, (New York, 1961), 204. Hereafter cited as Thomas.

that the Spanish Falange received some three million pesetas yearly from these German sources.¹⁴ An important bridge of communication between the Spanish Falangists and the Nazi officials was the Ibero-American Institute in Berlin, under the leadership of General Wilhelm Faupel.¹⁵

During the conservative administration in Spain from 1933 to 1936, right-wing Spaniards made several contacts with German officials. In February 1936, General Sanjurjo¹⁶ and José Primo de Rivera visited Germany on a winter-sports holiday at Partenkirchen. While in Germany, Sanjurjo was taken on a tour of the Germans arms factories by Admiral Canaris, head of German Military Intelligence.¹⁷

In the summer of 1936 German activities in Spain increased. The German State Railroads opened a tourist office in Madrid. The official German news service, Deutsche Nachrichten Bureau, also expanded operations in Spain by establishing an office in Madrid staffed by two German foreign correspondents.¹⁸

In July 1936, Germany reacted to the events in Spain by publicly stating that the struggle was a battlefield upon which western European

¹⁴Dante A. Puzzo, Spain and the Great Powers, 1936-1941, (New York, 1962), 46-47. Hereafter cited as Puzzo.

¹⁵General Wilhelm Faupel. (1873-1945). Head of the Ibero-American Institute in Berlin. German Chargé d' Affaires to Nationalist Spain, 1936. Ambassador to Spain, 1936-1937. Recalled from Spain in September of 1937.

¹⁶General José Sanjurjo. (1872-1936). Leader of the unsuccessful 1932 revolt against the Republic. Titular head of the 1936 revolt.

¹⁷Although there is no doubt that these visits did take place, there is no documentary evidence that German officials promised aid to the Spanish in the event of a military uprising in Spain.

¹⁸Henry Buckley, Life and Death of the Spanish Republic (London, 1940), 203-204. Hereafter cited as Buckley.

civilization combated Bolshevism. Hitler welcomed the Spanish revolt as an opportunity to further his own plans in Europe. If he could create enough diplomatic tension over the Spanish situation by backing Italian intervention and by aiding the Spanish Rebels with a minimum of help, he could then perhaps draw diplomatic attention away from his manoeuvres in central Europe. An added advantage would be that Italy, by its intervention, would become embroiled with Britain and France and as a consequence move closer towards Germany.¹⁹

Hitler also entertained definite ideas of the acquisition of material benefits from Spain. He was especially interested in the Spanish mineral resources of wolfram and copper ores that were vital to the German armament industry and the Four Year Plan. In the case of any future confrontation with Britain and France, Hitler wanted Spain politically akin and economically dependent upon Germany. This would enable Germany to menace the communications and commercial routes of Britain and France.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936, the diplomatic stage of Europe was occupied with the British and French attempts to reconstruct the Locarno agreements which had been destroyed by the German reoccupation of the Rhineland. In July, the League, with British and French support, realized the ineffectiveness of the sanctions against Italy and withdrew them. Thus the last major obstacle in the way of improving British-French Italian relations was eliminated. The withdrawal of the economic sanctions was an attempt by the British and French to

¹⁹Ivone Kirkpatrick, Mussolini, A Study in Power, (New York, 1964), 340. Hereafter cited as Kirkpatrick.

acquire Italian goodwill and assistance in restoring the Locarno pacts. But the Spanish Civil War with French, British, Russian, German and Italian intervention handicapped any efforts to ease European tensions after the Abyssinian affair.

The Spanish Civil War was not an isolated event. It was not merely a domestic problem but influenced European politics and international relations to a large extent. The ideological, political and economic competition among the European powers in Spain contributed significantly to the solidification of the major European states into power blocs which were to struggle for the mastery of Europe during World War II.

CHAPTER I

GERMAN MILITARY AND TECHNICAL AID

TO THE SPANISH NATIONALISTS

1936-1939

"The situation prevailing in Spain in 1936 was conducive to foreign intervention."¹ Both Spanish political groups, right and left, espoused political ideologies taken from the traditional and current practices of western Europe. Thus the various political groupings in Spain reflected, respectively, the political philosophies and practices of dictatorship, as exemplified by Nazi Germany, and democracy, as exemplified by the French Popular Front. It was therefore natural that the major powers of Europe became involved with the developments in Spain by aiding, materially and diplomatically, their ideological comrades in arms. Other reasons motivated foreign intervention, but those expressing political or ideological considerations involved prestige, which at the diplomatic conjuncture of 1936 was an important element of the European situation.

In Spain "neither side in this unfolding conflict felt equipped to fight it successfully."² The Rebel forces could count on approximately 94,000 troops under the separate commands of General Emilio Mola, commander of the Northern Army, General Franco, commander of the Army of

¹Norman J. Padelford, International Law and Diplomacy in the Spanish Civil Strife, (New York, 1939), 119. Hereafter cited as Padelford.

²Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, (New York, 1961), 205-206. Hereafter cited as Thomas.

Africa and General Queipo de Llano, commander of the military garrison in Seville. However, the Legionaires and Moroccan troops stationed in Spanish Morocco comprised the only efficient and well equipped force under Rebel control. But the troops in Morocco, under the command of General Franco, had no communications with the Peninsula and no means to cross the Straits of Gibraltar in order to link up with the other Rebel forces in an attempt to capture Madrid. Conscious of the deficiencies of his forces, Franco, as early as July 19, decided to seek foreign assistance. In the meantime, the Loyalist government³ suffered from an acute shortage of arms and trained combat troops. With its control of the bank of Spain which contained the sixth largest gold reserve in the world, the Republic also decided to seek arms abroad.⁴

The Rebel's attempts to acquire foreign assistance for their efforts to defeat the Loyalist government can be divided into three separate and unconnected appeals. General Franco appealed to the German government for aid through the German embassy in Paris and sent personal representatives to Hitler. General Mola, commander of the Rebel forces in the Northern provinces of Spain, sent personal representatives to Berlin and Rome distinct from those sent by Franco. In fact, the German authorities in Berlin were astonished that the Spanish emissaries had no knowledge of each other's mission. In addition, General Queipo de Llano requested German aid through the German consul in Seville. All three of these

³ The Spanish Republican government is hereafter referred to as the Loyalists. The opposing forces are hereafter referred to as the Rebels or the Nationalists.

⁴ Thomas, 205-206.

requests were independent of each other and indicated that there was no communication nor coordination of effort between the three Rebel generals.

Franco's first appeal for German aid was in the form of a dispatch on July 22 from the German consul at Tetuan to General Kuhlental, Military Attaché of the German embassy in Paris.

"General Franco and Lieutenant Colonel Beigbeder⁵ send greeting to their friend, the honorable General Kuhlental, inform him of the new Nationalist Spanish Government, and request that he send ten troop-transport planes with maximum seating capacity through private German firms. Transfer by air with German crews to any airfield in Spanish Morocco."⁶

At approximately the same time, Rebel airforce officer Captain Francisco Arranz, with Adolf Langenheim, head of the Nazi party in Tetuan, and Johannes Bernhardt, a German businessman and director of the economic branch of the Auslandsorganisation⁷ in Tetuan, took off in a captured German Lufthansa plane D-APOK-destination Berlin.⁸ They carried with them a private letter from Franco to Hitler supporting Colonel Beigbeder's request for German aid. Landing at Berlin's Tempelhof airport on July 25 with instruction to negotiate with the German authorities for the purchase of planes and war materials, the trio proceeded directly to the headquarters of the Auslandsorganisation.

⁵Colonel Juan Beigbeder Atienza. (1890-1957). Veteran of the Moroccan wars and Spanish military attaché at the Spanish embassy in Berlin in 1936.

⁶United States, Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Vol. III, Series D, (Washington, 1949), 3-4. Hereafter cited as GFD.

⁷The Auslandsorganisation was the foreign organization of the Nazi party. It contacted and organized German nationals in foreign countries.

⁸GFD, 7-8.

That evening Hitler, returning from the theater, was notified of the developments in Spain and of the Spanish rebels' request for aid. He then sent for Goering,⁹ Blomberg,¹⁰ and Admiral Canaris, head of German Military Intelligence. At this meeting Hitler decided to give active support to Franco. In his testimony at Nuremburg, Goering stated that he had urged Hitler to give support to the Spanish rebels in order to stop the spread of communism and to enable him, Goering, to test the combat and technical efficiency of the Luftwaffe. Admiral Canaris also supported the idea of German aid to Spain. Hitler agreed and appointed Canaris as the go-between for the coordination of the German aid program.¹¹

In the meantime, the German Foreign Ministry, knowing of the Spanish request and of the arrival in Berlin of the two emissaries from Franco, advised the Auslandsorganisation "against bringing the two officers into contact with official Party authorities and against promoting their plans here in any way. . . ." ¹² Dieckhoff, Director of the Political Department of the Foreign Ministry, and his superior, Baron von Neurath¹³ refused to agree to the deliveries of German war material to the Spanish rebels because of the impossibility of keeping the deliveries a secret and of the

⁹ Hermann Goering. (1893-1946). Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe, 1934-1939. Head of the German Four Year Plan, 1936.

¹⁰ Field Marshall Werner von Blomberg. (1879-1946). Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht, 1935-1938.

¹¹ United States, Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, Vol. II. (Nuremburg, 1947), 280-81. Hereafter cited as TMWC.

¹² GFD., 10-11.

¹³ Constantin von Neurath. (1873-1956). German Foreign Minister, 1932-38.

consequences that might develop for the Germans residing in Loyalist Spain. On July 24, Neurath told the War Ministry that "in the view of the Foreign Ministry compliance with the Spanish request is out of the question at this time."¹⁴ Neurath's negative attitude was without the knowledge that Hitler was in the process of deciding to aid the Spanish Nationalists. In fact, the Foreign Ministry was kept in the dark concerning Hitler's July 25th decision. This is shown by the fact that as late as July 28, the Foreign Ministry still opposed German aid to Spain.¹⁵

Although the Foreign Ministry was against aid to the Rebels, the Nazi party maintained the opposite viewpoint. The part played by Langenheim and Bernhardt, both members of the Nazi party, indicated that the policy followed was that of the NSDAP and not that of the Foreign Ministry.

At the July 25th meeting between Hitler, Blomberg, Goering and Canaris, and in subsequent meetings, a department was created in the War Ministry to supervise the recruitment of volunteers and the dispatch of war materials to the Spanish rebels. This department was termed the COS 'W'. Two holding companies, Hisma and Rowak, were set up to control all trade between Germany and Spain. If a German trader wished to sell anything to Spain, he would have to sell it first to Rowak, the German half of the company, who would then deliver it to Spain where it would be marketed by Hisma.

A fleet of merchant ships assembled at Hamburg and departed for

¹⁴GFD., 7.

¹⁵Thomas, 230-231.

Spain under the escort of the German navy. Thirty Junkers, 52 transport aircraft were sent immediately to Morocco. A "tourist group" under the direction of General von Scheele was set up in order to send volunteers to man the aircraft and to form a training contingent for the Spanish army. On July 31, eighty-five men left Hamburg for Cadiz with six Heinkel fighter planes and arrived on August 5. These first contingents of aid to Franco were soon followed by engineers, technicians and more fighter planes. In September, more fighter planes were dispatched along with two tank companies, a battery of anti-aircraft guns and some reconnaissance aircraft. The tank companies were under the command of Colonel von Thoma, while General von Scheele was the military head of the German holding company in Spain, Hisma. The mission of von Thoma and his officers was partly to train troops and partly to gain battle experience.¹⁶ General Goering was appointed by Hitler as administrator of the Four Year Plan, and in this position had charge of the German arms deliveries and the release of foreign currency for the cost of the German supplies to Spain. This elaborate aid organization was created within a week of the arrival of Franco's representatives in Berlin.

Both War Minister Blomberg and General Fritsch, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, shared the Foreign Ministry's negative attitude towards sending aid to Spain. The German army was inclined to follow a cautious policy towards Spain and strongly opposed committing any substantial number of German troops. It was because of this pressure by the High Command that German aid to Spain did not include a large number of ground

¹⁶Thomas, 227-231.

forces. Thus the German participation in the Spanish war was limited primarily to the Luftwaffe, whose activities caused additional friction between Hitler and the High Command of the army.¹⁷

On August 25, Field Marshal Werner von Blomberg appointed Lieutenant General Karl Warlimont as German military advisor to General Franco. Blomberg told Warlimont that Hitler had decided to send limited aid to Spain. Although German air support would be extensive, "any ground support would consist only of armaments and sufficient personnel to train Spanish troops in its use."¹⁸

On August 26, Warlimont proceeded to Rome accompanied by Admiral Canaris. While in Rome they conferred with Mussolini and General Mario Roatta, Canaris' Italian counterpart. Here it was agreed that Italy would also furnish Franco with aid. By early September Warlimont had made contact with Franco at his headquarters in Caceres.¹⁹

German military opinion was still cautious by mid-August. Admiral Raeder had asked Hitler for a decision on German policy towards Spain, while adding that in his opinion Germany could not assume the risks of intervention. Raeder was especially worried, since almost the entire German fleet was ordered to Spanish waters!²⁰

In the meantime, Franco had no difficulty in crossing the straits

¹⁷ Telford Taylor, Sword and Swastika: Generals and Nazis in the Third Reich, (New York, 1952), 134. Hereafter cited as S and S.

¹⁸ United Nations Security Council, Report of the Sub-Committee on the Spanish Question, (New York, 1946), 7. Hereafter cited as United Nations.

¹⁹ Ibid., 7.

²⁰ CFD., 50-52.

with the aid of the German and Italian transport planes. The German navy also assisted by running interference for the Rebel troop transports against the Loyalist naval vessels. In one month, 14,000 Spanish and Moroccan troops had been ferried across the straits by German and Italian aircraft. The German technical advisor in charge of the airlift was Captain Heinchen. The Italians supplied fighter cover for the merchant ships which had by August 5 ferried some 2,500 men with equipment from Morocco to Spain. "Hence forward Franco was in command of the Straits. An army would therefore be assembled at Seville, to march due north to cut off the whole Portuguese frontier from the Republicans, to join forces with Mola and to advance upon Madrid along the Tagus valley."²¹

With the steady flow of German and Italian war materials to the Rebel forces, the military situation in Spain took on a new character. Mola and Franco, in the north and South respectively, led the two major campaigns. General Franco with his Army of Africa advanced northward from Seville, while General Mola with the Army of the North advanced against the Basque province of Guipuzcoa. The rapid advance of the two forces was made possible by German and Italian aid.

At this time, the main route for German supplies to Spain was through Portugal. To coordinate the purchase of these war materials, General Franco's brother Nicolas Franco was sent to Lisbon under the cover name of Aurelio Fernando. His job was to supervise the procurement of war materials from Germany.²² After being unloaded in Portuguese Ports,

²¹ Thomas, 235.

²² GFD., 26.

the material was then shipped by rail through customs without inspection, and on to the Rebels. On August 22, the German Chargé d'Affaires in Lisbon notified Berlin that Hirma cooperated with the Rebel officials in shipping German war material across Portuguese territory.²³ Antonio Salazar, dictator of Portugal, believed that a Loyalist victory in Spain would mean eventual communist take-over in Portugal. He was therefore ready to give full support to the forces of General Franco.

The Loyalist government in Madrid was by no means idle concerning foreign assistance. During the first two weeks of August, its representatives in Paris were asking for planes and munitions from the French government. In order to eliminate the dilemma that the Spanish request caused for French public opinion and the foreign policy of the Quai d'Orsay, the French government on August 1, directed an appeal to the principal European governments to adopt an attitude of non-intervention towards the Spanish conflict. In the meantime, while French supplies continued to reach the Loyalists, the French government announced that if it was supplying arms to Spain, others were doing the same thing. But because of the division of public opinion over aiding the Loyalists, French aid could not continue indefinitely without the fall of the Blum government.

While Franco advanced northward in an attempt to capture Badajoz, Mola's forces engaged in an offensive against the Basque cities of San Sebastian and Irún. Because of the initial Rebel failure to control the northern provinces of Spain at the outset of the revolt, Mola's plan

²³GFD., 53.

for a quick thrust southward over the Guadarrama mountains to take Madrid had to be discarded for fear of an attack from the rear. Thus he was forced to reverse direction and concentrate his efforts upon sealing off the French border in order to cut off French aid to the Basques.²⁴ Mola needed planes, bombs and rifle and machine gun ammunition in order to carry out the offensive. He therefore requested through the German embassy in Paris on August 8, 15, and 16, that these materials be sent to him immediately. The point of delivery was to be La Coruna. In his request Mola also complained that thus far the southern group had been supplied exclusively.²⁵

On August 14, Franco succeeded in capturing Badajoz. This frontier town was strategically vital for the Rebels because it enabled Franco to open up a line of communication with Lisbon, the port of entry for most of the German war material. Communications between Franco and Mola were also improved. Aiding Franco in his northward offensive was the arrival in Seville on August 9 of ten new Italian Savoia tri-motor bombers accompanied by twenty Italian pilots, eighteen German Junker tri-motor bombers with thirty German pilots, six German pursuit planes and six German anti-aircraft guns of the latest model.²⁶ On August 25, the Rebel forces arrived within effective bombing distance of Madrid. On August 27 and 28, German Junkers 52 bombed Madrid. The bombing evidently had its effect for on August 28, General Faupel, German Charge d'Affairs in Spain,

²⁴The French border was opened on August 8, but was soon closed because of British pressure. However France continued to ship material to Spain.

²⁵GFD., 40.

²⁶United States, Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, Vol. II, 1936, (Washington, 1954), 481-482. Hereafter cited as USFS.

notified Berlin that this action threatened to endanger the safety of the official German representatives residing in Madrid and the German colony in the city.²⁷

On August 24, Germany adhered to the French embargo proposal on war materials to Spain. If Germany continued its shipments of material to the Spanish Rebels, it would now have to be done with the utmost secrecy. This Germany began to do on August 27, by notifying all German embassies and legations dealing with the Spanish Rebels that henceforth all reports concerning German aid to the Rebels or the requests for such aid should be sent by way of courier or cipher.²⁸

The Spanish Rebels were also assisted by the activities of the German navy. An example of German naval aid to the Rebels occurred on August 17 outside of the harbor of Ceuta on the southern coast of Spain. The Loyalist warship Jaime I was preparing to resume its bombardment of Rebel ports when the German 'pocket' battleship Deutschland manouevered itself between the harbor facilities and the Loyalist ship, thus making it impossible to bombard the harbor. The Deutschland became involved in another incident when on August 3 it visited the rebel controlled port of Ceuta accompanied by the torpedo boat Luche. Admiral Carls, Commander of the German High Seas Fleet, and Secretary of Legation Fischer of the German embassy in Madrid, disembarked in order to greet General Franco and to compliment him on his efforts against the Loyalist government. By the end of August, reports indicated that there were at least eight

²⁷ Germany did not extend de jure recognition to Franco until November 1936, and therefore still maintained diplomatic representatives in Madrid.

²⁸ GFD., 59.

German warships in Spanish waters. For a navy the size of Germany's, this was a major deployment of its forces.

Throughout August, Franco's position as leader of the Rebels steadily improved. This was because of his military successes and the contacts he had established with Germany and Italy. Both countries held the opinion that Franco was an able military leader and could be influenced by them.²⁹ At a meeting of the Rebel Military Junta on September 12, Franco was named head of the Rebel military command. This was not without grumbling by General Cabanellas who held more seniority than did Franco. A month later Franco was named Head of State, thus completing his rise to power in Nationalist Spain. On October 2, an administrative Junta was created to carry out the Rebel administrative functions. These actions solidified the Rebel government and made it more capable of facing the non-military problems which confronted the Military Junta. On October 6, Hitler sent verbal congratulations to Franco on his becoming Head of State. Franco replied by thanking Hitler for his invaluable aid.

During the month of September and the first half of October, Rebel attempts to encircle Madrid proceeded slowly and systematically from four directions: from the northeast towards Guadalajara, from the north from Somosierra, from the west from San Martín de Valdeiglesias, and from the southwest from Toledo.³⁰ During these battles around Madrid, the Loyalist forces continued to receive war materials from Russia which

²⁹Thomas, 274.

³⁰GFD., 101-102.

previously declared in the London Non-Intervention Committee³¹ that it would not be bound to observe non-intervention to any greater extent than the other members of the Committee. From October 20 to the 28th, at least nine Russian cargo ships reached Loyalist ports. Their cargoes included 100 trucks, 25 tanks, 30 pieces of artillery, 1,500 tons of ammunition and 6,000 tons of diesel oil.³² With the arrival of the Russian material and the International Brigades,³³ the Madrid defenders were able to resist the Rebel attacks. Germany now faced the decision whether to increase its aid to Franco in order for him to take Madrid, or to withdraw altogether.

On October 30, Neurath instructed Admiral Canaris to inform General Franco that Germany held a poor opinion of the combat tactics of the Rebel forces. Canaris was also instructed to report to Franco that Germany would send more assistance, but with the stipulation that if Franco accepted this aid, the German reinforcements would be under German command. Franco agreed, and on November 6 the Condor Legion with General von Sperrle³⁴ as commander and Colonel Richthofen³⁵ as chief of staff, disembarked at Seville. The Condor Legion included a battle group of four bomber squadrons of twelve Junker 52 bombers each, a fighter group of Heinkels 51 and Messerschmidts 109 of the same strength, and a seaplane,

³²Thomas, 309.

³³The International Brigades included personal volunteers from Western Europe, Russia and the United States, plus many other countries. Their political beliefs were to the left if not actually Communist oriented. They had come to Spain to fight for their fellow workers and political freedom.

³⁴Hugo Sperrle. Commander of Condor Legion Nov. 1936 to Oct. 1937.

³⁵Baron von Richthofen. (1895-). Chief of Staff of Condor Legion, 1937-1938. Commander, Nov. 1938 to May 1939.

reconnaissance and experimental squadron. This force was supported by anti-tank and anti-aircraft units plus two armored units of sixteen tanks each. The total number of personnel amounted to 6,500 men. Although the Condor Legion proved to be an effective fighting force throughout the civil war, it operated under very primitive conditions. It flew mainly without radio and its machine-gun had to be reloaded by hand. An additional force of gunnery, mine and signal specialists was later assigned to the Legion. These latter units operated from the battleships Deutschland and Admiral Scheer.³⁶ Additional reinforcements continued to arrive throughout the year. On November 17, some 1,200 Germans arrived in Seville. On December 1, 1,500 Germans landed at Cadiz while at the same time a force of 2,500 landed at Vigo. By the first week of January 1937, United States sources estimated that there were approximately 12,000 Germans in Spain and that eighty percent of the Rebel airforce was German.³⁷ While the Condor Legion was a highly specialized air attack and defense unit, it was used primarily for the tactical support of Franco's ground forces. The German planes and artillery made a major contribution to Franco's eventual victory.

The Condor Legion was reinforced with airforce personnel and a few army specialists, but its total strength never exceeded 20,000 men. The Condor Legion personnel were constantly being rotated by General Goering in an effort to provide extensive combat experience for a large number of

³⁶General Adolf Galland, The First and the Last, (London, 1955), 26. As taken from Thomas, 317.

³⁷USFD., 582-583.

men. Those who were selected for the Spanish tour of duty were under strict orders to maintain absolute silence concerning their activities in Spain. The commanders of the Legion were also rotated. Field Marshal Hugo Sperrle returned to Germany in November 1937 to take command of the air fleet based at Munich. His successor, General Volkmann,³⁸ held command until November of 1938. Volkmann was later put in charge of the Luftkriegsacademie. The last commander of the Legion was General Wolfram von Richthofen, who served as Chief of Staff for both Sperrle and Volkmann.

General Faupel, German Chargé d'Affaires in Spain, reported to Berlin on December 10 that Franco's successes in the first six weeks were because of his use of Moroccan troops and the lack of coordination on the Loyalist's side. The Loyalists had since increased their resistance through the use of Russian war material and a certain amount of political and military cooperation among their ranks. To counteract this new resistance, Franco needed more arms and ammunition. Faupel also recommended that the German officers training Spanish officer material in the methods of modern warfare must be increased by sending to Spain all available German officers who served as instructors in South America. Again Faupel requested that Berlin dispatch an effective German army unit trained in offensive tactics. This unit could be used to achieve a breakthrough on the Madrid Front which at present had developed into a stalemate. Friction between the various German officials in Spain was indirectly mentioned by Faupel when he ended his dispatch by noting that he was in no way interfering with the work of Sperrle or Funk, the German military advisor to Franco, but was

³⁸General Hellmuth Volkmann. (1886-). German General of Aviation. Commander of the Condor Legion, Nov. 1, 1937-Nov. 1, 1938.

supporting their efforts.³⁹

The latent quarrel between the NSDAP and the German military came to the surface in Spain. These troubles continued throughout the civil war. The basic point of contention was the problem of which German official held authority in what sphere of activity. A rivalry developed between Scheele and Bernhardt as to which one was Hitler's personal delegate to Franco. There also existed a mutual hatred between Sperrle and Faupel because of Sperrle's criticisms of Hisma. Eventually both of them were recalled by Berlin.

Until December, there was little if any coordination or cooperation between the War Ministry and the Foreign Ministry concerning the Spanish aid program. In fact, the Nazi party controlled most of the deliveries to and from Spain in cooperation with the War Ministry but without consulting the Foreign Ministry. As early as October 16, Goering complained of a lack of adequate personnel. Rudolph Hess, Nazi party Secretary, put the whole foreign organization of the NSDAP at Goering's disposal. Eberhard von Jagwitz, the head of the Party's foreign office, now worked directly under Goering. The German Foreign and Economic Ministries were not notified of the activities of the NSDAP or of the existence of Rowak and Hisma until mid-October. The Foreign Ministry's ignorance of the activities of the Nazi party and the War Ministry became evident on December 2 when the War Ministry agreed with Weizsaecker's⁴⁰ request of

³⁹GFD., 159-162.

⁴⁰Ernst von Weizsaecker. (1882-1951) Director of Political Dept. of the Foreign Ministry, 1936-1938. State Secretary, 1938-1943.

November 30 that there should be more cooperation between the two ministries. Despite their demand for more coordination of policy, the Foreign Ministry remained badly informed of the activities of Goering's agents in Spain throughout the German involvement in the Spanish Civil War.⁴¹

On December 15, Neurath, in response to the continual requests by Faupel and Sperrle for regular German army divisions in Spain, informed the War Ministry that he was not in favor of sending such divisions to Spain while the Great Powers in the Non-Intervention Committee attempted to limit the conflict and bring about mediation. Neurath's position in regard to the Spanish situation had always been of extreme caution. He opposed the original Spanish request for German aid on July 25, and on August 24 convinced Hitler that it was advantageous for Germany to agree to the French embargo plan for prohibiting the exportation of war materials to Spain.⁴²

The High Command of the Army and the War Ministry supported Neurath's position regarding the dispatch of regular army units to Spain. Despite the German attitude, Hassel, the German ambassador to Italy reported that Mussolini was going ahead with his planned shipments of regular Italian troops to Spain.⁴³ The inclination in Berlin seemed to be that Germany would not exceed the quantity of aid already given to Franco. It was decided to let Italy take the lead in providing Franco with combat troops.⁴⁴

⁴¹GFD., 149.

⁴²Ibid., 168.

⁴³GFD., 169.

⁴⁴Ibid., 198.

At the end of 1936 the failure of the Rebel offensive against Madrid, despite the use of German incendiary bombs, caused gloom among the nationalists and their foreign supporters. The Loyalists' increased resistance was evident along the entire front.

In January, French newspapers printed alarmist reports of large German troop concentrations in Spanish Morocco. The reports went on to say that these forces had practically taken over the economic resources of the area. The French government was particularly alarmed over these developments since, if true, they represented a decisive threat to French security in North Africa. The French government immediately reacted to these reports by concentrating troops along the border of the French zone of Morocco. On January 9, France reminded the officials in the Spanish zone of Morocco of the French-Spanish convention of November 27, 1912, in which Spain agreed not to alienate any of her rights in the Spanish zone to a third party. On January 11, Hitler, in a speech before foreign diplomats in Berlin, assured the French Ambassador, François-Ponçet, that Germany had no territorial ambitions in Spanish Morocco or in Spain. In a more public manner, the official German press organs spoke of the whole affair as a French attempt to discredit Germany.⁴⁵ In the meantime, General Faupel informed the Foreign Ministry on January 9 that the only German units in Spanish Morocco was a squadron of seven seaplanes at Melilla.⁴⁶

During the month of January, Germany decided upon her basic military

⁴⁵J.C. DeWilde, Foreign Policy Reports, "The Struggle Over Spain," Vol. 14, (New York, April 1938), 15-16.

⁴⁶GFD., 214.

policy towards aiding the Spanish rebels. Franco's request for more aid resulted in an Italo-German military conference scheduled for January 14 in Rome. The German delegation was led by General Hermann Goering, while Mussolini headed the Italian delegation. At this meeting it was decided that no additional German personnel would be sent to Spain other than replacements, and that further German contributions to Franco's war effort would be in military supplies only. Both Mussolini and Goering agreed that final efforts to aid Franco should be completed by January 31, and that dilatory tactics should be applied to the British control proposals in the Non-Intervention Committee until then.⁴⁷ This was decided in expectation of the success of Franco's offensive against Madrid. They also agreed that under no circumstances would they allow the widening of the civil war into a general European war.

The German Foreign Ministry was evidently still in the dark as to what direction German policy towards Spain would take in the future. Unaware of what had been decided upon in Rome, Baron von Weizsaecker remarked that the Spanish adventure was to be abandoned. The problem was how to withdraw from Spain gracefully. Evidently the Foreign Ministry was anxious to withdraw from Spain because of the international consequences of continued German presence there. In any event the Foreign Ministry was interested in cooperating with the London Non-Intervention Committee in attempting to limit the spread of the civil war into a European war.

⁴⁷S and S., 135. GFD., 226-227.

The failure of Franco's January offensive against Madrid disappointed German officials who believed that once Madrid fell, the civil war would end in a Rebel victory. They now believed that an end to the civil war would be put off indefinitely and that a mediated peace would ultimately mean a Loyalist victory unless Franco mobilized his heretofore untapped reserve manpower and received more German equipment. Germany at this time was still not interested in attaining greater influence in the planning and executing of Rebel offensives. Germany was well aware that undue interference in the Rebel conduct of the war would only arouse the proverbial Spanish individualism and xenophobia.⁴⁸ If Germany did agree to a joint German-Italian command and greater influence in the conduct of the war, it would be burdened with a responsibility for the course of operations which, up till now, it had avoided assuming.

On January 25, the German Foreign Ministry received Franco's opinion on the January 14th Rome decisions. Franco protested that, because of the recent inability to capture Madrid, he needed more war material than what was decided upon at the Rome conference. Franco also pointed out that if after January 31 Germany and Italy agreed to the British proposals to establish a control system preventing materials from reaching Spain, the effect of such a control system would work to the disadvantage of the Rebels.⁴⁹ In order to obtain needed supplies, Franco told General Faupel on February 7, that he would agree to the establishment of a joint German-Italian general staff consisting of five German and

⁴⁸GFD., 554.

⁴⁹Ibid., 331.

five Italians. Both Faupel and Roatta took this under consideration and agreed to report back to Franco after consulting their governments.

After repeated attempts to convince the Berlin authorities of Franco's need for more war material, Faupel finally enlisted the support of the Italian ambassador to Spain, Mancini, and Lieutenant Colonel Funck, German military observer to Franco's general staff, in requesting more aid for the Rebels. In a dispatch to Berlin on April 21, Faupel reported that the civil war could not be won if it continued to be waged in its present manner. Both Faupel and Mancini were in favor of making further German and Italian aid to Franco conditional on more influence to German and Italian officers upon operations, and upon the training of more Spanish recruits by German and Italian advisors.

The Rebel forces followed the recommendations of the German advisors during the winter offensives against Madrid. This was evident on January 5, when the Rebel forces employed blitzkrieg tactics while attacking the Loyalist's positions. Intense bombing was followed by the advance of tanks and mobile artillery, and then by infantry waves supported by more tanks.⁵⁰ These tactics had the effect of creating a breach in the Loyalist's lines but did not enable the Rebel forces to achieve a lasting penetration because of the lack of supporting troops and material.

In the spring of 1937, the Rebel's continual hammering against the Madrid defenses failed to make progress against the civilian resistance supported by International Brigades and Russian war material. Franco

⁵⁰Thomas, 349.

therefore decided to begin the subjugation of the northern provinces which were effectively cut off from foreign or Loyalist assistance. The Rebel military command thought that this area would be relatively easy to conquer and by doing so would provide a much needed victory to bolster Nationalist prestige. The Basque iron ore, as well as the industries of Bilbao were additional reasons for undertaking this offensive. Also, the conquest of these provinces would remove pressure on the Rebel rear and enable thousands of troops to be transferred to the Madrid front. Generals Mola and Davila commanded the Northern army which was to advance against Bilbao and Santander. The Army of the North contained a mixture of Italian and Spanish ground troops supported by the Spanish airforce, the Italian expeditionary airforce, and the Condor Legion. The total number of aircraft in support of the Army of the North amounted to approximately 120 planes.⁵¹

Preceding the offensive against the northern provinces, German bombers and fighter planes carried out an intensified bombing of Basque towns in order to weaken the Loyalist's defenses. On January 4, Bilbao was raided by nine Junkers 52 escorted by Heinkel fighter planes. This indiscriminate bombing of open towns and non-military areas created deep hatred and resentment against Germany.⁵²

On March 31, the Condor Legion bombed the country town of Durango, a road and railway junction between Bilbao and the front. The resultant

⁵¹Claude G. Bowers, My Mission to Spain: Watching the Rehearsal for World War II, (New York, 1954), 338. Hereafter cited as Bowers.

⁵²Thomas, 368.

destruction of the town included indiscriminate bombing of non-military civilian areas. The death toll inflicted by the German planes amounted to 154. Claude Bowers, United States Ambassador to Spain at the time, wrote in his book, My Mission to Spain, that this was "the most terrible bombardment of a white civil population in the history of the world up to March 31, 1937."⁵³ But this German crime against humanity was soon surpassed in destructiveness and barbarity by the Condor Legion's total annihilation of the Basque's holy city of Guernica.

As the ancient capital of the Basques, Guernica stood for centuries as the center of Basque religion, liberty and independence. It was here that the Catholic sovereigns Ferdinand and Isabella granted the Basque liberties which were renewed as recently as 1931 by the Republic. Guernica is a small town in the province of Vizcaya, lying in a valley ten kilometers from the sea and thirty from Bilbao. On April 26, General Mola ordered a punitive raid on Guernica in retaliation for the stiff resistance put up by the Basque troops. German Heinkels 111 and Junkers 52 carried out a three hour bombardment of the market area of the town where 7,000 people had gathered for their weekly market day. 1,654 people were killed and 889 wounded. Incendiary bombs gutted the town and left it in a blazing fury after the planes departed.⁵⁴

This senseless bombing of populated civilian areas produced a furor of protest in the world press. General Faupel was instructed by the German Foreign Ministry to request France to issue a strong denial that

⁵³Bowers, 343.

⁵⁴Thomas, 419-420.

German fliers were responsible. The official German newspapers in the meantime blamed the destruction on the retreating Basque communists.⁵⁵ In London, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden refused to issue a communique asked for by Ribbentrop against the false reports concerning Guernica. There were rumors that Eden would propose an international investigation. Hitler expressed the view that Germany could not consider an investigation of the incident. Hermann Goering, Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe, was later to admit at the Nuremberg War Trials that Guernica was regarded as a testing ground for the German airforce.

In the meantime, the Army of the South, under the command of General Queipo de Llano, was not idle. On January 17, a rebel offensive began against the large Spanish port of Malaga, located on the south-east coast of Spain. The offensive continued throughout January, and on February 7 the Army of the South captured the city.

The victory at Malaga coincided with a new Rebel offensive to the south-east of Madrid in the valley of the Jarama river. The Rebel force consisted of five mobile brigades, six 155mm. batteries, and a German artillery group of 88mm. guns. The objective of the offensive was the Madrid to Valencia road, which was the remaining line of communication between the defenders in Madrid and the Republican government at Valencia. After two weeks of fighting, a stalemate resulted with the Rebels failing in their objective, but penetrating some fifteen kilometers into Loyalist territory. Both sides suffered approximately 25,000 casualties.⁵⁶

⁵⁵GFD., 279.

⁵⁶Thomas, 380.

From March 30 to June 19, the Army of the North concentrated on capturing Bilbao, the major industrial and mining center in Spain. By the first week of May, the Basque defenders had been driven back to their last defensive positions outside of Bilbao. The Condor Legion continued their bombing runs. The Germans were experimenting with the idea of dropping large numbers of small incendiary bombs on wooded areas to force the Loyalists to leave their positions. Meanwhile, Neurath was in Rome conferring with Mussolini. The Duce told him that Germany and Italy had made enough sacrifices for Franco and that he, Mussolini, would inform Franco that the Italian troops would be withdrawn if the Rebels did not conduct the war more energetically.⁵⁷ This type of outburst was characteristic of Mussolini. He had invested an immense amount of men and material in Spain despite the economic dislocations that the Abyssinian affair created in the Italian economy. Neither the Italian economy nor Mussolini's pride could withstand a long continuation of the civil war.

By the end of May, Germany had poured approximately 150 million Reichmarks into Spain. If the present rate of deliveries continued, there would be an additional five or six million Reichmarks worth of war materials delivered monthly to the Rebels. The deliveries after May were to be paid for in cash, contrary to the previous German policy of advancing the Spanish Rebels credit for the purchase of German war materials.⁵⁸

On June 23, the German navy decided to withdraw most of its war vessels from Spanish waters. For the time being there remained a force consisting

⁵⁷Thomas, 437.

⁵⁸GFD., 320.

of one cruiser, four torpedo boats, and two U-boats.⁵⁹ Two days later, Duff Cooper, First Lord of the Admiralty, stated in the British House of Commons that according to British sources there were six destroyers, one armored ship, four submarines and two cruisers of the Germany navy operating in Spanish waters. This information was obtained by the British government prior to Germany's June 23 decision, for on July 7, Cooper told the Commons that the British government now had information revealing that there were three submarines, one armored ship and one cruiser of the German fleet in Spanish waters.⁶⁰ Rumors in London had it that the reason for the reduction of German war vessels in the Mediterranean was that high German naval officers in Berlin had protested to Hitler that the sending of the German ships to the Mediterranean increased the risk of having the cream of the German navy bottled up in the event of a general European conflict. Whether or not this was the real reason for the reduction of German ships, it was evident that Germany placed more emphasis upon increasing the combat efficiency of the Rebel navy than on using a large number of its own ships in support of the Rebels.

After the final collapse of Loyalist resistance in the Basque provinces on June 19, General Franco paused before mounting his offensive against Santander, a major Loyalist port on the Bay of Biscay. During this pause the Loyalists surprised the Rebel forces by launching an offensive against the Rebel positions ten miles west of Madrid at Brunete. Immediately Franco sent reinforcements from the Army of the North in order

⁵⁹Ibid., 370.

⁶⁰ Great Britain, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 326, (London, 1937), 320-322. Hereafter cited as Parl. Debates.

to halt the Loyalist advance. The Condor Legion and heavy artillery were also dispatched. On July 24, the Nationalists succeeded in stopping the Loyalist advance and instigating a counter-attack. But further Rebel advancement was held up by Franco who wanted to concentrate on taking Santander. The Brunete offensive cost the Loyalists 25,000 men and about 100 aircraft. The Rebel forces lost 23 aircraft and 10,000 men.⁶¹

German officers were quick to learn the tactical significance of the battle of Brunete for the use of the tank. The Loyalist's tanks were ineffective since they were spread out in support of infantry and thus could be attacked and destroyed individually. The Rebels, upon the insistence of the German General von Thoma, concentrated their tanks upon one point and thus used the tank force as a penetrating spear, followed by waves of infantry.

General Faupel informed Berlin that in his opinion once the Brunete crisis was over, Franco should continue his prepared offensive against Santander. Resumption of the Madrid offensive should be avoided. Faupel also noted that the Spanish forces lacked men trained in attack methods, and therefore requested that a number of such assault divisions be sent to Spain. This request had previously been refused by both the German High Command and the Foreign Ministry. Faupel's advice was subsequently heeded by Franco, for a new offensive against Madrid was not initiated but rather the northern campaign against Santander began.

During July, the British acquired a new prime minister, Neville

⁶¹Thomas, 461-462.

Chamberlain.⁶² British diplomacy under Chamberlain aimed at appeasing Hitler and Mussolini more energetically than had been done under Stanley Baldwin. Britain's primary aim was to secure friendship with Italy. This was attempted on the assumption that better British-Italian relations could also result in the easing of French-Italian tensions and could conceivably bring about a settlement of the Spanish crisis through a mediated peace. But British diplomacy in this direction floundered upon the continued shipments of Italian troops and war material to the Spanish Rebel forces. The increased Italian commitment to a Rebel victory resulted not only in further estrangement of British-Italian relations but in the closer cooperation between Italy and Germany.⁶³

In mid-August the Army of the North began its offensive against Santander. The Rebel forces consisted of 106 battalions supported by 63 batteries and the Condor Legion.⁶⁴ Because of their overwhelming superiority of air power, the Rebel victory on August 27 was never in doubt. Coinciding with the Santander campaign was the intensification of attacks on merchant ships in the Mediterranean.

Franco became alarmed at the reports of increased Soviet shipping reaching the Loyalists. He therefore requested help from Mussolini and the Italian navy in order to stop such shipments. Mussolini agreed, and during the month of August, Russian, British, French, and other neutral ships were attacked in the Mediterranean by Italian submarines and aircraft operating from Majorca. During the last of August the raids on

⁶²Neville Chamberlain. (1869-1940) British statesman; prime minister, 1937-1940.

⁶³Italy had joined the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact on November 6, 1937. On December 11 of the same year, Italy withdrew from the League of Nations.

⁶⁴Thomas 1168

merchant shipping increased, culminating in the August 31st submarine attack on the British destroyer Havock.⁶⁵

Because of this increased threat to commercial shipping in the Mediterranean, the British government decided to accept a French proposal calling for a conference of Mediterranean powers. On September 6, the British and French governments jointly issued invitations to Germany, Italy, Russia, Albania, Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Bulgaria and Rumania to send representatives to a conference beginning on September 10 at Nyon, Switzerland. In the meantime, the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden explained to Ernst Woermann,⁶⁶ German Charge d'Affaires in London, that the conference would deal only with the attacks upon commercial shipping in the Mediterranean. There was no desire to exclude Germany from the Conference.

⁶⁷ Germany replied to the invitation on September 9 by recalling the Deutschland and Leipzig incidents,⁶⁸ and the British and French lack of response to help Germany protect her ships. Germany proposed that the Conference be referred back to the London Non-Intervention Committee.⁶⁹

The Conference met as scheduled despite the German and Italian non-participation. On September 14 the participating states reached an agreement. It was decided to counter-act with force any attacks made upon merchant vessels in the Mediterranean. The Nyon agreements had the effect of making Italian interference with Russian aid to the Spanish Loyalists extremely difficult. Because of this, Germany and Italy had to

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Dr. Ernst Woermann. Official in the German Foreign Ministry, 1933-1936. Counselor of Embassy in Great Britain, 1936-1938. Director of the Political Department of the Foreign Ministry, 1938-1943.

⁶⁷GFD., 438.

⁶⁸See Chapter II.

⁶⁹CFM 1112 1112

increase their aid to Franco.

In the meantime, the Germans in Spain were quarreling among themselves. General Sperrle, commander of the Condor Legion and General Faupel, official German representative to the Rebel government, mutually disliked each other. Sperrle refused to see Faupel and was also critical of the Hisma monopoly. Franco requested that Faupel be recalled, partly because of his close relations with the Falange, but chiefly because of his heavy-handed arrogance. This was also due, no doubt, to Faupel's continual interference with Franco's conduct of the war. Faupel was replaced by Eberhard von Stohrer,⁷⁰ in late August. Sperrle himself was shortly recalled, being succeeded in command by General Volkmann.

By mid-August, Ciano was optimistic over military developments in Spain. The offensive against Santander proceeded successfully and the Italian naval activities in the Mediterranean resulted in the sinking of seven ships off the Spanish coast. But he was still apprehensive over the long duration of the war and the cost it involved for Italy. On August 16, he stated to the German ambassador to Italy, von Hassell, that "the most important thing now was to clear up the Spanish question which had been dragging on much too long; settlement of other questions would become considerably easier after that."⁷¹

The Loyalists attempted another diversionary offensive during August, this time on the Aragon front. It was undertaken in an effort to draw off some of Franco's men and material from the Rebel offensive in Asturias. To some degree it was successful, since the absence of

⁷⁰Dr. Eberhard von Stohrer. (1883-1944). German ambassador to Spain, 1937-1943. Recalled for failing to prevent the downfall of Serrano Suñer.

⁷¹GFD., 434.

of the Condor Legion prolonged the Rebel advance on Oviedo. Though the Loyalist pressure continued along the Aragon front until mid-October, it did not produce the desired result of checking the Rebel advance on Oviedo which was finally taken on October 21. With the fall of Oviedo, organized Loyalist resistance in the northern provinces collapsed.

The war in the north, the Basque, Santander and Asturias campaigns, had been important for the use of an overwhelming air and artillery superiority. It was at this time that the Condor Legion developed the tactic of carpet bombing. This tactic involved flying in close formation very low, and releasing all the bombs simultaneously, thereby producing a devastating effect upon the entrenched Loyalists. The conquest of the Northern provinces, 18, 600 square kilometers of land and 1-1/2 million people, brought the Rebels the Asturian coal fields and the industries of Bilbao. They also gained the north coast of Spain, enabling the entire Nationalist Navy to concentrate in the Mediterranean, and thereby create a stronger blockade of the Loyalist ports. The collapse of the Northern front enabled Franco to transfer 65,000 men of the Army of the North to the Madrid front.⁷²

There was a temporary quiet along all fronts in Spain following the Asturias and Aragon campaigns. This lull lasted from mid-October until mid-December. The Rebel army now consisted of about 600,000 troops. It was divided into 650 battalions of infantry, one division of cavalry, and supported by 290 artillery batteries plus 600 aircraft. This main body was sub-divided into three groups; the Army of the North, the Army

⁷²Thomas, 480-481.

of the Center, and the Army of the South under the respective commands of Generals Dávila, Saliquet, and Queipo de Llano. German and Italian aircraft made up the majority of the Rebel airforce. These planes included Junkers 52 and Savoias 73, Fiats 32, Heinkels and Messerschmitts.⁷³

Franco's plan for a new offensive against Guadalajara in mid-December was interrupted on December 15 by a Loyalist attack on Teruel, the tip of the Rebel salient into Loyalist territory. The salient extended approximately 50 miles into Loyalist territory at a width of 25 miles. German and Italian advisors urged Franco to continue with his plans for attacking Guadalajara in spite of the Loyalist offensive. Franco hesitated until December 23, when the political necessity of recapturing Teruel became extremely important. Franco's war effort was financed through foreign and private backing and he could not risk the possibility of being forced into a defensive position. Any signs that the Rebel forces were weakening, would have grave consequences for the continuation of financial support.

On December 29, the Rebels began their counter-offensive. As always, the Condor Legion supported the ground forces by establishing air superiority. Because of being constantly moved from one area to another, the headquarters of the Condor Legion was set up in a twelve car train for mobility purposes.⁷⁴ More German and Italian planes participated in the battle of Teruel than at any one time during World War I.⁷⁵

At this time, the Italians renewed their demands on Franco for an

⁷³Ibid., 488.

⁷⁴Thomas, 505-506.

⁷⁵Bowers, 372.

early military decision. They thought that this could be best accomplished through a unified German-Italian command. Germany, while not actually refusing this idea, was cautious. Weizsaecker commented that although a unified command might have advantages, such a command would burden Germany with a responsibility that eventually might prove harmful to German diplomacy. Weizsawcker's attitude was justified, since if there had been a unified command during the battle of Guadalajara,⁷⁶ Germany would have received the same loss of prestige for the defeat as had the Italians.⁷⁷

On January 2, Weizsaecker informed the Italian Charge d'Affaires, Magistrati, that Germany would not favor a unified command in Spain. Germany preferred instead, direct personal influence on Franco. General Blomberg, Minister of War, supported Weizsaecker's position.⁷⁸

The controversy over a unified command had been raging since 1936. The Italians were especially interested in establishing a unified command for reasons of prestige, and also because they thought that Franco was making poor use of the Italian troops and conducting the war in a slow and not altogether successful way. Both Faupel and his successor Stohrer requested the establishment of such a command. From a purely military standpoint, a unified command was desirable since this would enable the Germans and Italians to operate independently from Franco and

⁷⁶March 8-13, 1937. Italy suffered a humiliating defeat. German advisors attributed the defeat to the inability of the Italian troops to wage modern warfare.

⁷⁷GFD., 543.

⁷⁸Ibid., 544.

have greater influence over his operations. But Berlin, for political reasons, was not ready to assume the increased responsibility that a greater influence on the Rebel war effort would burden them with.

During January and February the Germans assumed a cautious attitude toward the Spanish adventure. On February 1, Stohrer requested information from Berlin as to whether or not Germany would follow the Italian lead and continue to supply Franco. In Stohrer's opinion, Franco desperately needed this aid, and unless pressured by Germany and Italy, he would not assume the risk of any major action. For this reason, demands for more German influence on the conduct of the war should accompany any additional German aid to Franco. Weizsæcker answered by stating that no decision would be made on military policy in Spain until it was seen how Franco recovered from the Loyalist offensive against Teruel.⁷⁹

Evidently the reason for the Foreign Ministry's hesitancy to lay down any definite military policy towards Spain at this time was because of the impending political and military shakeup in Berlin. During February, Hitler ousted Blomberg from the War Ministry and appointed himself to the post. Hitler also reorganized the army by creating the High Command of the Army, and placing it under his personal control. General Wilhelm Keitel⁸⁰ was appointed as Chief of the High Command. Hitler's reorganization plans also included the Foreign Ministry.

⁷⁹GFD , 575.

⁸⁰Wilhelm Keitel. (1882-1946). Chief of the OKW, 1938-1945.

Foreign Minister Neurath was replaced by Joachim von Ribbentrop,⁸¹ formerly ambassador to Britain and one of Hitler's lackeys.

One of Ribbentrop's first functions as Foreign Minister was to assure the Spanish ambassador to Germany that the Reich would continue its policy of supporting Nationalist Spain. Hitler also reiterated Germany's desire to combat any attempts to bolshevize Spain, and added that Germany had no territorial ambitions in Spain.

While assuring the Spanish Rebels of its continued support, Germany was still uncertain as to whether or not to continue sending aid to Franco. Future German policy towards Spain depended upon the success or failure of the present Italo-British negotiations for a general settlement of outstanding difficulties between the two countries. Since becoming prime minister, Chamberlain, contrary to the wishes of his Foreign Secretary, attempted to come to an understanding with Italy concerning the Mediterranean and Italian withdrawal from Spain. Eden was not opposed to reconciliation with Italy, but was opposed to the policy of appeasement which would ultimately be at the expense of British interests and security. Germany had to adapt its policy to any agreement between Britain and Italy, or to any agreement reached in the London Non-Intervention Committee on the question of withdrawing foreign volunteers from Spain. Thus, Germany was anxious to convince Franco that he must make maximum use of German and Italian volunteers in the next few months in order to deliver a decisive military blow before the possibility of having to withdraw German and Italian volunteers became a reality.

⁸¹Joachim von Ribbentrop. (1893-1946). Ambassador-at-Large, 1935-1938. Ambassador to Britain, 1935-1938. Reich Foreign Minister 1938-1945.

On March 4, Franco informed Stohrer that guerilla activities and military incompetence of the local commander at Teruel were responsible for the delay in his operations. He assured Stohrer that present strategic plans would achieve an early victory before the question of volunteers became acute. The offensive that Franco referred to was the buildup of troops and material for the March 9 Rebel counter-offensive against the Loyalist positions at Teruel.

At the end of March Germany was still pressuring Franco for a quick decisive military blow that would result in a Rebel victory. On March 30, General Volkmann, received instructions from the War Ministry to urge Franco to continue military operations until all of Catalonia fell, and not to divert his attention to other fronts.⁸²

The entire Condor Legion supported the March 9 Rebel offensive against Catalonia. The Legion now consisted of eight squadrons of Messerschmitts 109, four squadrons of Heinkels 51, a reconnaissance group of Heinkels and Dorniers 17 and twelve squadrons of Heinkels III and Junkers 52. The tank corps comprised approximately 180 tanks, while the anti-tank units numbered thirty companies.⁸³

During March and April the Loyalist resistance collapsed in the face of overwhelming Rebel air superiority. Franco used his aircraft to drive the Loyalists from their positions and then over-run the area with infantry supported by tanks. From this battle the German observers

⁸²GFD., 628.

⁸³Liddell Hart, The Other Side of the Hill, (London, 1948). F. O. Micksche, Blitzkrieg, (London 1941), 81. As taken from Thomas, 519.

learned a great deal about the use of fighter planes for supporting infantry. By April 15, the Rebel forces succeeded in reaching the Mediterranean coast and thus opening a wedge between the two principle Loyalist cities of Valencia and Barcelona.

In view of the rapid advance of the Nationalists, Germany concluded that its volunteers could start withdrawing from Spain without hindering Franco's war effort. Mounting tensions in Eastern Europe and the concluding of Anglo-Italian agreement on April 6, made the German High Command unenthusiastic about supplying the Nationalists with more men and material. Franco agreed, but on the condition that the Condor Legion would leave behind its aircraft, anti-aircraft guns and other equipment for use by German trained Spanish pilots.⁸⁴ On April 8, Weizsäcker asked Magistrati, Italian Chargé d'Affaires, to cable Rome for Mussolini's reaction to the withdrawal of German troops. Germany needed these troops at home for assimilation into an expanded training program.⁸⁵ The Italian reply on June 8 stated that Italy had no intention of recalling its troops at this time despite the Italian-British agreement, but that they might be reduced.

In the meantime, Franco changed his mind. On April 27, he informed Stohrer that the Condor Legion would be of utmost value until final victory was assured.⁸⁶ Franco's change of heart was probably because of the increased resistance of the Loyalists who were receiving supplies from France since the opening of the Pyrenean frontier on March 17.

⁸⁵Ibid., 640.

⁸⁶GFD., 647.

During June, reports from Stohrer, Volkmann and other German officials in Spain constantly stressed the need for re-equipping and re-supplying the Condor Legion. On June 11, General Volkmann cabled Berlin that no supplies had reached the Condor Legion since the beginning of March, and as a consequence the Legion was in urgent need of replacement parts and new equipment. The 88mm. anti-aircraft artillery had been completely worn out. The combat efficiency of the Legion had been reduced in half as a result of worn out equipment and combat losses.⁸⁷ Both Ribbentrop and Keitel approached Hitler on the urgent need for re-supplying the Condor Legion, but it was not until the end of June that Germany finally decided to continue supplying the Legion with the necessary equipment to maintain its combat strength. These supplies were not delivered on the condition that further economic concessions from Franco be granted to Germany, but Stohrer was to inform Franco of Germany's desire to acquire certain mining rights in Spain.

Between the end of April and the end of July, the Rebel advance along the Mediterranean coast continued with increased difficulty as the Rebels approached Valencia. Although the Loyalists received enough war materials from Franco to slow this advance, their source of supply was steadily drying up. On June 13, France, under pressure from Britain, closed the Pyrenean frontier. This was partly done in order to create a favorable situation for Franco's acceptance of the plan for the withdrawal of volunteers decided upon in the Non-Intervention Committee.⁸⁸

⁸⁷Ibid., 689.

⁸⁸See Chapter two. Franco did not accept this plan.

On June 30, Generak Kindelan, Commander of the Spanish Airforce, approached Stohrer with the request that Spanish pilots be authorized to take over a complete squadron of the Condor Legion. The Spanish request was granted, but on the condition that these planes remained under German command.⁸⁹

As a result of the surprise offensive of the Loyalists along the Ebro river during July, the Rebel forces once again desperately needed supplies. On August 14, Bernhardt, director of Hisma, telegraphed Berlin urging that supplies be sent immediately to Franco, especially artillery ammunition and airplane engines. Goering was requested to intervene personally so that these supplies would be delivered as quickly as possible.⁹⁰ By the end of August the Rebels succeeded in containing the Loyalist offensive. Both sides suffered immense losses in men and material but the Loyalist could least afford it, since they did not have the source of supplies that was available to the Rebels. Because of the weaknesses of both sides, four months of trench warfare followed.

During September of 1938 the Czech crisis preoccupied the attention of Europe. Franco was alarmed by this potentially dangerous situation because of the possibility of a general war in which he might have to contend with a French invasion. During the crisis, German aid temporarily stopped, because of the possible German needs in central Europe. Franco was annoyed at Germany for failing to inform him of its plans. However on September 19, Germany informed Count Antonio Magaz, the Rebel Ambassador

⁸⁹GFD., 712.

⁹⁰Ibid., 735.

to Germany, that there would be no change in German aid to Spain even if war did come.⁹¹

Franco became worried over Hitler's promise to Chamberlain during the Munich conference on September 30 that Germany would withdraw her volunteers from Spain if all foreign volunteers were withdrawn. To Franco, it seemed that this cooperation between Germany and Britain might lead to a mediated peace in Spain. Franco's apprehensions were not ill-founded, for on October 2, Stohrer informed Berlin that Franco could not win a military victory without extensive aid from Germany and Italy, and that a peace by mediation would not necessarily be harmful to German interests.⁹²

In order to counteract the possibility of a mediated peace, Jordana informed Stohrer on October 6 that a mediated peace in Spain would mean that the civil war had been fought in vain. Franco, far from accepting mediation, demanded that Germany deliver to Spain 500 heavy machine guns, 50,000 rifles, 1,500 light and 100 75mm. guns. Berlin agreed, but made the delivery of the above material conditional upon the granting of mining concessions to Germany. This arrangement did not take final form until November.⁹³

German policy concerning further aid to the Spanish Rebels was decided in Rome on October 28 in a conversation between Ribbentrop and Mussolini. Both agreed to continue sending supplies to Franco. As a result of this decision, German and Italian aid became quite extensive during the months of November and December of 1938 and January of 1939.

⁹¹Thomas, 553.

⁹²GFD., 753.

⁹³Ibid., 775.

30,000 tons of material entered the Rebel port of Vigo during December alone.⁹⁴ Despite the increased aid to Franco, General von Richthofen informed Goering that the Condor Legion would have to be tripled in order for Franco to win the war. Berlin did not agree and continued to follow its policy of sending only war material and not troops to Spain. The Condor Legion was maintained at its present number according to Hitler's November 18 decision.

The increased aid to the Rebels was a reversal of the direction that German policy had taken towards Spain during the earlier stages of the war. After the implementation of the Italo-British agreement on November 1938,⁹⁵ and after the Munich conference,⁹⁵ it was evident to Germany that Britain and France would never go to war over Spain or anything for that matter. It seemed to Germany that the fears it earlier held concerning the dangers of the Spanish war spreading into a European conflict were groundless. This opinion was also encouraged in the autumn of 1938 by the Soviet Union's change of policy towards Spain. After repeated attempts to affect a Russian-British-French alignment against Germany, the Soviet Union was finally persuaded by the results of the Munich conference that her interests would be better served by some sort of an understanding with Germany.⁹⁶ As was the case with Czechoslovakia, so it would be with democracy in Spain. The Spanish Republic would be sacrificed by the appeasement policies of British and French diplomacy

⁹⁴Bowers, 402.

⁹⁵The condition for the agreement to come into effect was the withdrawal of Italian troops from Spain. 10,000 left in the autumn of 1938.

⁹⁶Thomas, 612-613.

in order to prevent a general European war.

By January 3, the Rebel offensive against Catalonia turned into a rout with the collapse of the Loyalist defenses. For all extents and purposes the civil war was now over.

With the end of the war in sight, Germany was anxious to withdraw her volunteers from Spain. Therefore on March 1, the Foreign Ministry instructed General von Richthofen to inquire of Franco as to a suitable date for the withdrawal of the German contingent from Spain. Franco replied that the Condor Legion could leave anytime after the first week in May, for a victory parade was to take place in Madrid around that time.

In the meantime, Johannes Bernhardt was negotiating with the Rebel government and Berlin as to the possibility of having Field-Marshal Goering witness the embarkation of the Condor Legion. This was done without the knowledge of the German Ambassador Stohrer who, once informed of these negotiations, cabled Berlin immediately protesting the activities of Bernhardt and threatening to resign his post if the impending visit was not arranged through normal diplomatic channels. Stohrer added that he had tolerated Bernhardt's interference in the Embassy's relations with Franco throughout the civil war for the sake of German unity of purpose, but now must demand that this interference be stopped.⁹⁷ The Foreign Ministry supported Stohrer's position and on May 8 instructed him to inform Bernhardt to leave all negotiations with Franco to the German Embassy. Stohrer was also to inform the Spanish government that he was taking over all arrangements for Goering's visit.⁹⁸

⁹⁷GFD., 903.

⁹⁸GFD., 906.

Further negotiations between Stohrer and Franco resulted in failure to agree to the time and place of the proposed meeting between Goering and Franco. The whole plan was therefore cancelled and the Condor Legion left Spain on May 22 without the presence of Goering. On arriving in Hamburg on May 31, the Legion proceeded to Berlin to be reviewed on June 6 by Hitler.⁹⁹ By the end of June the evacuation of German and Italian military forces from Spain was complete.

The Condor Legion participated in almost every major action in the war. Its value to the Rebel forces was in its mobility and technical precision. The Legion was constantly being shifted from one front to another in order to provide the Rebels with not only air superiority, but with tactical support of the Spanish and Italian infantry. Their participation in the war provided the German pilots with combat experience and the opportunity to experiment with new tactics such as carpet bombing and the use of incendiary bombs.

The principal activity of the German army in Spain was to train Spanish officers and officer-material in the methods of modern warfare. The German tank detachment that was sent to Spain under the command of General von Thoma, trained Spanish officers in the use of tanks, anti-tank weapons and other technical machinery that was indispensable to a modern equipped army. The German army also established infantry, artillery, mortar and engineer schools in which 56,000 Spaniards received instruction.¹⁰⁰ The German army was not far behind the Luftwaffe in

⁹⁹Katharine Duff, Survey of International Affairs, "The War in Spain and its Repercussions," Vol. I, (London, 1938), 355-357.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

experimenting with new tactics at the expense of Spanish troops and civilians. In particular, the Germans observed that concentrated tank units were more effective against defensive positions than units which were spread out in support of infantry.

German military aid to the Spanish Rebels was decisive for the ultimate Rebel victory on three separate occasions. The first being the supply of transport aircraft in July of 1936 enabling Franco to airlift his Moroccan troops across the Straits of Gibraltar. Secondly, the heavy supplies sent to the Rebel forces early in 1937 prevented the possibility of a collapse of Rebel morale after having failed to capture Madrid. Thirdly, the arrival of German war material enabled Franco to launch his successful Catalan campaign in December of 1938, thus providing the Rebels with enough material to overcome the last defensive position of the Loyalists. This material arrived when both sides were exhausted from the destructive battle of the Ebro and neither could, for lack of material, initiate an extensive counter-offensive. If German aid had failed to arrive, the possibilities for a compromise peace would have been greatly enhanced.¹⁰¹ The dependable and efficient men and material that Germany supplied to Franco, enabled the Rebel forces to keep up a constant pressure on the Loyalists who, for lack of a similar source of supplies, were eventually overwhelmed.

¹⁰¹Thomas, 612.

CHAPTER II

GERMAN DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT OF THE

SPANISH NATIONALISTS

THE NON-INTERVENTION COMMITTEE

1936-1939

In addition to direct military and technical assistance, Germany also supported the Spanish Rebels through diplomatic channels, the forum being the London Non-Intervention Committee. German diplomatic support of the Rebels was not accomplished by singing the praises of the Nationalist's cause or by rallying around the Rebel banner but rather by causing endless discussion and delay in the Committee and thereby reducing its effectiveness. The Committee's main concern was preventing foreign intervention in the Spanish Civil War, and various proposals were introduced to accomplish this task. Following the Italian lead, Germany attempted to delay passage of any proposals which would limit its ability to aid the Spanish Rebels.

By July 22, 1936, it was evident that the Spanish generals' attempt at a coup d'état was unsuccessful. The struggle in Spain evolved into a civil war with each side appealing for and receiving large amounts of war materials from the interested European powers. It was because of this extensive aid to Spain, creating the danger of precipitating a European war, that France on August 1, 1936 issued an appeal to the interested

powers for an immediate adoption of a common policy of non-intervention toward the Spanish conflict. At the same time, France announced that it would retain its freedom of action concerning Spain pending the conclusion of a non-intervention agreement.¹

The Spanish Civil War created not only a division in the French cabinet but also a division of opinion among the French populace. At this time, the French government was a coalition government composed of elements of the left, combined under the leadership of Leon Blum and commonly referred to as the Popular Front. The cabinet was divided between the proponents of strict neutrality and those favoring aid to the Madrid government. Outside the cabinet, the French people were divided in a similar manner. Added to this internal division was the policy of the British government under Stanley Baldwin. Britain maintained its traditional policy of avoiding European entanglements and thereby leaving the French to face the consequences of any future French intervention in favor of the Madrid government. The remaining, and in all probability the best course of action left to the Blum government was to have the major European powers agree to a policy of non-intervention.

The French note of August 1 proposed that an embargo be placed on all arms, ammunitions and implements of war by each of the interested states. This embargo would also apply to contracts for military equipment entered into prior to the outbreak of the civil war. The national measures passed or decreed by each of the states, in fulfillment of the

¹Puzzo, 88.

obligations assumed under the non-intervention agreement, would be circulated among the states.²

In a conversation on August 4 between the German Foreign Minister Baron von Neurath and the French ambassador to Germany, François-Poncet, Neurath stated that Germany did not need to make a declaration of neutrality since it did not interfere in domestic Spanish affairs. Germany was willing to consider discussions on the possibility of preventing intervention by foreign powers, provided that all the interested countries join such an agreement--especially the Soviet Union.³ On August 8, the German government was again pressured to adhere to the French note. This time it was by the British Ambassador to Germany, Sir Nevile Henderson. Again Germany delayed action by explaining the difficulties of implementing such a plan and demanding that all countries with large munition plants also participate.⁴

Germany continued to find excuses for not adhering to the French proposal. Up till August 9, its two main conditions for agreement were that those countries with munition plants participate in the embargo of war materials and that the Soviet Union also agree to join. On August 9, Spanish authorities at Badajoz seized a German Junker transport plane. The German government not only used this as another excuse to delay action on the embargo plan but also attempted to complicate matters further by threatening to break off relations with the Spanish government

²Vera Micheles Dean, "European Diplomacy in the Spanish Crisis," Foreign Policy Reports, XII (New York, 1937), 225. Hereafter cited as FPR.

³GFD., 29.

⁴Ibid., 34.

if the crew and plane were not released.

In an effort to increase the diplomatic pressure on Germany, the governments of Britain and France transmitted to the German government a joint declaration in which they agreed to ban export of war materials as soon as similar declarations were made by Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Russia.⁵ Germany replied that it agreed in principle to the embargo plan but reiterated three conditions for accepting the plan as proposed by the French. 1) The Spanish government must release the captured plane and crew, 2) that all states possessing arms industries also join the ban, and 3) that the Soviet Union also agree to accept the non-intervention proposal. Included in the German reply was the suggestion that the non-intervention proposals be extended to include volunteers.⁶

In order to quicken the diplomatic pace set by Germany, Britain unilaterally announced the imposition of an absolute ban on war materials exported to Spain. The effect of the British conciliatory measure was destroyed by the Spanish Loyalist's attack, seizure and search of the German steamship Kamerun on August 19, contrary to international law.

By August 24, Germany was in danger of being blamed for sabotaging the British-French attempts to affect an international agreement on the non-importation of war materials to Spain. Therefore on August 24, 1936 the German government, in a note to the French embassy, formally agreed to adhere to the French embargo proposal.⁷

⁵Esch. 56.

⁶GFD., 44-45.

⁷Ibid., 56.

The agreements on the embargo of war materials to Spain had the effect of focusing international attention on the Spanish crisis. Also, in contradiction of traditional international practice, the embargo resulted in the denial of the right of the legally constituted Madrid government to purchase war materials on the world market. This effect prolonged the civil war by weakening the military position of the Spanish government. For Germany, the embargo act was a convenient screen behind which German aid to the Spanish rebels was diplomatically hidden, while aid to the Loyalist Spanish government was severely handicapped.

On August 29, the French government proposed the formation of a Non-Intervention Committee. Its task was to keep the participating states informed of the various measures that each of them implemented in order to comply with the obligations undertaken in adhering to the embargo agreement. The representatives of each government on the Committee were chosen from the respective embassies or legations currently accredited to the British government.⁸

The German government was suspicious that the Committee would eventually become an organization with control powers and thus hamper German aid to the Rebels. Germany suggested to the French government that the Committee be dispensed with, and in its place the offices of the British government be used to inform the participating states of the measures taken by each member in implementing the embargo agreement. Also, the British government could receive the complaints concerning violations of the embargo agreement. German compliance was conditional

⁸GFD., 63-64

on the question of how the proposed Committee would function and the scope of its authority. In an attempt to get the German government to agree to the French proposal, the British and French gave assurances that the Committee would not become a control agency with extensive powers.

In their efforts to get Germany to agree to the establishment of a Committee, the British promised to eliminate the possibility of any control authority that the Committee might assume. This showed that the British were more concerned with limiting the danger of the Spanish conflict from becoming international in character than with prohibiting the importation of war materials into Spain. In order to placate Germany and Italy, the western democracies avoided aiding the legitimate government of Spain--a policy that was to lead to greater concessions and eventually to World War II.

On September 5, the German government, unwilling to assume the responsibility for defeating the French proposal, informed the British Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin that Germany accepted the proposal to establish a Non-Intervention Committee in London. Germany was confident that its present level of technical and material aid to Franco would enable him to achieve victory.⁹

The German Foreign Ministry, in order to assure itself that the Committee would not assume control functions, instructed its representative on the proposed Committee to play a reserved role, to resist the

⁹ Esch, 18.

¹⁰ The official German representative on the Committee was Joachim von Ribbentrop, German ambassador to Britain, but the sessions of the Committee were usually attended by Ernst Woermann, German Chargé d'Affaires in Britain.

implementation of any controls, and to refer all matters to Berlin.¹¹

In its first session on September 9, and in subsequent sessions throughout the month of September, the Non-Intervention Committee decided upon its organization and procedure. Mr. W.S. Morrison, Financial Secretary of the British Treasury, was chosen temporary chairman. On September 21, he was succeeded by Lord Plymouth, British Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, as permanent Chairman. The sessions of the Committee were secret and at the end of each meeting a joint communique was issued to the press.¹²

A set of elaborate rules was adopted to deal with any alleged violations of the non-intervention agreement. Every complaint had to be addressed to the Committee in writing and had to be from an official source. Thus reporters, journalists and travelers were excluded. Once received by the Committee, the complaint was communicated to the government accused of the violation. The accused government would then supply sufficient information to the Committee as to the veracity of the accusation and the facts surrounding the alleged violation. The Committee would then investigate the charges. Unfortunately, it took an immense amount of time for any complaint to go through this lengthy procedure. Once passed this complicated machinery the complaint ran into a deadend, for there was no provision for the application of any type of sanction against the violating government.¹³ The Committee was merely a

¹¹GFD., 78-81.

¹²GFD., 182-184.

¹³Padelford, 70.

debating society that agreed to do nothing more than review the facts and evidence of each complaint brought before it.

The financial obligations of the Committee were met by contributions from its members.¹⁴ The major powers of France, Britain, Germany, Italy and Russia contributed proportionately larger amounts than the lesser powers. As in similar international organizations, the Committee was in constant financial difficulties because of the lack of contributions.

A sub-committee was established principally to assist the chairman in the day-to-day work of the Committee, but eventually it came to assume the powers of an executive organ of the Committee. Its members included France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Russia, Portugal, Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Sweden. Because of its procedure, the sub-committee could accomplish little without involving a long period of time.

From October to December of 1936, one of the main concerns of the Committee were the Russian complaints of German violations of the embargo agreement, and its subsequent threats to withdraw from the Committee. During this same period, the British attempted to negotiate, both inside and outside of the Committee, for an observation and control system that would supplement the embargo agreement. Outside of the Committee, the German recognition of the Franco regime threatened to handicap efforts to establish the international policy of non-intervention towards the Spanish conflict.

¹⁴Countries adhering to non-intervention: Albania, Austria, Belgium, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Irish Free State, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Rumania, Sweden, Turkey, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

At the October 23 meeting of the Committee, Russia threatened to withdraw from the Committee if German and Italian aid to the Rebels continued. However, Russia softened its position somewhat by stating, after diplomatic representations by London, Paris, and Prague, that it would not be bound to the non-intervention agreements to any greater extent than the other participating powers.¹⁵ Thus the Russian threat to break up the Non-Intervention Committee and thereby create the possibility of greater foreign intervention in Spain was solved by diplomatic means outside of the Committee.

Since October, the members of the Committee had been aware of repeated violations of the embargo agreement by Italy and Germany and to a lesser extent by the Soviet Union. In an attempt to deal with these violations, the British government introduced in the sub-committee a plan calling for the posting of foreign observers in Spanish ports and along Spanish borders. The Committee on December 2 agreed to have the plan presented to the two Spanish factions, requesting their approval. At the same time, the sub-committee was instructed to examine the feasibility of prohibiting the entrance of volunteers into Spain. The question of volunteers became acute because of the increased rumors that composite units of the German and Italian armies were being sent to the assistance of Franco.¹⁶

Germany reacted to the British plan by informing the British government that despite the fact that Germany had introduced a measure concerning volunteers during the discussions on the arms embargo earlier

¹⁵FPR., XII, 230.

¹⁶GFD., 150.

that year, it was willing to agree to any proposal which would strengthen non-intervention. Agreement was on the condition that all members of the Committee participate. Repeated British and French notes to the German government caused Germany to reply that neither the question of volunteers nor the enforcement of the embargo accord should be discussed outside the committee.

Germany also emphasized that discussion of volunteers could only take place in conjunction with other forms of indirect intervention-- that is, financial aid.¹⁷ Germany's reasons for hesitating to reply to the continual British and French efforts to conclude an agreement were primarily because of the military situation in Spain. During December Franco, with his combined southern and northern armies, failed to capture Madrid because of the increased volume of Russian war materials arriving in Madrid, plus the arrival of a considerable number of international volunteers. A German agreement to the ban on volunteers at this time would seriously hamper the rebel war effort and damage the international prestige of the Fascist powers who publicly sided with the Rebels. Both Germany and Italy continued to assist the Rebels in order to counteract Russian aid.

The increased flow of war materials to Spain led Britain and France, on December 27, to communicate a joint note to Berlin, Rome, Lisbon and Moscow. The note stressed the danger of increased aid to Spain as a threat to international peace.¹⁸ Germany and Italy interpreted the

¹⁷GFD., 167.

¹⁸C.A. Thomson, "Spain: The Civil War," Foreign Policy Reports, XII (New York, 1937), 267.

British-French note as an attempt to maintain the superiority of the Madrid government over the Rebels.¹⁹ To forestall any immediate action on the question of volunteers, Germany suggested to Britain and France that the London committee study the possibility of removing all foreign volunteers from Spain. On December 31, Neurath told the British and French Ambassadors that although Germany was willing to localize the conflict, it would never tolerate a Communist Spain.²⁰

The German de jure recognition of the Franco regime on November 18 struck a damaging blow to the efforts of the British and French to arrive at some sort of working agreement to establish an international policy of non-intervention towards the Spanish conflict. De jure recognition meant not only that the Franco regime became a member of the community of nations but that Germany was legally within its rights to aid Franco if the non-intervention agreements failed. German recognition created the impression among the European powers that the Fascist states, in backing a Franco victory, would risk the possibility of a confrontation with the Soviet Union--Loyalist Spain's principal supporter. Thus, with both Spanish parties being recognized as the legitimate government of Spain, both the Soviet Union and the Fascist states could claim that they were helping a legally recognized government to defeat a rebel uprising. Such an attitude was precisely what the British and French, through the Non-Intervention Committee, were attempting to forestall.

¹⁹GFD., 194-196.

²⁰Ibid.

The new year opened with the German seizure of three Spanish ships on January 3, 1937 in retaliation for December 24 internment of the German steamer Palos by the Loyalist government. German policy, in light of the Loyalist actions against German vessels, was to intensify the raids on Spanish ships but not to take stronger action.

In the Non-Intervention Committee, the British observation and control plan was still being debated while war materials continued to be shipped to Spain in an ever increasing volume and number. Again the British and French endeavored, by diplomatic means outside of the Committee, to keep the Spanish conflict from spreading. "On January 9, the British government urged immediate national prohibitions upon recruiting of volunteers for Spain, and the assimilation of the volunteering problem to the program of observation and control being worked by the Committee. . . ." ²¹

Germany was willing to consent to the ban on volunteers provided that an effective control system be adopted at the same time and the other members of the Committee also agree to the ban. Germany informed Franco of its attitude on January 14 and advised him to accept the control and observation scheme in principle but to stipulate certain conditions which would delay its enforcement.

On January 27, conversations between Goering and Mussolini took place in Rome. There was mutual agreement that Italian and German replies to the British note of January 9 be identical and express that both governments were willing to support the British proposal to stop volunteers

²¹ Padelford, 72-73.

from entering Spain. Both Goering and Mussolini agree that Franco was sufficiently supplied with war materials to enable the Axis powers to cooperate with Britain and France.²²

In the meantime, Franco's negative reply to the British observation scheme called attention to the fact that any attempts to establish control observers on Spanish soil would be a limitation of Spanish sovereignty. This reply had the effect of forcing Germany and Italy, in replying to the British note on January 25, to state that they were in full agreement with the British proposal, but not with the proposal to place international observers on Spanish soil. The reply also stated that the two governments already created the necessary legislation prohibiting the departure of volunteers to Spain. This legislation would go into effect as soon as an effective system of control was agreed upon. They again referred to their proposal to withdraw volunteers already in Spain.²³

On March 8, the London committee reached agreement on the extension of the embargo to include volunteers. The members of the Committee also agreed to set up a land and sea observation patrol around Spain in order to enforce the embargo on volunteers and war materials. The purpose of the observation scheme was to provide a system by which all attempts to ship arms, ammunition and volunteers to Spain would be observed and reported to the Committee.

²²Malcolm Muggerridge (ed.), Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, (London, 1948), 85. Hereafter cited as Ciano.

²³GFD., 237-238.

To administer the observation scheme, the Committee created an International Board composed of representatives from Britain, France, Italy, Russia, Norway and Poland. Chairman of the Board was Vice-Admiral Duim of the Netherlands. The International Board appointed administrators and deputy administrators, plus a corps of observing officers. The observing officers included 130 for the French-Spanish border and five for the Gibraltar-Spanish border, plus 550 for ship observation. The Portuguese-Spanish border was administered by 130 British observers. The 550 ship observers mentioned above were part of the merchant vessel observation plan. This plan required all vessels flying the flag of the countries participating in the Committee to stop at any of twelve designated ports outside of Spain and embark two observation officials. The duties of these officials included ascertaining as to whether or not embargoed goods were aboard the ships bound for Spain.²⁴

Complementing the land and merchant vessel observation schemes was the naval patrol. Its members were Britain, France, Italy and Germany. Ships under the specific authority of their respective states patrolled the Spanish coasts from a distance of ten miles. Patrol zones were established in such a manner as to have German and Italian ships patrolling the coasts held by the Loyalists and the French and British ships patrolling the coasts held by the Rebels.

To finance the control scheme, the Committee created an international fund subscribed to by all the members of the Committee. The International Board administered the fund through an accounting officer appointed by

²⁴Padelford, 77-79.

the Non-Intervention Committee.

The main failure of the scheme was that the control authorities could not stop the flow of contraband and volunteers into Spain but could only warn the violators of the national measures of each country against such actions. The only way a violator could be punished was to have the observation officials submit a report to the International Board describing the violation. The International Board would then submit the report to the Committee, which would communicate the charges to the proper government. The government of the individual who caused the violation would prosecute the violator in accordance with the laws of that state. The government would then report the actions it had taken to the Committee. This was a long and complicated process that, in the final analysis, depended upon the goodwill of the government involved and its ability to verify the facts of the violation.

The embargo on war materials and volunteers did not include either Spanish combatants or states that were not signatories to the non-intervention agreements. Ships flying the flags of these states were not required to embark observers or comply with the regulations of the naval patrol.

On April 7, 1937, the observation and control system went into effect. Because of the numerous methods of circumventing the system, both Spanish combatants continued to receive foreign assistance. Germany and Italy continued their aid to Franco in an attempt to strengthen his forces for the final attack against Madrid. They were convinced that enough aid

²⁴Padelford, 77-79.

had reached Franco to enable him to overcome the Loyalist forces. They could, therefore, subscribe to the observation and control plan without endangering the rebel military position.

The next major problem confronting the Non-Intervention Committee was the question of withdrawing volunteers already in Spain. The question was previously brought up by Germany during the negotiations of 1936 concerning the embargo act and the ban on volunteers. Now, however, the British brought up the question during the March 1, 1937 meeting of the Committee. Previously, Britain and France had ignored the German proposal. Now, it was the turn of the German and Italian representatives to evade and delay the question. Because of the Italian defeat at the hands of the Loyalist forces in the battle of Guadalajara, Italy would not consider the question of withdrawing volunteers until it restored its military prestige.

Another factor influencing Germany and Italy to follow obstructionist tactics was that in the spring of 1937 Franco was in the midst of his campaign to conquer the northern provinces of Spain and needed the German air power of the Condor Legion and the Italian troops. This was especially true since the majority of the Rebel forces was concentrated around Madrid.

From March to May of 1937, German and Italian delaying tactics effectively blocked diplomatic negotiations concerning the withdrawal of volunteers. On March 20, Neurath informed Sir Nevile Henderson that Germany would proceed with discussions on volunteers only if the question of the Spanish gold being shipped to Russia would also be discussed.²⁵

²⁵GFD., 254.

Late in March, the German ambassador to Great Britain, Ribbentrop, informed the German Foreign Ministry that if the Rebels could not win without foreign assistance, gaps could be found in the observation system in order to reinforce Franco. Ribbentrop believed that France would do nothing without the backing of Britain, and Britain was too preoccupied with peace and containment to force a showdown over the violation of the supervision and control plan.²⁶

On May 17, the British asked Germany if it would be willing to participate in approaching both parties in Spain with the view of reaching an agreement to an armistice in order to withdraw the foreign volunteers.²⁷ The German reply suggested that the question of withdrawal would perhaps have a better chance of success if pursued in the London committee. It appeared to Germany that the success of a mediation plan was highly unlikely.²⁸

The Deutschland incident abruptly interrupted attempts to achieve agreement over the withdrawal of volunteers. On May 29, 1937, the German 'pocket' battleship Deutschland was bombed by Loyalist aircraft while it lay at anchor in the harbor of Iviza.²⁹ The battleship was a participant in the naval patrol, but at the time of the attack, it was off-duty. The crew suffered twenty killed and seventy-three wounded. Berlin sent immediate instructions to the German Embassy in Great Britain to the effect that, "the Reich Government will hence forth not participate

²⁶ GFD., 292.

²⁷ Ibid., 290.

²⁸ Ibid., 292.

²⁹ Iviza is one of the Balearic Islands.

in the patrol or in the deliberations of the Non-Intervention Committee until it obtains a positive guarantee against a repetition of such incidents."³⁰ Shortly thereafter, the German navy, in retaliation shelled the Spanish port city of Almería.

In reply to British fears that the German bombardment of Almería might lead to an expansion of the Civil War, Neurath stated that that would depend upon Britain, but as far as Germany was concerned the Almería incident was the extent of German retaliation.

Now that Germany and Italy had withdrawn from the naval patrol, one-half of the system of supervision and control was in danger of collapsing. In order to meet this emergency, the British and French governments, with the approval of the Soviet Union, proposed that they take over the patrol duties in the vacated German and Italian zones. Germany and Italy refused to accept this offer and in return suggested that the naval patrol be dispensed with altogether by granting belligerent rights to both Spanish parties. The Axis considered the impartiality of the British and French in the naval patrol as questionable.

Since 1936, the German and Italian governments continually had attempted to persuade the other powers to recognize a state of belligerency in Spain. With the status of belligerents, both parties in Spain would have the right to establish blockades. This would make the London committee and the embargo agreements unnecessary. Although used by Germany as a delaying and obstructionist tactic, the granting of belligerency did have some validity in international law. The recognition

³⁰ GFD., III, 297.

of belligerency implied a position of neutrality by the recognizing state. Therefore, if the powers of Europe extended belligerent rights to the Spanish parties, this would be the same as declaring a position of neutrality and as such would supercede the London committee. But a state was not required to extend belligerent rights automatically as soon as an insurgent reached a definite position in relation to the established government. The extension of belligerency laid solely in the hands of the individual states and could therefore be used as an instrument of foreign policy. The British were not about to extend belligerent rights to the Rebels, because this would give legal sanction to interference with foreign shipping on the high seas. In British opinion, this could only lead to a widening of the war and the danger of starting a European conflict.

By mid-summer of 1937, Franco was, with Italian assistance, exercising belligerent rights in the Mediterranean. The naval patrol broke down with the withdrawal of Germany and Italy. The system of land control was also threatened as Portugal suspended frontier control and the French announced they would do likewise.³¹

In an effort to insure the safety of foreign warships participating in the naval patrol and to bring Germany and Italy back into the Committee, the British government on June 3 proposed a series of guarantees to the German Foreign Ministry for its approval. The guarantees included a pledge to be given by both Spanish parties to respect foreign warships

³¹Esch., 84.

and to designate safety zones in Spanish ports for fueling bases for patrol vessels. Failure to implement these assurances or interference with patrol ships by the Spanish combatants would be the subject of consultation between the four naval patrol powers.

In the ensuing talks between Britain and Germany, it was agreed on June 12 that in case consultation failed Germany would retain her freedom of action in inflicting reprisals for unwarranted attacks upon any of her patrol vessels. Germany accepted the other three parts of the British proposal. It was also decided that Germany and Italy would return to the Committee and to the naval patrol after joint communication of the agreement to the Spanish parties. Without waiting for a reply, Germany and Italy resumed on June 16 their membership in the patrol scheme and the Committee.³² On June 17, the Spanish ambassador informed the German Foreign Ministry that Franco intended to give his approval to the guarantee for naval patrol vessels in Spanish ports.

Four days after the settlement of the Deutschland incident on June 15 and 18 the German cruiser Leipzig was allegedly attacked by a submarine.³³ On the same day, the British ambassador to Germany received notification from the German Foreign Ministry of the cancelation of Neurath's impending trip to London. The German excuse was that the attacks of German warships in the Mediterranean necessitated the Foreign Minister's presence in Berlin. In the meantime, Germany demanded action by the four naval patrol powers under the June 12 agreement to consult in the event of another

³²GFD., 326-327.

³³Esch, 82.

attack on a naval patrol vessel. The German government was anxious to come to an immediate understanding as to the joint measures to be taken in retaliation to the attack.

At first the German proposals included an immediate naval demonstration by the four powers off the Loyalist coast, surrender of all submarines, and a warning to the Loyalist government that further attacks would be dealt with by military reprisals.³⁴ Because of the British and French rejection of any retaliatory measures until an inquiry could be made, Germany modified its demands to include only the naval demonstration. By June 23, no agreement was reached in the Four Power Conference. Therefore in accordance with the agreement of June 12, Germany notified the control powers of its decision to recover freedom of action and to withdraw from the naval patrol. Germany would, however, continue its participation in the Committee. German and Italian withdrawal from the naval patrol limited the patrol's authority and efficiency to such an extent that throughout the summer of 1937 incidents of piracy increased in the Mediterranean. This had the effect of forcing the British and French governments to take action.

On September 14, the states having interests in the Mediterranean met at Nyon, Switzerland and agreed upon an anti-piracy control plan. Germany and Italy were invited but did not attend. The purpose of the Nyon agreement was to eliminate attacks on merchant and war vessels operating in the Mediterranean. Because of the Nyon agreement, which was similar to the functions of the naval patrol, Britain and France

³⁴GFD., 356-357.

withdrew from the patrol in September. The naval patrol was only one facet of the control scheme. The remaining merchant vessel observation scheme continued to operate throughout the civil war, but with less efficiency.

During the Deutschland and Leipzig incidents the British government continued to press for an agreement on the withdrawal of foreign volunteers from Spain. The Fascist states continued to follow obstructionist tactics. In the June 22 meeting of the Committee, the British representative proposed that Britain be empowered to negotiate with both Spanish parties in order to reach an agreement on the equal withdrawal of volunteers from both sides. The Soviet Union defeated this proposal by demanding that a porportionate withdrawal from both sides take place.³⁵

Germany and Italy followed similar tactics in respect to the withdrawal question. Both avoided taking a stand on withdrawal by stating that the decision to withdraw volunteers must be left up to the Spanish governments. The German representative in the Committee was instructed by the Foreign Ministry to follow the lead of the Italian representative in obstructing withdrawal.³⁶ The tactical problem confronting Germany and Italy was how to delay passage of a withdrawal agreement while placing the responsibility somewhere else.

By July 5, France was considering the advantages of reopening the Pyrenean frontier in order to aid the Spanish Loyalists but was restrained

³⁵
GFD., 362-364.

³⁶ German policy was to let the Italian representative take the lead, thus assuring against the possibility that Germany might be blamed for obstructing the progress of withdrawal.

by Britain. The British attitude was at this time disposed towards the concluding of some sort of plan for the withdrawal of volunteers, and the opening of the French-Spanish border would destroy these efforts.³⁷ Because of Franco's northern campaign, the Loyalists badly needed the aid that France could give them if the Pyrenean border was reopened.

Despite British pressure, both France and Portugal withdrew the international observers from their borders. The only part of the observation scheme that remained was the merchant vessel system which required all ships bound for Spanish ports to embark neutral observers.

In order to remedy this situation, the British government introduced on July 14 a compromise plan in the London committee. This plan included: 1) retention of placing neutral observers aboard ships going to Spain and restoration of control of land frontiers, 2) replacement of the naval patrol by neutral observers in Spanish ports and in Spanish airdromes, 3) withdrawal of volunteers and a commission to be sent to Spain to arrange and supervise the withdrawal, and 4) recognition of the belligerency of both parties when withdrawal was substantially underway and on the condition that both parties: a) recognize as contraband only those articles whose shipment was prohibited under the non-intervention agreement and any others that might be designated by the Committee and b) agree not to molest ships carrying neutral observers or to interfere with neutral shipping not engaged in traffic with Spain.³⁸ On the same day the committee authorized the British government to discuss points

³⁷GFD., 396.

³⁸GFD., 414-417.

one, two and three with the Spanish parties.

During the remaining months of 1937, the London committee concerned itself with the efforts to negotiate the terms of the British compromise plan and to arrive at a solution. In response to the British plan, the German Foreign Ministry instructed its Committee representative to accept the British proposal as a basis for discussion, but German policy was to remain vague and general. The German representative was not to give the impression that Germany would accept the withdrawal of volunteers prior to the granting of belligerent rights.³⁹

German strategy throughout these discussions over the British plan was to delay and obstruct any agreement until Franco had sufficiently built up his forces for the planned spring offensive on the Aragon front. Germany was sure that the blame for delaying the withdrawal could be placed on the Russians.

The Non-Intervention Committee, while debating the British proposal, received the Dulm-Hemming report on means for restoring and improving the control system. The report recommended that the naval patrol remain dissolved and that a system of observers be placed in various Spanish ports.⁴⁰ A month later, on October 2, the Soviet Union took the position that the entire supervision and control system would be meaningless without the naval patrol. Any further participating in the Committee on its part was conditional on the existence of an effective control system.⁴¹

³⁹GFD., 420.

⁴⁰Ibid., III, 436-437.

⁴¹Ibid., 450.

Inability to reach an agreement over the British plan centered around the three points of symbolic withdrawal, belligerent rights and the attitude of the Soviet Union. Germany and Italy used all three in order to avoid being blamed for obstructing the progress of withdrawal. In the October 17 session of the Committee, the French representative introduced a plan somewhat similar to the British proposal. This plan was also defeated by the German use of the Soviet Union's attitude.

It was Germany's tactic to insist that the Soviet Union participate in any withdrawal plan by demanding that any agreement must be unanimous. In this way, Germany would not be blamed for delaying the progress of the Committee.

The German position on the three points under discussion in the Committee was revealed in the October 18 instructions to the German ambassador to Great Britain. Germany favored symbolic withdrawal of a limited number of volunteers on an equal basis from each side. The bargaining number could start at 3,000 men, but the type of volunteers withdrawn must be left up to the Spanish parties. Symbolic withdrawal was interpreted as being only an experiment. If it proved successful, then a larger number of volunteers could be withdrawn after a limited amount of debate. There was no German objection to the renewal of the non-intervention pledges as proposed in the French plan. The instructions further stated that once symbolic withdrawal was concluded, the problem of belligerency must be given priority.⁴² Thus Germany reversed its previous stand that belligerent rights must be granted prior to any

⁴²GFD., 465.

withdrawal. Both positions were tentative and could be changed or altered according to the tactical position that Germany wanted or needed to assume.

Progress in the Committee was now blocked by the disagreement over which of the withdrawal plans, the British or the French, should be discussed first. Italy, with reluctant German support,⁴³ favored discussing the British plan first. The Soviet Union regarded the policy of non-intervention as a failure and rejected any responsibility for its continuation. This was precisely what Germany and Italy wanted in order to shoulder Russia with the major responsibility for any failure of withdrawal.

In the October 22 session of the Committee, a joint draft of the British and French withdrawal plans was introduced. At the same session all the states, except France and Russia, favored setting the tentative number for symbolic withdrawal at 1,000. Difficulties arose over the date of restoration of control measures and whether the commissions or the Committee would decide on the definite number of volunteers to be withdrawn.

Germany was not as yet ready to agree to a definite plan on the withdrawal of foreign volunteers from Spain. Nor was it interested in having non-intervention fail. As far as Germany was concerned, a further gain of time would probably result in the improvement of Franco's military position, and this in turn would create an advantageous situation for

⁴³ Germany thought that a more conciliatory stand should be taken, so as not to incur any responsibility for delay.

Germany in the Committee. With this in mind, Germany was ready to support symbolic withdrawal on the condition that belligerent rights be granted as soon as this partial withdrawal was completed.⁴⁴ This was a tactical measure intended to cause delay, since the French demanded that belligerency be accorded only after all volunteers had withdrawn from Spain.

Now that Germany and Italy accepted the British-French compromise plan in principle, the technical difficulties and minor points needed to be clarified. Also some sort of agreement was necessary on what the Russian responsibility would be if it did not agree to the withdrawal but remained in the Committee. Germany was not willing to force a failure of the British plan over Russian non-participation. In order to eliminate the possibility of assuming the blame of any such failure, Germany dropped her demand that all powers participate in the withdrawal and the recognition of belligerency. In its place was the new demand that safeguards for the Russian non-participation be included in any withdrawal plan.

On November 4, 1937, the Committee adopted a resolution accepting a compromise solution based upon the July 14 British plan. The chairman of the Committee, Lord Plymouth, was authorized to present the plan to both Spanish parties in order to secure their approval. The plan contained provisions to send two commissions to Spain with authority to estimate the total number of foreigners to be withdrawn and to make arrangements for their evacuation. Control measures were to be ..

⁴⁴GFD., 484.

re-established and strengthened just before the commencement of the evacuation process. Belligerent rights were to be granted only after a substantial number of volunteers had been withdrawn.⁴⁵ The draft proposal also provided that safety measures would be taken to fill the gap caused by the Russian non-participation.

The London committee continued to work out the composition and powers of the commissions to be sent to Spain while awaiting the replies of the Spanish parties. In the meantime, the German government urged Franco to respond favorably to the Committee's plan, but to impose certain conditions.⁴⁶ Franco agreed to do so.

The Committee received the Spanish replies by the middle of December. While both parties accepted the plan in principle, they made many conditions and expressed important reservations as to its practical application.

In the Committee, negotiations continued to be bogged down over the problem of the composition and powers of the two commissions. Other points of disagreement and inability to compromise were the questions involving substantial withdrawal and belligerent rights.

As the year 1937 came to a close, the Committee was still negotiating the details of the withdrawal plan which was accepted in principle by the participating states and the Spanish parties. Important points had yet to be agreed upon, and it would take months of negotiation before any compromise could be reached.

⁴⁵J.C. deWilde, "Struggle Over Spain," Foreign Policy Reports, XIV (New York, 1938), 22-23.

⁴⁶GFD., 503.

While the Committee continued its discussions, Franco prepared his forces for the spring offensive. He continued to receive large shipments of material and troops from Germany and Italy. Russia also continued its aid to the Loyalist forces. The Committee had been in existence for one and one-half years and its successes, besides helping to localize the Spanish conflict, were negligible.

At the start of the new year there was still no agreement on the actual number of volunteers that would constitute the "substantial withdrawal" upon which depended the granting of belligerent rights. Franco was of the opinion that belligerent rights should be granted after 3,000 men were withdrawn equally from both sides. This was the position taken by the German representative after Germany and Italy conferred on January 18 over the common policy to be adopted in the Committee concerning the withdrawal question.

Proportionate withdrawal from both sides was also being discussed in the Committee. On January 11, 1938, the Committee authorized Lord Plymouth to enter into private and informal talks with the representatives of the major powers in order to arrive at a compromise solution.

On January 20, the German Chargé d'Affaires in Great Britain sent a telegram to Berlin outlining the dilatory policy that Germany had followed during the previous year. Woermann included in his report a brief résumé of German-Italian cooperation in the Committee. The cooperation of the two countries presented a united front unchallenged by any other similar group. According to Woermann, the Soviet Union had isolated itself because of its inability to cooperate with Britain or France. By introducing the question of belligerent rights, Germany

had held up the progress of the Committee indefinitely without assuming the responsibility for the delay. Woermann predicted that the date for the implementation of the withdrawal plan would be sometime after May but that Franco still had it in his power to cause further postponement.⁴⁷

In January, the Rebel military forces suffered a setback when the Loyalists won the battle of Teruel. The German Foreign Ministry notified its embassy in Britain to use obstructionist tactics in order to delay further agreement on withdrawal.⁴⁸ In the meantime, German and Italy further assisted Franco in building up his forces to counteract the present Loyalist military advantage. This increase of foreign troops in Spain jeopardized the German position in the Committee. In order to give at least a semblance of cooperation, Woermann suggested to Berlin that Germany agree to the British proposal for placing observers in Spanish ports.

The German War ministry disliked the British plan for control officers in Spanish ports but agreed not to oppose it. Their opinion was that the naval patrol interfered with German aid to Franco. The Foreign Ministry reassured them that supplies could still reach Spain on ships flying the flags of countries not represented in the Committee or on ships flying either of the Spanish flags.

The renewal of submarine attacks in the Mediterranean forced Britain, France and Italy⁴⁹ to increase supplementary safety measures to those

⁴⁷GFD., 562.

⁴⁸Ibid., 572.

⁴⁹Although Italy was not an original signatory to the Nycn agreements, later she did agree to participate in the anti-piracy measures.

agreed upon during the Nyon Conference. These measures provided that submarines submerged in the patrol areas of the Mediterranean would be attacked. On February 8, the German government protested the British action as being a unilateral declaration without binding legal force. Since the German naval forces were not affected, Germany took no further action.⁵⁰

Agreement was finally reached in the Committee on the question of how many volunteers would be withdrawn before granting belligerent rights. All the members, except the Soviet Union, agreed upon the figure of 10,000. The Soviet representative demanded 20,000 as a basic number. This Soviet attitude stalled the progress of the withdrawal plan and enabled Germany and Italy to not only blame Russia for the delay but also to continue assisting the Spanish Rebels.

Again the question arose as to when the control system, suspended since July of 1937, would be restored. Germany and Italy wanted it restored as soon as the commissions arrived in Spain. France demanded restoration only after the beginning of actual evacuation.

The military situation in Spain, in March of 1938, placed the London committee in a somewhat awkward position. The Rebel forces under General Franco had recaptured Teruel and were driving towards the Mediterranean coast in an effort to divide the Loyalist territory in half. The Committee was now faced with the possibility of an early Franco victory. If this occurred, neither the withdrawal plan nor the

⁵⁰GFD., 582.

Committee itself would be necessary.⁵¹

Germany had no fear that the Condor Legion in Spain would be included in the withdrawal, since a Franco victory would eliminate the need for implementing the withdrawal plan. If unforeseen events prolonged the Rebel victory, Germany could count on Franco to reject the withdrawal plan or at least to make conditions that would delay its implementation. Therefore, on June 17 Germany informed the Committee that it would accept the British plan in its entirety.

The British compromise plan was to go into effect 45 days after its acceptance by the two Spanish parties. It was to be completed in approximately 118 days. Belligerent rights would be granted as soon as 11,000 volunteers were evacuated from the side with the smaller number of foreign volunteers. The control system of 1937 would be re-established--minus the naval patrol. In place of the patrol, international observers were to be placed in twelve designated Spanish ports. The agreements of 1936 and 1937 were also to be re-affirmed by the members of the Committee.⁵²

Germany and Italy, after having accepted the withdrawal plan, immediately set out to coordinate their positions and to advise Franco of their intentions. In his reply to Berlin and Rome, Franco objected to the British plan because it involved interference with Spanish sovereignty and left nationalist Spain with only partial belligerent rights.

On August 16, the London committee received Franco's reply to the

⁵¹GFD ., 639.

⁵²Padelford, 104.

British plan. The Spanish Rebel government accepted the idea of withdrawal and that 10,000 volunteers be withdrawn but refused to accept the idea of proportionate withdrawal. Franco demanded that belligerent rights be granted prior to the withdrawal and objected that observers in Spanish ports constituted a limitation on Spanish sovereignty. Germany believed Franco's reply to be perhaps a little too negative and would probably cause considerable difficulty in the Committee.⁵³

Faced with the negative Spanish replies, the Committee did not convene to consider the Spanish objections to the British plan. To do this would have involved more months of detailed discussions before any agreement could be reached. Besides that, any future compromise plan had no greater certainty of success than the recently defeated plan. By this time the Czechoslovak-German crisis surpassed the Spanish affair in importance. Because of this new crisis, there was no serious effort to overcome the Spanish objections.

On September 21, 1938, Premier Negrín⁵⁴ of the Spanish Loyalist government appealed to the League of Nations to appoint a commission to oversee the implementation of the Loyalist's decision to withdraw all foreign volunteers. By October, all foreign volunteers fighting for the Loyalist's cause were withdrawn. Fearing that he would be held responsible for obstructing a withdrawal, Franco on October 15 allowed the departure of 10,000 Italian troops from Rebel territory.⁵⁵ Franco thought

⁵³GFD., 730.

⁵⁴Juan López Negrín. (1889-1956). Prime minister of Spain, 1937-1939.

⁵⁵Padelford, 114-115.

that this would be about the recognition of his status of belligerency by the European powers.

In the meantime, Franco, during an interview in Burgos, informed the Secretary of the Non-Intervention Committee, Francis Hemming, that "the Spanish Government put no value whatsoever on a continuation of the sessions of the Non-Intervention. . . ." ⁵⁶ Hemming returned to London on November 14 and reported that the withdrawal plan in its present form had no chance of success. A new plan could only succeed only if Franco was granted belligerent rights from the very start. ⁵⁷

In December of 1938, the Committee was in danger of becoming dissolved. The system of supervision and control of embargoed goods to Spain had been suspended and efforts to re-establish the control system and to effect the withdrawal of foreign volunteers had been rejected by the Spaniards. To all extents and purposes, there was nothing further for the Committee to do unless it was willing to tolerate many more months of prolonged discussions and disagreements.

Germany however was not willing to let the Committee dissolve. It provided a convenient base for Germany's diplomatic support of Franco and also preoccupied French and British foreign policy. To keep the Committee alive, Germany demanded that belligerency be granted to Franco and that the Committee continue to work on a withdrawal plan acceptable to both Spanish parties.

⁵⁶ GFD., 780.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 794.

Because of the rapid progress of Franco's military forces in 1939,⁵⁸ the member states of the Committee concentrated not so much upon inducing Franco to part with his foreign troops but upon the question of whether those volunteers would leave Spain as soon as the civil war was over. In this respect the British government was satisfied by Hitler's Munich statement and Mussolini's assurances in connection with the 1938 Anglo-Italian agreement. The French were not so easily persuaded. They demanded a guarantee from Franco that his future foreign policy would not be anti-French. In the spring of 1939, Franco assured the French that Spain would not follow a policy hostile to France.

Neither the Non-Intervention Committee nor its sub-committee had held any formal sessions since July of 1938 when the British plan for withdrawal of volunteers had been accepted in principle. Thereafter, the discussions on the details of the plan had been conducted through private interviews between the Committee members and the chairman. Although the activities of the Committee had been suspended throughout the latter phases of the civil war, the Committee did not dissolve itself until April 20, 1939--one month after the Rebel occupation of Madrid.

Germany did not officially withdraw from the Committee until April 20 but announced at the end of March that it would not continue making payments towards the cost of the control system.

Throughout its entire existence, the London Non-Intervention Committee succeeded in focusing international attention upon the Spanish

⁵⁸ Franco's forces had reached the coast and were advancing on Barcelona.

Civil War. This was contrary to its avowed purpose of limiting the influence and affect of the civil war on international relations. Its declared purpose of prohibiting the exportation of war materials and volunteers to Spain was only an excuse to cover up its real intention of attempting to prevent the danger of the civil war becoming a European conflict. Thus the Committee was willing to overlook repeated violations of the non-intervention agreements by Germany and Italy, if these violations did not endanger the efforts to localize the civil war. The Committee was successful in localizing the conflict, but in order to do so it compromised its authority and efficiency.

The Committee itself had no legal justification for its existence other than the national legislation of the member states implementing the obligations assumed in agreeing to follow a policy of non-intervention. In other words, the effectiveness of the Committee depended on the goodwill of its members in following a specific course of action for an unlimited amount of time.

Any violation of the non-intervention agreements was not contrary to international law since the agreements did not have the same legal authority as a treaty or formal international agreement. However, such an organization as the Non-Intervention Committee could compel a government to comply, at least publicly, to various agreements. If a government was unwilling to do so, it ran the risk of incurring public disapproval.

Germany was well aware of the risks it ran in following obstructionist tactics in the Committee and in violating the non-intervention agreements. This was the reason why so much emphasis was placed upon

the attempts to shoulder the Soviet Union with the responsibility of delaying the progress of the Committee. Germany was following a double policy of publicly cooperating with the policy of non-intervention while privately sending assistance to the Spanish Rebels.

As far as Germany was concerned, the Committee provided a splendid opportunity to prolong the civil war by aiding the Rebels and to tie down the British and French foreign offices, it then could exercise less diplomatic restraint in central Europe.

CHAPTER III

GERMAN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS

WITH NATIONALIST SPAIN

1936-1939

Since the advent of industrialization in Spain in the early twentieth century, a major part of the Spanish economy has been controlled by foreign capital. Although Spain was not in need of capital, it did need the technical knowledge necessary to exploit its vast mineral resources. In many respects, Spanish industrial development by 1936 was simply a branch of the advanced industrialization of western Europe. "Spanish capitalism was in a significant measure but European capitalism in Spain."¹

Spanish mineral deposits so attractive to foreign capitalists included copper, silver, pyrites, bauxite and potassium. Seventy per cent of the world's mercury supply was mined in Spain, and Basque iron and coal deposits also contributed to the mineral wealth of Spain. To many people, foreign control of important Spanish mining and industrial enterprises was a matter of considerable importance. This was especially true in the case of the British, who owned and operated the Rio Tinto mines, Spain's largest copper deposit.

With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July, 1936, many countries with large investments in Spanish industry became vitally

¹ Puzzo, 17.

concerned over the future of those investments. On the other hand, states with little or no investments in Spain looked upon the civil war as an opportunity to acquire certain raw materials necessary for the production of armaments. Acquisition could be accomplished by providing one or the other of the Spanish combatants with war material and demanding in return the export of certain vital raw materials. The availability of Spanish ores was assured by the need of each Spanish combatant for arms, ammunition, planes, tanks, technicians and troops.

Their initial success placed the Rebels in control of the mines of Huelva and Spanish Morocco, the agricultural produce of the Canary Islands and the abundant crops of Andalusia. The campaign of 1937 brought to Rebel control the Vizcayan iron ore deposits and heavy industry and the coal fields of Asturias. Being thus able to control much of Spain's mineral resources was a great advantage to the Rebels, since the export of mineral and agricultural raw materials became one of the major ways of financing the war. In addition to the export of wine, cork, oil, minerals and other products, the Rebels financed their war effort through private contributions, forced conversions of foreign securities into bonds, and credits. By January 1937, five months after the start of the civil war, the Rebel government owed a debt of 180 million dollars.² Most of the debt was for war material imported from Germany. In return, the Nationalists shipped large quantities of iron ore and other raw materials to Germany under various barter and credit arrangements.

²Time, Sept. 6, 1937, 18-19.

To handle the German aid program to Spain and the Spanish exports to Germany in payment for the deliveries of war material, two holding companies were established in July 1936 under the direct supervision of Hermann Goering. Rowak, Rohstoffe-und-Waren-Einkaufsgesellschaft, was the German holding company which handled all purchases of war material destined for Spain and all imports of Spanish raw material into Germany. As Co-ordinator for Raw Materials and Foreign Exchange, Goering was in direct control of Rowak.³ Working under Goering was Major von Jagwitz, chief of the Auslandsorganisation's foreign office, who was later to become State Secretary in the Economics Ministry.⁴ To operate the machinery of the German aid program, the entire foreign office of the Auslandsorganisation was at Goering's disposal.

Hisma, Compañía Hispano de Marroquí de Transportes, managed the necessary commercial transactions such as procurement and supply at the Spanish end of the German operation. Johannes Bernhardt, formerly a clerk for the Wilmer Brothers Company, a German export firm in Spanish Morocco, was named director of Hisma. Bernhardt had married Fraulein Wilmer and settled down as manager of the Wilmer Brothers branch office in Tetuan, where he had cultivated the friendship of Spanish officers stationed there. When the civil war broke out, he was thus in an opportune position to act as an intermediary between the Spanish Rebels and the Nazi party and to garner a large personal fortune as director of

³Friedrich Bethke was the administrative director of Rowak and departmental head in the Economics Ministry.

⁴GFD., 111.

Hisma.⁵ As early as August 2, Hisma ferried Rebel troops across the Straits from Morocco to Spain and was soon active in the Spanish economy. By 1937, Bernhardt's interests included several companies operating in Spain besides Hisma, grouped under a new holding company, Solfindus, Sociedad Financiera Industrial.⁶

Penetration of the Spanish economy by German capital was an important consideration in the determination of German policy towards Spain. Hitler, in a speech at Wurzburg on June 27, 1937, stated that the reason for German intervention in Spain was the need to acquire Spanish iron ore.⁷ Germany also needed mercury, zinc, and copper for its rearmament program. These raw materials would be readily available if there was a Fascist regime in Spain, and thus German economic officials preoccupied themselves with arranging various commercial agreements, trade concessions and treaties with Nationalist Spain throughout the civil war. From 1937 to 1938, German exports to Spain increased by 46 million Reichmarks, while imports totaled approximately 10 million Reichmarks monthly.⁸ The imports included 25, 563 tons of copper and 13,167 tons of zinc.⁹ German efforts to acquire economic concessions from the Spanish Nationalists throughout the civil war finally paid off in 1939 when the Franco government granted mining concessions to Germany.

⁵Puzzo, 58-59.

⁶GFD., 2.

⁷Puzzo, 43-47.

⁸Thomas, 459.

⁹Esch, 13.

The basic economic policy towards Spain that Germany followed throughout the civil war was first sketched in a report from Spain by Eberhard Messerschmidt, representative of the German Export Cartel for War materials. After touring Spain for two weeks in the autumn of 1936 interviewing major German officials, including Bernhardt, and inspecting the operational facilities of Hisma, Messerschmidt reported to Berlin that the delivery of German war materials to the Rebels was a Hisma monopoly. Messerschmidt was especially critical of Bernhardt for not demanding compensation from Franco for German aid. "It is obvious that Bernhardt has tailored the whole organization to fit his personal pattern."¹⁰ It was Bernhardt however who took the initiative in getting German aid to Franco and in implementing the aid program. According to Messerschmidt, this had been necessary in the first stages of the German aid program, but now it was expedient to negotiate with the Rebels in order for Germany to receive some return on its gifts. Messerschmidt recommended that Germany be aware of its future interests in Spain while Franco was still dependent upon German aid. Germany would find itself empty handed if it did not pressure Franco for pledges concerning future German economic and political influence in Spain. There was a need for a basic German-Spanish treaty which would outline what raw materials Spain was to deliver to Germany and what German manufactured goods it must buy in return.¹¹

Because of Messerschmidt's penetrating analysis of the German aid program and his recommendations for future German policy in Spain, the

¹⁰ GFD., 85.

¹¹ Ibid., 84-89.

Intelligence Department of the War Ministry found it necessary to call in all copies of the report. The Messerschmidt report received additional confirmation on November 24 in a telegram from the German embassy at Seville to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin. The telegram described the urgent necessity of devising some sort of arrangement enabling the Rebels to pay for German war deliveries and by which German economic interests would be safeguarded after the end of the civil war. There was the danger that Britain and France might surpass Germany in granting credits to Spain after the civil war if some sort of German-Spanish agreement was not concluded.¹²

The Economics Ministry, having received requests from Nationalist Spain to send representatives for negotiations on a trade and clearing agreement, attempted to regularize the trade in raw materials between Germany and Spain. Evidently the Ministry was unaware of the existence of the holding companies Rowak and Hisma. The Franco government was probably as equally confused over the lack of coordination in Berlin. The Spanish request was more than likely because of the Rebel desire to solve the problem as to which German agency they should deal with concerning the German aid program. Since the outbreak of the civil war, the Rebel authorities had dealt with the Nazi party through the Auslandsorganisation. It was through the latter agency that Spanish representatives received the first German aid, and it was through Bernhardt, a member of NSDAP that German aid continued to reach the Rebels. Now they were confronted with the officials from the Economics

¹²GFD., 137-139.

Ministry. Clearly something had to be done or the entire aid program would suffer.¹³

On October 16, State Secretary Kuerner of the Four Year Plan briefed the Economics Ministry on the existence of Rowak and Hisma and the functions of the two holding companies in regulating the trade in raw materials between Spain and Germany. Koerner explained that Rowak and Hisma were limited to trade in raw materials only and that their authority did not extend to either the Canary nor the Balearic Islands. Both companies held a monopoly of purchases and sales. A German exporter who wished to export goods to Spain was required to sell them to the German firm, Rowak. A fleet of merchant ships, protected by the German navy, would then deliver the goods to Spain where they were resold to Hisma. The goods were then marketed in Spain by the Hisma firm. To finance the operation, the Finance Ministry granted 3 million Reichsmarks of credit to Rowak. Hisma obtained similar credits from the Spanish Rebel government.

The Economics Ministry was surprised upon learning of the existence of the German aid program to Spain under the direction of the NSDAP. Since the program was already operative, the Economics Ministry took no initiative of its own other than attempting to expand the Hisma-Rowak monopoly to commercial trade under the operation of private business interests. The crux of the problem was the antagonism between the Nazi Party and the official agencies of the German government. This

¹³GFD., 10.

was particularly evident when the Spanish representatives first approached Germany for aid. The contacts between the Spanish Rebels and German officials were established through the offices of the foreign organization of the Nazi Party. Spanish attempts to acquire aid through normal diplomatic channels encountered the cautious conservatism of the German Foreign Ministry. By using the Auslandsorganisation, the Spanish were able to expedite matters and negotiate directly with Hitler and Goering. Most German officials who favored aiding the Rebels encouraged this indirect approach through the Party apparatus as a necessary precaution against any unwanted publicity.

The influence of the Auslandsorganisation in matters dealing with the Rebel government was due to its vast network of economic and political agents recruited from the large number of Germans residing in Spain. This formula for furthering German interests was repeated in other countries as well as in Spain. Agents of the Auslandsorganisation worked independently of the German Foreign Ministry, whose embassies and legations abroad usually followed a more cautious policy. The Auslandsorganisation agents promoted export of foreign goods to Germany, supplied commercial information to Germans residing in foreign countries, obtained control of local raw materials, and in general looked after German foreign interests.

1937 was an important year for laying down the basis of German-Spanish economic relations along the lines of the Messerschmidt Report. Various protocols and agreements between Germany and Spain attested to the German desire to establish a definite foundation for acquiring Spanish ore and maintaining a dominant role in the economy of Spain after

the civil war. These agreements provided an outline for future German-Spanish economic cooperation which eventually led to concrete agreements on the extent of German penetration of the Spanish economy. Delay, misunderstanding and fear of other foreign investors supplanting German economic interests, characterized the German efforts to secure a position of superiority in order to exploit Spanish mineral resources and invest in the future development of the Spanish industry.

On December 23, 1936 the Economic Policy Department of the Foreign Ministry instructed the German ambassador to the Rebel government to approach the Rebels with the view of taking up negotiations to adapt the March 9, 1936 German-Spanish trade agreement to meet present conditions. The new treaty was to contain provisions indicating the readiness of both parties to conduct trade relations with each other on a favorable basis as possible and to insure preference in the supply of goods of special interest to the two parties.¹⁴

The Spanish Nationalist government agreed to the proposal in a German-Spanish protocol on January 1, 1937 and suggested that the negotiations be started not later than April 1, 1937.¹⁵ The German officials in Berlin, including Hitler, were interested in speeding up the impending negotiations for fear that imminent shipments of large units of the Italian army to Spain might tend to lessen German influence with Franco.¹⁶ Although Germany was willing to cooperate with Italy for

¹⁴GFD., 179.

¹⁵Ibid., 199-200.

¹⁶Ibid., 219.

the sake of closer Italo-German relations, it was not ready to sacrifice its economic interests in Spain. The German delegation to the economic talks scheduled for the last week in January was led by Geheimrat Wucher, an experienced negotiator from the Finance Ministry. Von Jagwitz represented Rowak on the delegation.

On January 28, Bernhardt reported to the Foreign Ministry that in the last six months most of the German deliveries to Spain were without payment. The payments the Rebel government made were in goods or small amounts of foreign exchange. The Rebels used most of their foreign exchange to buy supplies from countries other than Germany. Bernhardt recommended that the Rebels be asked to apply all their foreign exchange exclusively to the purchase of German materials.

The major topic under discussion among German officials in Berlin from February to May, 1937, while economic negotiations continued between Germany and Spain, was whether or not the Hisma-Rowak monopoly of all German purchases and sales in Spain should be continued. Both German and Spanish export interests wanted the restoration of normal commercial relations. This involved substituting a clearing agreement in place of the Hisma monopoly. A number of other countries had already concluded such an agreement with the Nationalist government, and Germany risked the possibility of losing the Spanish market if it did not do the same. On the other hand, Hisma succeeded in placing Germany ahead of other countries in Spanish trade and directing raw materials primarily to Germany. The pressure needed to stop Franco from selling materials to other countries for foreign exchange could be applied by Hisma because of its great influence with the Rebels. The Foreign

Ministry and Field Marshal Goering supported the Hisma-Rowak monopoly, while President Schacht of the Reichsbank and the Finance and Food Ministries were in favor of replacing Hisma with a clearing agreement.

By May, the German officials in charge of the aid program to Spain decided not to negotiate a clearing agreement with the Nationalist government but to continue the Hisma-Rowak monopoly. General Franco was to be consulted for his views on a clearing agreement. If he insisted on such an agreement, Germany was prepared to conclude a partial clearing agreement but only on the condition that a guarantee be given by the Rebels that the transactions in raw materials and essential foods be reserved for the Hisma-Rowak firms.¹⁷

In the meantime, German-Spanish economic negotiations reached an impasse over the Rebel delegation's demand for a clearing agreement to reopen private trade relations. The Foreign Ministry instructed Stohrer to inform Franco of the impasse and to ask for (his) position on the matter. On May 21, Franco replied to the German representation by stating that he did not attach any importance to a clearing agreement at this time and that the Rebel delegation overstepped its authority in pushing for such an agreement.¹⁸

Delays, criticisms of the Hisma monopoly, and complaints by private German and Spanish business interests held up the signing of the economic agreements. The Nationalist government informed Stohrer that the inadequate facilities and organizations of the Spanish agencies

¹⁷GFD., 87-89.

¹⁸Ibid., 293.

created a situation in which the negotiations involved a longer period of time to be concluded than was originally thought.¹⁹

On July 12, 15 and 16, protocols were signed between Jordana,²⁰ representing the Nationalist government, and Stohrer, representing the German government. These protocols signified the successful conclusion of the economic talks that had been going on for the past few months between Germany and Nationalist Spain. The protocol of July 12 stated that a more comprehensive settlement of economic relations between Spain and Germany was postponed for the present. Spain promised to conclude its first general trade agreement with Germany with unrestricted most-favored-nation treatment. If Spain attempted economic negotiations with a third party, it would inform Germany before any agreement was reached. In the July 15 protocol, Germany and Spain agreed "to assist one another to the greatest possible extent in the delivery of such raw materials, foods and semifinished and finished goods as are of particular interest to the recipient country."²¹ On July 16, Spain agreed to pay its debts to Germany in Reichsmarks at a four percent annual interest. Partial payment of the Nationalist debt would be by the export of certain goods and minerals from Spain and Spanish Morocco of vital interest to Germany. Also, the Nationalist government would provide funds to Germany for re-investment in Spain. Germany received the opportunity to participate

¹⁹GFD., 407.

²⁰Count Francisco Gómez Jordana. (1876-1944). President of the Junta Técnica, 1938. Vice-President and Foreign Minister of Spanish Nationalist government, 1938-1939.

²¹GFD., 417.

in the future economic reconstruction of Spain, especially in mineral resources and other raw materials.²²

The July protocols were considerable economic concessions to Germany. If the Spaniards could be taken at their word, Germany would have a significant amount of control over the economy of Spain in the future. Events were to prove that the Nationalist government interpreted the July protocols in a slightly different manner than did Germany.

On October 9, the Spanish Nationalist government issued a decree suspending for the present all transactions of and titles to mining property. Also, all titles, leases, sales and purchases of mines or mining property acquired after July 18, 1936 were declared null and void.²³ The decree was a setback to German businessmen in Spain who attempted to secure control of Spanish mines in order to guarantee a continuous supply of raw materials to Germany. The German businessmen involved, were agents of the Hisma company. Hisma activities in this field included the Montaña project,²⁴ which was an attempt to bring about German control of five mining companies operating in Spain. On October 12, Bernhardt protested to General Jordana and General Franco that the decree of October 9 adversely affected Hisma's efforts to secure German participation in the Spanish mining industry. Bernhardt also complained that the Nationalist decree was not in the spirit of the July protocols. The Nationalists gave indefinite assurances that the decree was not

²²GFD., 421-422

²³Ibid., 457.

²⁴Montaña companies: Aralar, Compañía Explotadora de Minas S.A., Tolosa, capital stock of 25 million pesetas; Cia, Minera Santa Tecla S.A., Vigo, capital stock of 12 million pesetas; Montes de Galicia, Orense, capital stock of 16 million pesetas; Sierra de Gredos, Salamanca, capital stock of 8 million pesetas; Montañas del Sur, Seville, capital stock of

directed against German interests but rather against the possibility of the Loyalist government's granting economic concessions to foreign interests--especially to the Soviet Union. Jordana requested that Hisma's views be put in writing. This was done, but Jordana was still evasive and gave the impression that the Rebel government was not anxious to discuss the question at this time. Neither Hisma nor the German embassy was satisfied with the Rebel's actions, particularly since they viewed that the decree of October 9 as directed against Germany. Stohrer and Bernhardt considered a direct appeal to Franco in order to clarify the situation.²⁵

In the meantime, the German Foreign Ministry informed Stohrer on October 16 that the Spanish Rebels intended to enter economic negotiations with Britain. Any agreement with a third party was potentially dangerous to German preeminence in the Spanish economy. The German-British competition in iron ores and copper made these impending negotiations all the more worth watching.²⁶ Stohrer was instructed to keep the Foreign Ministry informed of the course of the Anglo-Spanish talks and to intervene to protect German interests if they seemed directly menaced.²⁷ On October 24, Stohrer replied that Nicolas Franco²⁸

²⁵GFD., 496.

²⁶In the summer of 1937, the Nationalist government took over control of the Rio Tinto mines and the mining facilities of Bilbao. Germany and Britain constantly pressured the Nationalists for mining rights in these two areas. The British were especially concerned with maintaining their controlling position in the Rio Tinto mines.

²⁷GFD., 461.

²⁸Nicolas Franco: (1891-). Brother of General Franco, head of General State Secretariat (political department) of the Span. Nat. gov. Later Ambassador to Portugal.

and Chef de Cabinet Sangroniz²⁹ assured him that economic questions were not discussed with the British. The talks entailed only the conclusion of a consular agreement involving the exchange of semi-official missions between Nationalist Spain and Britain.³⁰

By October 1937, Spanish Nationalist debts for the delivery of German war goods totaled 70 million Reichsmarks. In addition to the debt for German deliveries, Stohrer, in a memorandum dated October 25, stated that the German property damage in Spain amounted to another 90 million Reichsmarks. Stohrer went on to say that the embassy was aided by the foreign agencies of the NSDAP in organizing and aiding the German colony in Spain. So far, cooperation between official German agencies and the Nazi Party was very effective. Again the problem of the Hisma monopoly prompted Stohrer to write that Spanish opposition elements were growing and should be carefully considered for their influence on future German-Spanish economic relations.³¹

Germany's economic aims in Spain involved penetrating into the main sources of Spanish wealth, i.e. mining and agriculture. The Montaña project constituted the whole aim and purpose of German exploitation of Spanish mineral resources. If the Nationalist government did not consent to the German demands then Germany would apply stronger measures than mere negotiations in order to reap sufficient rewards for its assistance to the Spanish Rebels.

²⁹José Antonio de Sangroniz Y Castro: (1895-). Chef de Cabinet in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Nationalist government. Later Ambassador to France and Italy.

³⁰GFD., 478.

³¹Ibid., 480.

Germany was also concerned over the possibility that the Rebels would grant economic concessions to Britain at the expense of German mining interests in Spain. Goering was particularly irritated on hearing rumors that because of the Hisma-Rowak monopoly Spanish economic interests contemplated opening up negotiations with the British in order to establish stronger economic relations between the two countries. To counteract this possibility, Goering favored sending a representative to Salamanca to "hold a pistol to General Franco's breast."³² Jagwitz calmed Goering down by suggesting that the German ambassador be instructed to make representations to Franco expressing deep concern over the security of German interests in Spain. Bernhardt, who at this time was in Berlin, agreed with the suggestion.

On November 27, Stohrer undertook the demarche with Franco in the interest of mining concessions and against Anglo-Spanish agreements detrimental to Germany. Stohrer also asked Franco for a binding pledge of protection for a list of concessions already held by Hisma.³³ To further strengthen Hisma's bargaining power with the Nationalist government, Goering, on November 30 appointed Bernhardt the official representative of the Four Year Plan for economic questions in Spain.³⁴

On December 4, Franco denied rumors of Spanish economic concessions Britain "as pure fabrications."³⁵ He promised to consider the list of

³² GFD., 508.

³³ Ibid., 511.

³⁴ Ibid., 516.

³⁵ Ibid., 522.

mining concessions demanded by Germany. However, Franco's assurances did not satisfy Berlin. On December 13, the Foreign Ministry instructed Stohrer to continue pressuring Franco on the subject of economic concessions.³⁶ In a subsequent meeting between Bernhardt, Stohrer and Franco on December 20, the German representatives were told that the German demands needed time to be examined. There must also be a clarification of the judicial and legal situation. To accomplish the clarification, Franco proposed that a mixed commission be created to make an expert study of the legal situation and try to come to an understanding. The commission would be composed of members of the Junta Técnica, Hisma and the German embassy.³⁷

What alarmed the Nationalist government was Germany's method of acquiring numerous mining rights without announcing its intentions or consulting the Rebels about future purchases. Jordana informed Stohrer that difficulties between Germany and Nationalist Spain were unnecessary and could be avoided if Germany would only give the impression that it desired to cooperate with the Nationalist government.

Various conferences, inspections and collections of data involving technical and legal questions of the Montaña affair were in operation by the second week of January between representatives of the Junta Técnica and the Rowak-Hisma firms. In a conference on the Montaña project between officials of the German embassy and the Hisma company on January 10, 1938, "it was agreed that all materials suitable for

³⁶GFD., 528.

³⁷Ibid., 538.

answering any objections which the Spaniards might still raise would be examined and assembled at once."³⁸ In the meantime, it was decided that undue pressure would not be exerted on the Junta since various Hisma-owned mines were continuing to operate with the consent of the Rebels.³⁹

German officials in Berlin were particularly anxious that the economic talks proceed rapidly in order to secure from General Franco a guarantee of mining rights in Spain. Germany was not prepared to accept the Nationalist's limitation of twenty-five percent foreign ownership of Spanish companies. The German embassy was therefore instructed to watch closely further developments in Spain which might influence German economic interests.

The Nationalist government continued to find reasons for delaying the conclusion of any definite economic agreement with Germany, especially concerning German interests in Spanish mineral resources. Both Stohrer and Bernhardt attempted at every opportunity to push and expedite the settlement of the Montaña affair but were repeatedly confronted with Spanish excuses for delay. In response to the continual German representations, Jordana expressed on February 10 the view that Spain was anxious to cement friendly and close ties with Germany in the economic field, but changes in government and administrative delays prevented an early settlement.⁴⁰ German strategy involved couching its demands for

³⁸GFD., 549.

³⁹On January 21, Bernhardt reported to Berlin that ore shipments from Spanish Morocco and Nationalist Spain to Germany during December 1937, amounted to 205,000 tons of iron ore, 55,000 tons of pyrites and 152 tons of tungsten, copper and bronze. Total imports of Spanish ores during the entire year totaled 2,584,000 tons. (GFD , 565).

⁴⁰GFD., 586.

economic concessions in terms of cooperation, historical ties and common enemies, while avoiding the impression that it merely wanted economic rights in Spain as compensation for services rendered in supplying the Spanish Rebels with war material.

Franco finally took the initiative and on March 19 ordered the newly created Council of Ministers⁴¹ to decide the question of German mining rights in Spain. The council decided to initiate studies with the view of replacing the October 9, 1937 law with a general decree applicable to all foreign powers and which allowed room for granting special rights to the Axis powers. However, the proposed decree would enable the Spanish government to grant or refuse changes of ownership in Spanish mines. On April 6, Stohrer protested to Franco that the proposed law was unwise and unjust. In its place the German ambassador recommended that the Nationalist government issue a general mining law which would give Germany much more freedom of action in acquiring mining rights than the decree of the Council of Ministers.⁴²

Hitler reserved for himself the decision as to the amount of financial claims that Germany would make on the Spanish Rebel government for the delivery of war materials.⁴³ Originally, it was decided that the Rebels would pay for these supplies on a cash basis. This was not done because the amount of German aid exceeded the Spanish ability to pay in foreign

⁴¹In February, 1938, the Nationalists formed a regular cabinet with Franco as President of the Council. Jordana was Vice-President.

⁴²GFD., 637.

⁴³Ibid., 648.

exchange and raw materials. As of March 31, 1938, the Nationalists paid only 45 million Reichsmarks of the total 338 million Reichsmarks of the Wehrmacht's expenditures for men and material in Spain.⁴⁴ In partial payment of the debt, Franco released some 10-12 million Reichsmarks for reinvestment by Hisma in Spain. At the time, Hisma was demanding that Franco grant 90 million more in credit for the German investment in Spain.

On May 31, Stohrer was still attempting to exert influence on Franco and the Council of Ministers as to the final draft of the proposed decree that would replace the law of October 9, 1937. To support the German case, Stohrer recommended to the Foreign Ministry that a demarche be made with the Spanish ambassador in Berlin.⁴⁵

The new Spanish mining law was signed on June 6, 1938, before Stohrer had an opportunity to discuss with Franco what form the law would take and to what extent German economic interests in Spain would be safeguarded. Jordana explained to the enraged German ambassador that the new law increased foreign participation in mining rights from twenty-five to forty percent, with the possibility of further increasing the percentage in special cases. Stohrer considered the law as an unfriendly act toward Germany. But in his report to Berlin, Stohrer was not as outraged as he had been with the Spanish Foreign Minister. "The result is by no means pleasing or gratifying, even though the new law . . . seems acceptable to our interests."⁴⁶ The Spaniards seemed to act as if

⁴⁴GFD ., 648.

⁴⁵Ibid, 667.

⁴⁶Ibid., 675.

the promises they made to respect German economic interests were not entirely in good faith, since the method of passing the new law was similar to a fait accompli. Not only had the Rebels failed to inform the German officials of the preceding of the Council of Ministers, but had denied the German Ambassador permission to see General Franco prior to the promulgation of the new law.

Despite the Spanish method of passing the new law, the Germans were not entirely disappointed with it. In Bernhardt's opinion, the law offered the possibility of acquiring 100% control of Spanish mining interests in special cases. Because of dummy companies and personnel, the 40% could be avoided. "In the final analysis we have thus probably achieved substantially what we had to achieve from the standpoint of our interests and what we could demand in consideration of the claims of other countries . . . and Spain's understandable desire to safeguard her own interests."⁴⁷

On October 18, the German Economics Ministry recommended to the Foreign Ministry that further German aid to the Spanish Rebels be conditional upon prior guarantee by the Nationalist government of German control of the Montaña companies. The next day Jordana told Stohrer that payments to the Montaña project of sums owed to Germany were approved by the Nationalist government. This slight concession by the Rebels had the effect of paving the way for greater German control of Spanish mineral resources.

By this time, Berlin was becoming more and more apprehensive over

⁴⁷GFD., 687.

the lack of Spanish cooperation in guaranteeing the participation of German capital in Spanish industry. Therefore, on November 7 the Foreign Ministry instructed Stohrer to inform Jordana that new material to Nationalist Spain was conditional upon Rebel acknowledgement in precise figures of past deliveries of war material and expenses of German personnel and equipment incurred while in Spain. The new material was also conditional upon a decision by the Council of Ministers as to whether or not it would permit more than 40% German ownership of various mining companies in Spain.⁴⁸ The reasoning behind the German move was that the shipments to Spain of war material and the maintenance of the Condor Legion caused a considerable burden on the German rearmament program. Germany, as a consequence, needed raw material and foreign exchange.

On November 19, Stohrer notified Berlin that the German conditions were acceptable to the Nationalist government. The Spaniards were also willing to firmly orientate themselves politically and economically toward Germany after the civil war.⁴⁹

By March 11, 1939, the approaching end of the civil war suggested to Germany the need to arrive at some sort of commercial treaty with Nationalist Spain in order to settle the Rebel debt to Germany for deliveries of war material, to guarantee future ore deliveries, and to enable Germany to play a major role in the reconstruction of the Spanish economy. German ambassador Stohrer advised Berlin that because of the

⁴⁸GFD., 784.

⁴⁹In fulfillment of the German wishes, the Nationalist government granted to Germany an increase of German capital to 75% in three of the five Montaña mining companies, and to 60% in the other two.

increased competition of Britain, France and the United States negotiations with the Rebels should be initiated as soon as possible. The Hisma-Rowak monopoly should also be reevaluated in order to conciliate German and Spanish private commercial interests.⁵⁰

The Nationalist government also desired to clarify Germany's role in reconstruction and future trade with Spain. On March 15, the Spanish Minister of Commerce suggested to Stohrer immediate discussions for the purpose of arranging a settlement of the outstanding German-Spanish economic questions. In view of reports of an imminent Loyalist surrender, the German Foreign Ministry accepted the Spanish offer with a sense of urgency. The delegation⁵¹ named for the economic talks with Spain was to approach the Nationalists with a friendly and cooperative attitude and to avoid at all cost any impression of competing with the Italians.⁵² Germany gave the impression publically that the Italians were partners, but privately they were regarded as economic competitors in Spain.

In the preliminary negotiations lasting from June 12 to July 5 in Burgos, the Spaniards appeared cooperative but seemed uncertain as to what form German-Spanish economic relations would take in the future. The Nationalist government was prepared to negotiate the German claims on war debts, which now totaled 500 million Reichsmarks.⁵³ The Spaniards also expressed a desire for a clearing agreement in place of the Hisma-Rowak monopoly. In repayment of the war debt, Germany expected yearly

⁵⁰GFD., 863.

⁵¹Sabath, Counselor of Legation in Spain; Bethke, of the Economics Ministry; Koenning, of the Finance Ministry.

⁵²GFD., 895.

⁵³Ibid., 892.

imports in the sum of 250 million Reichsmarks or more. Fifty percent of these imports would be specified by Germany. The Nationalists were also expected to provide funds for the Solfindus investments, which would be subtracted from the total war debt.⁵⁴

Despite the fact that the negotiations for a general German-Spanish economic agreement dragged on into World War II, Germany still received extensive compensation for its aid delivered to the Spanish Rebels throughout the civil war. Because of its continual pressure on the Nationalists for economic concessions during the civil war, Germany was able by 1939, to exert a strong influence on the future development and direction of Spanish trade and economic reconstruction. Despite the Nationalist's victory over the Loyalists, the Rebel government was still unable to establish a working, sound economy without German assistance, because of the destructiveness of the civil war. Because of the German penetration of the Spanish economy, the Nationalists were unable to conclude extensive trade agreements with Britain, France or the United States in order to escape the economic grasp of Germany. Thus Germany received ample economic compensation for its material and technical support of the Rebel forces. As a consequence, traditional British-Spanish and French-Spanish trade declined.

Germany's political relations with Nationalist Spain were not as successful as its economic relations. It was not until March 1937 that

⁵⁴The Solfindus company with its headquarters in Salamanca, was mainly concerned with exporting to Germany wools, skins, ores, metal, agricultural products and resin products. Solfindus controlled the Spanish and German dealers and firms which previously arranged the purchase and export of the above material.

Germany made any attempts to clarify its future political relations with Spain. At this time, the Spanish Nationalist government and Germany concluded a secret protocol at Salamanca. Both governments agreed to consult each other on measures necessary to defend themselves against the threat of communism. They also agreed to consult one another on questions concerning international policy which affected their joint interests. Neither party would enter into agreements directed against its treaty partner or assume any other position than benevolent neutrality if either party was attacked by a third party.⁵⁵

The next German attempt to bind Spain closer to the Berlin-Rome Axis without involving the obligations of a military alliance was on April 6, 1938, when Ribbentrop advised Hitler on the necessity of concluding a political treaty with Spain along the lines of the protocol of 1937.⁵⁶ Hitler was not enthusiastic over this type of treaty and requested that the Foreign Ministry delay approaching Franco for the time being.⁵⁷

The Foreign Ministry delayed consideration of the treaty with the Spaniards until May, at which time it instructed Stohrer to sound out Franco as to the attitude of the Nationalist government concerning such a treaty. Jordana and Franco approved of the treaty but informed the German ambassador that they wanted it to remain a secret. The Spaniards feared that a German-Spanish political treaty at this time would hamper

⁵⁵GFD., 256-257.

⁵⁶Ibid., 631.

⁵⁷Ibid., 634.

the British efforts for a rapprochement with Nationalist Spain, especially since the British were pressuring the French government to stop its aid to the Loyalists in an effort to create a positive atmosphere for the British-Spanish talks. Spanish reasons for delaying the treaty did not mean a rejection of the treaty but merely an effort to guard against unpleasant international repercussions detrimental to the Nationalist cause.⁵⁸ On May 31, 1938, the German Foreign Ministry notified Stohrer that a secret treaty was of no value to Germany at this time and that negotiations should be delayed until a more opportune moment.⁵⁹ There matters stood until December 1938, when Germany renewed its efforts to conclude a German-Spanish political treaty.

By the end of February 1939, negotiations reached a successful conclusion with Franco's approval of the text of the German-Spanish Treaty of Friendship.⁶⁰ On March 31, the treaty was signed at Burgos. It contained approximately the same articles as Ribbentrop's April 1938 draft treaty, with the exception that the treaty would remain in force for five years and if not rejected six months prior to expiration, it would continue for another five years.⁶¹

In the meantime, German-Spanish relations suffered a slight setback. During the Czech crisis of September 1938, after representations by Britain and France, Franco announced that in the event of war Spain would

⁵⁸ GFD., 664.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 660.

⁶⁰ Esch., 158.

⁶¹ GFD , 884.

declare its neutrality. In order to offset any possible German protests, Franco intended to address a letter to Hitler on the question.⁶² On September 28, Woermann, Under State Secretary in the German Foreign Office, informed the Spanish ambassador that Germany understood the Spanish position but expected Nationalist Spain not to negotiate this question with Britain or France and also expected Spanish benevolent neutrality towards Germany in the event of a European conflict.⁶³ The Nationalist government replied by stating that the initiative in the affair came from Britain and France.

The Spanish statement of neutrality originated from the Nationalist's misgivings over what effect the Munich conference would have on the Nationalist's cause. The Spaniards felt that during the conference Germany did not give enough consideration to the cause of Nationalist Spain. Berlin in fact maintained no contact with Franco as to German political or military intentions in the event of a European war.⁶⁴ Germany quickly reassured the Nationalists that no decision concerning Spain came out of the talks between Hitler and Chamberlain and that German units and material would remain in Spain in the event of war. German reassurances calmed the Spanish and stimulated further attempts to solidify German-Spanish political relations.

The next German effort to strengthen German-Spanish political ties was the attempt to secure Spanish adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact.

⁶²GFD., 749.

⁶³Ibid., 752.

⁶⁴Ibid., 741.

On January 4, 1939, the Foreign Ministry instructed Stohrer to discuss the matter with Franco.⁶⁵ Because of the possibility of French and British de jure recognition of the Nationalist's government at the time, Franco politely rejected the German invitation. He eventually agreed at the end of February but on the condition that it remain a secret until the end of the war.⁶⁶ The Nationalists feared that a public announcement would jeopardize its efforts to secure the return of Loyalist war materials, merchant vessels, and gold from France. On April 7, 1939, after settlement with the French, the Nationalist government publically announced its March 17 adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact.⁶⁷

Although Germany was quite willing to apply pressure on the Franco government in order to conclude political agreements, it maintained an official policy of non-intervention in domestic Spanish affairs throughout the civil war. The Germans felt that their interests in Spain were best served by not emphasizing their ideological inclination towards the Spanish Falange. Any attempts to transplant National Socialism to Spain was potentially dangerous to future German-Spanish relations. This policy was in operation as early as November 1936, when the Foreign Ministry instructed Faupel, newly appointed ambassador to Nationalist Spain, not to interfere with the Rebel conduct of the war or to assist

⁶⁵GFD., 814.

⁶⁶Esch., 158.

⁶⁷Two other German-Spanish agreements were concluded during 1939, a cultural agreement on January 24, and a labor exchange permit agreement on January 29. The ratification of the cultural agreement was delayed by protests from the Vatican to the Nationalist government. The matter was eventually allowed to lapse without ratification.

General Franco unless requested to do so.⁶⁸

The success of the German efforts to assure closer political relations with Nationalists Spain was clearly evident by the summer of 1939. Although the Nationalists were committed by the Treaty of Friendship not to enter into agreements directed against Germany, they were not bound to any definite military or political alliance. No treaty or agreement existed between Spain and Germany that mortgaged Spain's political future. It was obvious from Franco's statements during the Czech crisis that Spain would remain neutral during any future European war. To what extent this neutrality would be favorable towards Germany was a question that only future events could decide. However, German political influence in Spain combined with its considerable economic influence created a situation in which Germany controlled to a considerable extent Spain's future political and economic foreign relations. This was evident during World War II when the predominant German position in Spain forced the Nationalist government to balance its foreign policy between neutrality, benevolent neutrality and outright association with the Axis powers.

⁶⁸Being a military officer and staunch supporter of the Spanish Falange, Faupel found it difficult to stay out of Spanish political problems and to let the Rebels conduct the war. It was partly for these reasons that Franco requested Faupel's recall in September 1937.

CONCLUSION

After its initial decision in July 1936 to support the Spanish Nationalists with military assistance, Germany continued throughout the civil war to give the Nationalists diplomatic and military support. By the summer of 1938, Germany calculated that its military assistance to the Rebels totaled 337 million Reichsmarks.¹ This figure did not include the casualties among the German personnel in Spain nor the cost to German prestige and influence caused by the international complications of the German policy of publicly adhering to non-intervention while privately sending military aid to the Spanish Nationalists. The dispatch of the Condor Legion to Spain in October 1936 caused additional hardships on the German Luftwaffe which was in the process of an extensive training program at home. According to Kesselring, then Chief of the General Staff of the Luftwaffe, "drafts to the Spanish theatre comprised our very best material, to the prejudice of the training work of the Home Command. . . . We, at home, were accordingly faced with every kind of difficulty as the demand for personnel and technical equipment upset our training programme."²

Although German intervention in Spain occurred simultaneously with Italian intervention and eventually became a cooperative effort, important differences existed between the German and Italian contributions

¹GFD., 648.

²Albert Kesselring, A Soldier's Record, (New York, 1954), 22. Hereafter cited as Kesselring.

to the Rebel victory. While Italian military aid to the Spanish Nationalists was more extensive in quantity,³ Germany contributed military and technical aid far superior in quality. German military aid included large quantities of heavy equipment, heavy artillery, trained artillerists, heavy bombers, pilots, navigators, anti-aircraft crews, and in general the technical services necessary to wage modern war. At least as important was the swiftness of organization and dispatch of the German aid to the Rebel forces. During the months of July and August 1936, it was Germany, rather than Italy, that supplied the Rebels with sufficient material to overcome the vast and bitter resistance of the Spanish people and to ferry the Rebel troops across the Straits of Gibraltar.⁴ Hitler later commented that "the intervention of the German General von Richthofen and the bombs his squadrons rained from the heavens . . . decided the issue."⁵ Towards the end of World War II, Hitler stated that "Franco ought to erect a monument to the glory of the Junker 52. It is this aircraft that the Spanish revolution has to thank for its victory. It was a piece of luck that our aircraft were able to fly direct from Stuttgart to Spain."⁶

Compensation from the Spanish Nationalist government for German war materials was not as extensive as Germany expected. Although there

³By March 1937, Italian troops in Spain numbered 60 to 70 thousand men. Bullock, 348-340.

⁴Puzzo, 65-66.

⁵Adolf Hitler, tr. R.H. Stevens, Hitler's Secret Conversations 1941-1944, (New York, 1953), 462. Hereafter cited as Conversations.

⁶Conversations, 558.

were various German-Spanish agreements, protocols and treaties outlining in general terms future German participation in the Spanish economy, no definite agreements existed between the two countries by which the Rebels acknowledged a definite area of the Spanish economy available for German exploitation. This was true despite the 1939 mining concessions granted to the German controlled Solfindus company.⁷ As late as September 1940, Franco still proved to be obstinate over the question of repayment of the civil war debt. He refused to mix what he considered idealistic questions (the Nationalist cause) with crass economic questions (the Nationalist debt to Germany).

Despite the difficulties of acquiring economic concessions from the Rebels and in bringing Nationalist Spain into closer political relations with the Axis powers,⁸ Germany did receive some benefits from its intervention in the Spanish Civil War. The Condor Legion gained an immense amount of combat experience during the civil war. The Ju 87 dive bomber excelled to such an extent that it was used as a decisive weapon in World War II until 1942. Also the activities of the German anti-aircraft batteries in Spain gave German observers valuable information as to the "tactical employment and development as organized

⁷Throughout the civil war Nationalist Spain was shipping extensive amounts of ores to Germany, but this was by separate agreements pertaining to each shipment of ore. This type of arrangement could be terminated at the pleasure of the Rebels. Thus German ore supplies from Spain were on tenuous grounds.

⁸Although Spain signed the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1939, this was not a formal agreement to support the cause of Fascism nor a binding political agreement. It merely combined Germany-Italy-Spain in a common cause against Communism.

units of these batteries."⁹

A political advantage gained by Germany for its participation in the civil war was that another Fascist or dictatorial state, along the lines of Germany and Italy, established itself in Europe. As far as Germany was concerned, the more Fascist states in Europe, the greater would be its prestige. A Fascist government in Spain would not only strengthen German influence in Europe but would also surround France with unfriendly neighbors whose very existence might prevent effective French action against German manipulations in Eastern Europe.

Perhaps an even greater advantage for Germany arose out of German-Italian cooperation in aiding the Rebels during the civil war. This cooperation resulted in closer relations between Italy and Germany. It was Germany's policy as early as 1936 to court the Italians in an effort to prevent them from succumbing to British and French attempts to re-establish good relations with Italy after the Ethiopian affair.¹⁰ Italian interest in the Spanish conflict further embittered Italian-British-French relations. As a consequence, Italy gravitated towards Germany which held similar interests in the Spanish situation. Thus Chamberlain's overtures to Mussolini from 1937 to 1939 did not succeed because of Italian policy in Spain. Germany let Italy contribute the majority of the aid to the Spanish Rebels and thereby create a cooling of relations between Britain, France and Italy.

In November 1937, while Italy was becoming deeply committed to the

⁹ Kesselring, 22.

¹⁰ GFD., 170-173.

Spanish cause, Hitler was telling his generals that a 100% Rebel victory was not desirable since a continuation of tensions in the western Mediterranean would lead to a further deterioration of British, French and Italian relations. This could only benefit Germany.¹¹ "Indeed, the common policy of Italy and Germany towards Spain created one of the main foundations on which the Rome-Berlin Axis was built, and the Spanish Civil War proved much greater scope for such cooperation than the Abyssinian War from which Germany had held aloof."¹²

The Spanish Civil War provided Germany with one more occasion to test the mettle of Britain and France as to how far they would allow Germany to proceed with its adventuristic foreign policy. German and Italian intervention in Spain elicited only a feeble veto from the Western powers and in some cases outright encouragement. The British and French attitude convinced Hitler that he could continue his uncompromising attitude in foreign affairs without recourse to war.

By 1938, the Spanish Civil War slowly faded out of the international picture to be replaced by more important and pressing matters such as the Munich conference. World attention was more concerned with what Hitler was saying and doing than in what was going on in Spain. On February 10, 1945, Hitler commented for the last time on the Franco regime. "We were badly deceived, for, had I know the real state of affairs, I would never have allowed our aircraft to bombard and destroy

¹¹GFD., Series D, Vol. I, 36-37.

¹²Bullock, 348-350.

a starving population and at the same time re-establish the Spanish clergy in all their horrible privileges."¹³ Hitler, at this time, was attempting to rationalize Germany's impending defeat and was blaming the Spanish Rebels for not entering the war on the Axis side. As far as Hitler was concerned, the Rebels obstinacy in refusing to join the Axis during World War II was indicative of Spanish ingratitude for German support during the civil war.

¹³Adolf Hitler, tr. R.H. Stevens, The Testament of Adolf Hitler (February-April 1945), (London, 1961), 48.

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Documents relating to the establishment of the Non-Intervention Committee and the measures taken by each state in subscribing to the agreements of that Committee can be found in Norman J. Padelford's International Law and Diplomacy in the Spanish Civil Strife. This work is not, however, a history of the Committee but rather an interpretation of the activities of the Committee in relation to the practices of international law.

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